

Proposing Methodological Triangulation for a Study on a Diaspora within a Nation-state and Beyond

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Abstract

People moving out of their native place and settling elsewhere due to certain compulsions become diaspora. At present, the term diaspora is used for describing any group of dispersed population. A diaspora undergoes cultural and economic challenges in a receiving society until a complete assimilation takes place or the collective memory of the original identity decomposes. This is a review paper on the choice of methodology adopted for studying negotiations by a diaspora of such challenges in the relevant international scholarship. The literature review suggests that methodological triangulation is appropriate for this kind of a study.

Keywords: Diaspora, Triangulation, Cultural Challenges.

This paper reviews methodology used in a select set of research papers by scholars working on forced migration, mainly on the refugees. This is evidently incomplete in view of the fact that it has not taken into account books and papers produced by Indian scholars, particularly the researchers of the Calcutta Research Group. The necessity of such review has arisen out of my project on the Rajbanshi diaspora in Rajasthan Noida and Nepal. Thus, the search for a conceptual vocabulary and an appropriate research practice is dictated by my interest in understanding the dynamics of negotiation of a diaspora of challenges from the culture of the people of the places of their arrival. It is conceivable that the receiving people have also to respond to the new cultural encounters with the ‘outsiders’.

The two critical concepts in my design are *diaspora* and *methodological triangulation*. The term *diaspora*¹ was referred to those groups of people who moved to other parts of the world either due to expulsion from their homeland or migrated out of their native place, reformed their communities in the receiving society, made contact with the people of the receiving community in order to achieve different purposes and settled close to each other for continuing their original culture as well as their original collective identity (Rios and Adiv, 2010; Safran, 2005). It is well known that *diaspora* is presently being used for describing any group of dispersed population be it outside of the original state or within the same state (Chailand and Rageau, 1991; Ma Mung, 2000; Jayaram, 2004; Bordes-Benayoun and Schnapper, 2006 and Skeldon, 2010). An example of progressively inclusionary character of the concept of diaspora, we may refer to:

“By diaspora we refer broadly to communities and individuals residing and working outside their country of origin. These individuals often maintain social, financial, and cultural connections to their country of origin usually mediated through family and friends in the homeland.”(Merz et al., 2009)

Studies suggest that the diaspora faces many cultural challenges in the receiving society. In the beginning, they undergo acculturation² when they encounter the dominant group of the receiving community. The diaspora may passively conform to the culture of the dominant group. Or, they can deny it or at least become selective in their ‘acceptance’ of norms and practices peculiar to the receiving community. This acculturation may lead to assimilation³ or segmented assimilation⁴, integration⁵, marginalization⁶ and separation⁷ or segregation⁸ depending upon the

¹ Originally, the term *diaspora* was used to refer “the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered in exile outside Palestine” (Jayaram, 2004).

² Acculturation takes place because of first hand contact among different groups having different cultural orientations. As a result, either the groups or only the non-dominant group may undergo cultural changes.

³ When a non-dominant group is absorbed among the dominant group or when many groups merge in order to form a new society, assimilation takes place.

⁴ Segmented assimilation of the individuals belonging to the non-dominant group takes place in a segmented manner due to the differences in the adaptation of the dominant culture (depends on their levels of social capital, human capital and cultural capital).

⁵ Integration takes place, when a non-dominant group get integrates with the dominant group while retaining their own culture.

⁶ Marginalization takes place, when non-dominant group lose any sort of contact i.e. cultural and psychological with both their native culture and the dominant society.

diaspora's willingness as well as the difficulties created by the dominant group. Further, the second generation of the diaspora might experience segmented assimilation in the receiving community depending on their family acculturation processes⁹ and the hurdles created for them by the dominant group. Beside cultural challenges, the diaspora also faces economic challenges in the receiving society while being accustomed with new work culture, which can include learning of new work skill, contending with wage discrimination, etc.

Now, the proposition here is that the location of the dynamics of the negotiation of challenges by the diaspora in their new habitat can be explored through triangulation¹⁰, rather than a reliance on a single method of data collection or construction. Theoretically, speaking a single method usually yields a partial understanding of a complex phenomenon, which migration and settlement elsewhere is. Unless, somebody wants to privilege one particular aspect only or one particular method of doing research, it is wiser to go for disciplinary collaboration and triangulation of methods.

⁷ When non-dominant group does not want to follow the culture of the dominant group and instead the former want to maintain their own culture then it is known as separation.

⁸ When dominant group does not allow non-dominant group to maintain any sort of relation with them then it leads to segregation.

⁹ Social, cultural, and human capitals also influence the family acculturation process. Three types of family acculturation process can take place-Dissonant, Consonant and Selective. As a result, segmented assimilation of the second generation takes place.

¹⁰The concept of triangulation was borrowed from navigational and land surveying techniques where a single point in space is being studied by converging measurements from two different points (Rothbauer, 2008). This is widely used in social and behavioral research for measurement practices (Bryman, 2003). Triangulation helps in understanding a phenomenon at its best (Rothbauer, 2008). Moreover, the uncertainty of a proposition regarding the phenomenon can be reduced if two or more methods are used (Webb et al., 1966). Donald T. Campbell and D. W Fiske, for the first time recommended the use of multitrait-multimethod matrix for the purpose of validation. According to them: 'Measures of the same trait should correlate higher with each other than they do with measures of different traits involving separate methods. Ideally, these validity values should also be higher than the correlation among different traits measured by the same method.' (Campbell and Fiske, 1959) According to Paulette Rothbauer, during 1950's and 1960's triangulation method was mainly used for quantitative analysis and therefore was criticized by the qualitative researchers (Rothbauer, 2008). Here it is important to mention that the researchers who follow quantitative approach viewed triangulation to be a process of verifying the findings generated by the use of different methods so that the error is reduced. However, the researchers who follow qualitative approach viewed that triangulation is not only about verification of findings. Rather, it is having a capacity to generate multiple viewpoints about a particular phenomenon in question (Hastings, 2010). Norman K. Denzin extended the concept of triangulation, which is widely used in qualitative research. He stated four forms of triangulation namely data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation and methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1970).

It may be useful to place my preliminary understanding of the Rajbanshi community and some of them settling outside of their original place. People from the Rajbanshi community residing in the northern part of West Bengal have been migrating out of their native place in search of livelihood since 1970's and getting settled in other parts of India namely Rajasthan and Noida. They have been migrating to Nepal also. Apparently, this does not look like a forced migration going by the standard indicators conceived in terms of the causes of migration, like war, ethnic, religious, tribal conflicts, political turmoil, persecution, challenging environmental conditions or mandatory repatriation. But in such a list of traumatic movers of men, women and children there is provision for 'economic stagnation' as a source of 'force'. Only, we need to acknowledge that, while this may be in the form of economic stagnation of a natural region, it may be peculiar to a community due to political economic reasons. We gain by moving from the concept of forced migration to that of population displacement.

My earlier research on the demand pattern of the Rajbanshis showed that they suffer from a sense of relative deprivation vis-à-vis 'other' which includes the OBC'. Curiously, an analysis of the demand charters of the Kamtapur movement shows that the Rajbanshis feel that the Bangladeshi immigrants are better off than they are in terms of governmental assistance. In addition, certain State Government policies such as non-implementation of mother tongue of the Kamtapurians in primary education, non-inclusion of the history of Kamtapur in the school as well as the university syllabus and lop-sided regional development deprived them from their own cultural, social, and economic opportunities. Hence, they are compelled to migrate outside and become diaspora in their own nation.

On the basis of whatever little information I was able to gather, the Rajbanshi diaspora might be facing the economic and cultural challenges of negotiation in a new place, which I intend to study in my doctoral dissertation. In this paper, the main objective is to look into relevant international studies in order to figure out the use of triangulation for pursuing this kind of research. The first section consists of literature review. Here, only those studies have been reviewed which deals with different challenges of negotiation faced by the diaspora in a new destination. While doing this it was noticed that most of the literatures are on refugees. The last section justifies the use of triangulation approach for the study on the Rajbanshi diaspora.

Methodological Review of the Relevant Studies

The methodologies adopted for studying various issues of forced migration involved the use of [i] single research method and [ii] triangulation approach. Now, in the beginning I review those inquiries where single research method had been applied. In a paper titled “African Refugees in Egypt: Trauma, Loss and Cultural Adjustment”, Hani M. Henry undertook *a multiple case study* approach¹¹. *Interview* as a part of multiple case study approach was conducted for obtaining information regarding African refugee’s experiences about departing their home, changes that they underwent in a new place and their life experiences in Egypt. Interview transcripts were coded to sort out potential themes regarding key challenges faced by these refugees in a new place (Henry, 2012). Similarly, in another study *grounded theory*¹² approach was used for understanding the family consequences of the trauma experienced by the Bosnian refugees. Qualitative data were obtained through interview of the Bosnian refugees, which were coded, and potential themes were generated (Weine et al., 2004). Yatta Kanu in his paper titled “Educational Needs and Barriers for African Refugee Students in Manitoba” collected data through focus group discussion, participant observation, and interview. The author generated codes from these data, analyzed them and interpreted (Kanu, 2008).

Now, I come to those studies where authors have used triangulation. While doing literature review it was observed that in some paper the authors did not announced that they are using triangulation while in other papers authors have mentioned it in the foreground. First, I will be reviewing those literatures where the scholars had used triangulation without announcing. In the following four-paper *sample survey has been triangulated with field work*. Cheung and Phillimore in their paper titled “Social Networks, Social Capital and Refugee Integration”, chose a sample population. They used questionnaires to gather data. Both bivariate and factor analysis were conducted (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013). Manley and Coughlan in their paper titled “Adaptation of Refugees During Cross-Cultural Transitions: Bosnian Refugees in Upstate New York”, interviewed a sample population regarding their cultural adaptation. They also used

¹¹ A method used for justification of theories. This involves comparison of different observations of a particular theory through findings from various cases (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2003).

¹² Grounded theory is ‘The discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analysed in social research’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

questionnaires for obtaining demographic attributes of these refugees. They did the analysis based on interview transcripts and simple percentage calculation (Manley and Coughlan, 2012). Birman et al. in their paper titled “Acculturation and Adaptation of Soviet Jewish Refugee Adolescents: Predictors of Adjustment Across Life Domains”, chose a sample population through *snowballing or chain sampling*¹³ method. *Field work* involved qualitative interview among the sample population for obtaining information regarding adaptation of language, identity and behavior of the receiving society; psychological adaptation; school adaptation and peer as well as family adaptation. Information regarding demographic attributes was obtained with the help of questionnaire. The authors scaled down the qualitative information and applied correlation technique (Birman et al., 2002). Similarly, Bankston and Zhou in their paper titled “The Social Adjustment of Vietnamese American Adolescents: Evidence for a Segment Assimilation Approach”, interviewed a sample population. They applied Regression technique on the survey data “to examine the predictors and effects of differential associations with Americanized co ethnic peers and with American peers in the principle Vietnamese residential concentration in Orleans Parish” (Bankston and Zhou, 1997).

Now, I refer to those papers where the scholars have articulated choice of triangulation. First three studies are on *data triangulation*, one study uses both *data and methodological triangulation* and last two studies deals with *knowledge triangulation*. Kumssa and Jones in their paper titled “Human Security Issues of Somali Refugees and the Host Community in Northeastern Kenya”, triangulated the data collected from various sources to assess economic, social and political challenges faced by both the refugee and the host communities. Primary data were collected through focus group discussion and survey questionnaires. Secondary data comprised of books, papers etc. Beside this, they also collected data through observation. Both descriptive and bivariate statistics were applied for analyzing qualitative data (Kumssa and Jones, 2014). Raphi Konstantin Rechitsky in his dissertation titled “Forced migration processes and global refugees at the borders of Europe in Ukraine” studied the cultural challenges faced by the refugees in Ukraine. The author did *a convenience sampling*¹⁴. Data were gathered through semi structured interviews, non-participant observation and expert interviews. In addition, data

¹³It is a non-probability sampling. When one or two key informants help in locating other likely informants.

¹⁴Selection of those informants who are both easy and close to locate.

were collected from archives and organizational documents. Afterwards, the author used narratives for analysis (Rechitsky, 2014). Similarly, in another study, the authors adopted an inductive methodology in order to identify the key elements, which lead to successful integration of the refugees in the receiving society. In this study, the authors gathered primary data from field survey of refugee settlements and secondary data from documents, literatures and cross-sectional survey of refugees. The data gathered were further triangulated for conceptual validity (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Joyce Addo in his thesis titled “Exploring the Livelihood Strategies of Liberian Refugee Women in Buduburam Ghana” used both data triangulation and methodological triangulation. The author did a *purposive sample survey*¹⁵. In order to collect quantitative data regarding socio-economic and demographic variables both open and close-ended questionnaires were used. In depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted for obtaining qualitative data related to livelihood strategies. The data generated from the primary field survey were compared with the secondary data obtained from different sources. According to the author, methodological triangulation seemed to be appropriate for this research as it provided a detailed description of the respondent’s lives, which was validated by using statistical methods. He opted for a between-method triangulation i.e., use of both quantitative as well as qualitative methods in order to find if any sort of changes in livelihood strategies took place and how much (Addo, 2008).

G.D.M. Wijers in his paper titled “The Reception of Cambodian Refugees in France” tried to find out the reason behind the invisibility of the Cambodian refugees in France compared to other immigrants. He conducted fieldwork in two places of France namely Lyon and Paris, where the Cambodians are settled. Based on the triangulation of findings of these two places he proposed that invisibility among the Cambodian refugees compared to the other immigrants depends on the nature of reception as well as resettlement underwent by them in the receiving society (Wijers, 2011). Similarly, Jessica Lyn Gladden in her dissertation investigated the coping strategies of Sudanese refugee women in a refugee camp of Kenya. She gathered data through interview and questionnaire. She also conducted informal interviews with other person and triangulated both the findings (Gladden, 2012).

¹⁵Selection of only those samples, which represents the universe and can answer the research question.

In Defense of the Choice of Triangulation Approach for the Study on the Rajbanshi Diaspora

Yet to visit Rajbanshi settlements in Rajasthan, Noida and Nepal, I am left with conjecturing about my research imperatives. The scholarship on migration is a pluri-disciplinary, in the sense that it is studied by scholars across some cognate social sciences. The ground work for epistemological collaboration has already been laid; making proposition on triangulation is easier, even ‘natural’. My understanding of research requirements for study of the Rajbanshis settled outside of their original habitat would involve triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative research for pursuing a wider and an in- depth study. That would mean triangulation at the levels of methods, data collection and knowledge. For example, as an exercise in methodological triangulation, I will be triangulating both *sample survey* and *field work*. This is because, sample survey results in “greater confidence in the generalizability of results” and “validation of results” whereas fieldwork will help in exploiting the benefits of social observation (Jick, 1979). I will be selecting a sample population through *snowballing or chain sampling*. *Field work* will include questionnaire based survey, ethnographic research and narrative inquiry.

My research will also need triangulation of multiple data sources and multiple data forms. Different data sources will result in different findings regarding a phenomenon. When we triangulate various data sources, it helps us in increasing the credibility of our findings related to that phenomenon. Sometimes, different findings regarding a phenomenon obtained by the use of multiple methods may not converge. This highlights the problem of using a single method for studying a phenomenon. In addition, this may prompt us to look for a new method of inquiry or new area of inquiry (Webb et al., 1966). As to the need for different forms of data, triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data is likely to be useful. Quantitative data will be obtained through questionnaire based survey. Mainly, data regarding demographic and socio-economic profile of the migrant Rajbanshis will be thus available. But such data can be located unobtrusively through use of secondary sources. Qualitative data can be obtained a life story¹⁶

¹⁶Life story is a form of narrative enquiry and has been in use already. One of the examples where the use of life story can be seen is a work titled “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” by William I.

among the diaspora about their experiences related to negotiations, search of livelihood, everyday life practices and social status in a receiving society. In-depth interview and focus group discussion will lead to individual and collective life stories. The whole engagement with the field is ideally be conducted under the aegis of ethnographic research¹⁷ for getting a holistic view of the multi-dimensional and multi-form Rajbanshi diaspora's negotiation with the imperatives of settling down as 'aliens'. The stipulated process focus will also lead us inquiries regarding their memories of their lives in their original location.

Conclusion

Although, there are certain benefits of triangulation but still certain issues exist. First of all this kind of approach is quite expensive as well as time consuming because it involves a number of methods. Secondly, a large number of data gets collected which may not be tackled properly. Third, epistemologies are still in tensions among themselves. But such challenges need not put off an experiment with triangulation because population dispersion and population displacement as well as what these actuate, namely, retrieval and/or re-working of social networks and a desire to be 'placed' again – territorially, economically, juridically and culturally, require multiple knowledges to collaborate among themselves. This could be crucial for the Rajbanshis engaging the state and the political society through the Kamtapur movement at the same time taking a flight out of inopportune conditions of existence. The processes are indeed complex.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors Prof. Prasanta Ray and Prof. Ranjan Basu for their valuable suggestions. I would like to acknowledge I.D.S.K library for providing me the international scholarships.

Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. Narrative inquiry helps us in understanding different experiences of human beings. In addition, this is a type of research methodology. Therefore, allows a close study of experiences of each individual "over time and in context" (Clandinin and Caine, 2008).

¹⁷Ethnography provides us with a holistic description of a "group or culture" from an insider's perspective which is nonjudgmental (Fetterman, 2008).

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