Pranee Liamputtong
Editor

SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH SERIES 34

Doing Cross-Cultural Research

Ethical and Methodological Perspectives

Springer

Doing Cross-Cultural Research

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Volume 34

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To My Parents
Saeng and Yindee Liamputtong, who bring me up in cross-cultural ways &

To my children
Zoe Sanipreeya Rice and Emma Inturatana Rice, who are part of my cross-cultural identity

Preface

Despite the proliferation of qualitative books in the last decade or so, there is not a single book that discusses ethical and methodological issues regarding cross-cultural research. Clearly, there is a great need for a new book that will devote an entire discussion on how best to work with people in our cross-cultural research projects who, I contend, are often vulnerable and marginalised. This book is a response to that need.

Globally, cross-cultural research has become increasingly essential. In multicultural societies like the UK, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, there have been an increasing number of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Meeting the needs of our multicultural society requires a cultural awareness of the diversity and commonality in people's beliefs and practices. This, I argue, can be obtained by research, particularly the qualitative approach. Hence, cross-cultural research is a valuable tool for advancing cultural awareness of belief systems and practices among diverse groups. The need for culturally competent research is now urgent in view of the fact that current social and health policies in many developed countries attempt to address the needs of multiethnic populations.

Similarly, the presence of Indigenous populations in countries such as Canada, the UK, the USA, New Zealand and Australia has a great ramification for social science researchers. The Indigenous peoples of these countries have been colonised, damaged and have become marginalised in their own native lands. Due to a concern about reducing inequalities between the Indigenous peoples and the "white" populations, there have been attempts to include these marginalised people in the research arenas. But, there has not been much discussion on performing cross-cultural research with Indigenous peoples.

More social science researchers have also started to conduct research with poor people in a cross-cultural context. It is imperative that social science researchers ensure that their research is conducted ethically and take into account the cultural norms so that their research may not harm but will benefit local people. Again, this has barely been discussed in the literature.

Conducting cross-cultural research is rife with ethical, moral and methodological challenges. The task of undertaking cross-cultural research can present researchers with unique opportunities, and yet pose dilemmas. In carrying out their research with people in cross-cultural arenas, researchers are challenged with many issues. In this book, I bring together salient issues for the conduct of culturally appropriate research.

This book has its focus on qualitative methodology. Although doing cross-cultural research can be carried out both through qualitative and quantitative methods, I advocate the use of qualitative methodology, as I believe that this methodology offers much more accurate information from the perspective of the research participants than the positivist science. In putting this book together, I expect that the readers will have some basic knowledge of qualitative research methodology. With a limited number of words that we can have in one text, it is beyond the scope of this volume to include all qualitative methods. However, I have included diverse methods which are more appropriate for doing cross-cultural research and are sensitive to the needs of research participants in cross-cultural contexts.

In this book, I do not intend to compare people across cultures as most texts on cross-cultural research have done. Except for one chapter, I focus the whole book on research in cross-cultural settings and with ethnic minority groups in Western nations. I hope that the book will provide valuable lessons and examples so that our research may proceed relatively well and yet be sensitive and ethical in approach.

The book is intended for researchers who are working in cross-cultural settings. It is also valuable for the training needs of postgraduate students who wish to undertake cross-cultural research. The book will also be of value to researchers and students who work with minority groups and ethnic communities in Australia, the UK, the USA, Canada and other parts of the world.

Like any other publication, this book could not have been possible without assistance from others. First, I wish to express my gratitude to Myriam Poort and Esther Otten of Springer, who believed in the value of this book and contracted me to write. My utmost thanks go to Rosemary Oakes who edited part of the manuscript for me. Last, but most importantly, I wish to express my sincere thanks to all the contributors in the volume who helped to make this book possible. Most of you worked so hard to meet my timetable and to endure my endless emails for getting chapters from you. I hope that this journey has been a positive one for you. Thank you to you all.

Melbourne, March 2008 Pranee Liamputtong

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About this Book

This book comprises 19 chapters. In **Chapter 1**, Pranee Liamputtong sets the scene by introducing some salient issues discussed in this volume. She contends that conducting cross-cultural research is rife with methodological and ethical challenges. In this chapter, she aims to firstly provide discussion on the essence of cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural research. She then discusses issues relating to language and the use of bicultural researchers in cross-cultural research. She also suggests strategies to gain access to research participants in cross-cultural research. Lastly, she examines moral and ethical perspectives in cross-cultural research, and discusses the thorny issue of informed consent in cross-cultural research.

Chapter 2 focuses on language issues in cross-cultural research and is written by Monique Hennink. She suggests that language and communication are the bedrock of qualitative enquiry. Language is a fundamental tool through which qualitative researchers seek to understand human behaviour, social processes and the cultural meanings that inscribe human behaviour. However, when conducting cross-cultural research, issues of language and communication become more complex and often require the assistance of translators and "cultural brokers". Cross-cultural research poses numerous methodological, epistemological and practical challenges, which are rarely debated in qualitative research. In this chapter, she outlines the epistemological approach to language and communication in different research paradigms and demonstrates the implications of this for the rigour of qualitative enquiry. In particular, concepts of transparency, subjectivity and reflexivity, which are indicators of methodological rigour in qualitative research, are typically not applied to language assistants in cross-cultural qualitative research despite the critical role of language assistants in the generation of knowledge and its cultural interpretation. She contends that improving cross-cultural qualitative research involves understanding how language and communication can affect rigour and addressing language and communication issues that underlie the entire research process. Failure to recognise and acknowledge the role of language and communication issues in cross-cultural research may impact on the rigour and reliability of the research.

Chapter 3 is written by Fiona Irvine, Gwerfyl Roberts and Caroline Bradbury-Jones. In this chapter, they focus on the researcher as insider versus the researcher as outsider and the way rigour through language and cultural sensitivity can be enhanced. Fiona and colleagues argue that evidence suggests that in research studies involving minority language users, rigour is enhanced when researchers share a common language and culture with research participants, and, thus, are considered to be “insiders”. However, it is clear that the use of “insiders” is not always possible and where the researchers and the researched do not share a common culture and language, measures can be taken to ensure that the research is rigorous. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic concordance does not in itself guarantee rigour; researchers must also demonstrate that their approach stands up to judgement against criteria that are congruent with the relevant research paradigm. In their chapter, Fiona and colleagues consider best practice in research studies involving more than one language when the researchers are either insiders or outsiders. They draw on examples from published literature as well as from their research experiences as insiders and outsiders to examine approaches for enhancing rigour when conducting qualitative research. Attention is given to cultural issues which, they argue, are inextricably linked to language, and therefore require cultural sensitivity on the part of the researcher in order to effectively capture and interpret data. They also examine sampling and recruitment, in which they demonstrate the measures that can be taken to facilitate the recruitment of participants with different language backgrounds. They give some consideration to data collection and identify strategies that can be adopted to gain rich data from participants where researchers either share or do not share the same language as the researched. Translation and interpretation are both identified as approaches that can facilitate rigorous cross-cultural research if addressed appropriately. The process of transcription, which is rarely addressed in the literature, is also examined and suggestions are given about how this can be tackled when operating in more than one language. Finally, they consider data analysis and offer suggestions for best practice when analysing data collected in two or more languages.

In **Chapter 4**, Jennene Greenhill and Kerry Dix write about respecting culture as a crucial aspect in researching with Aboriginal communities in rural areas. They contend that respecting culture is easy to say, but difficult to do. In this chapter, they explore the process of doing cross-cultural research in the context of working with Aboriginal people. The chapter follows their journey in search of methods to collect meaningful data and reveals the successes and struggles encountered. They address the question: “How do we maximize cultural sensitivity as white women doing research with Aboriginal people?” They share their experience in finding ways to do culturally sensitive research. The many ways that participants tell their stories, how to achieve a degree of trust and rapport with the communities, the elders, the individuals, their families and the service providers, are examined. Jennene and Kerry also suggest that many Aboriginal peoples have good reason to be sceptical about research and doubt whether it is really useful to their communities. Aboriginal communities are often the focus of research but are rarely the recipients of tangible benefits of this intense interest. Given the history of research being “done to” Aboriginal peoples the importance of building relationships, showing respect and a willingness to learn is foremost in our minds when we embark on research. Researchers need to be cognisant of the history of exploitation within communities and the associated ongoing cultural dyslexia that characterises our society. They argue that cultural dyslexia is a result of dissonance, institutional racism and positivist research and management approaches that are preoccupied with “evidence”, data quality and outcomes, and too often lead to the objectification of participants. In this chapter, the need for research to be grounded in participatory methodologies such as action research and community-based ethnography is well documented. Both authors suggest that a reflexive approach is essential because it promotes community inclusion and confronts the traditional exclusivity in academic culture of research expertise. By sharing experiences and fostering a collaborative culture through research, we can learn from communities and undertake more meaningful research.

In Chapter 5 Clive Pope suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand has seen a welcome burgeoning of researchers and graduate students adopting Kaupapa Mäori as a preferred methodology. Over recent years, appropriate ways to conduct research with Mäori and within Mäori communities have evolved. As a supervisor working within an institution where Kaupapa Mäori has established a high profile, Clive found himself in the role of supervisor to several Mäori students. Furthermore, as a Päkehä New Zealander, he has, in recent years, discovered himself standing on tricky ground, learning and appreciating this methodology and its associated world view. He asks: How can a white, male, middle-class supervisor contribute to the conduct of Kaupapa Mäori and the growth of Mäori graduate students? Such an experience has revealed a different way of knowing, far removed from the “colonial gaze” that has marked much of his own research. Barbara Grant has recently described the act of supervision as an uncertain practice marked by a plethora of contradictory and competing discourses. Between such discourses are spaces that Linda Tuhiwai Smith has termed “tricky ground”. Such a term is pertinent because it highlights the complexity, uncertainty and shifting nature of not only the ground upon which researchers work, but also the individuals and communities who perform the research, the epistemologies and understandings they hold, the practices they indulge in and the effects such research can have on the participants. Russell Bishop has argued that storytelling is a culturally appropriate way of empowering participants and Clive employs this strategy to share his experiences as a supervisor working on tricky ground.

In **Chapter 6**, Andrew Day and Linda Davey provide their reflections on researching Indigenous Australian issues. They describe the attempts of non-Indigenous researchers to develop an appropriate research methodology to investigate anger in Indigenous men in prison. In this chapter, they examine the need for research that can meaningfully inform service provision to be conducted in the context of Indigenous critiques of mainstream research methodologies and describe some of the issues that arose in their attempt to achieve this. What emerged was an appreciation of the way in which the research methodologies that were available to them were inescapably representations of their own cultural backgrounds and that effective and culturally acceptable research practice was not a question of mere methodology, but of being prepared to remain conscious of the potential for their research to do harm.

In **Chapter 7**, Robert Schweitzer and Zachary Steel write about methodological and ethical considerations in researching refugees. They suggest that research with refugees involves particular conceptual, ethical and methodological issues. They outline a number of approaches to refugee research. They also review the merits and limitations of the dominant trauma approach, noting the particular tendency of this approach to exclude Indigenous forms of knowledge and understanding. They review the emergence of alterative or complementary approaches which strive to integrate qualitative and quantitative methodologies and emphasise a return to human experience and a deeper eco-social and cultural understanding of the refugee experience. One such methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, is described in greater detail. They then extend their chapter to examine some of the ethical issues which emerge in refugee-related research. In this section, they locate the research enterprise within the broader socio-political context of engaged research.

Chapter 8 is written by Labby Ramrathan. This chapter presents his experience and thoughts on ethical and political issues associated with researching HIV/AIDS in South Africa. These thoughts and experiences have been derived from his engagement in research activities, supervision of postgraduate students' research work and project work. He presents a contextual landscape of the issues emerging from researching HIV/AIDS within South Africa. This contextual landscape then raises issues of ethics and politics associated with the pandemic leading to a conception of data as agency as a theoretical tool to understanding the complexity and competing agendas for researching HIV/AIDS within South Africa.

Doria Daniels, in **Chapter 9**, explores ethical issues when using visual tools in educational research. She contends that in the visual as well as word-orientated world that qualitative researchers increasingly find themselves in, a critical stance about ethics and its relation to qualitative data-gathering methods is long overdue. The growing popularity of technology and the user-friendliness of cameras and videos have led to an increase in the use of visual-oriented tools. Consequentially, critical reflection by the researcher about what is ethical, and what is right in the behaviour of researchers when collecting and using visual images in educational research, is needed. Due to qualitative research not being associated with physical manipulation or intrusive measures, an assumption could be perpetuated that its processes pose no or minimal risk to participants. However, witnessing how identifiable visuals of vulnerable populations are being shown during dissemination of findings in the public domain has led Doria to question the ethics of such practices. In a world of litigation, defamation of character and misrepresentation, educational researchers have to be knowledgeable about ethical concerns that are raised about trust within the research relationship and the rights of those who are depicted in the photographs. This chapter provides an overview of the merits of visual-oriented tools in research contexts where the researcher has to cross into an unfamiliar culture, ethnicity and language. It follows with the ethics concerns that should guide the decisions of using visual data methods in research. Lastly, Doria reflects on the ethical challenges that researchers face when analysing visual data.

In **Chapter 10**, April Vannini and Coreen Gladue introduce decolonised methodologies in cross-cultural research. This chapter examines in detail the process of performing the interview in life history, life story and narrative research. April and Coreen focus on a set of collaborative life-history interviews that April conducted with Coreen, who is the storyteller. April discusses how together they have reflected on the interviewing process in particular and the research process in general. She further reflects on the ways they were able to democratise the interview process by using ten of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's decolonising projects together with Indigenous ways of knowing – the talking circle, and reflexive dyadic interviewing. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to examine the process of "story sharing" as a way to democratise interviewing.

Chapter 11 is about "Living on the Ground": Research Which Sustains *Living Culture* and is written by Zohl dé Ishtar. She contends that "Living on the Ground" is a research practice that positions non-Indigenous researchers as partners *with* Indigenous peoples as they themselves act to foster individual resilience and promote collective sustainability in their community. Based on Indigenous Self-Determination, Relationship and Phenomenological Presence, "Living on the Ground" is a process of inquiry which furthers the local peoples' *Living Culture*, an empowering cultural force which when potent enables culturally marginalised peoples to withstand seemingly insurmountable obstacles resulting from colonialism and cultural trauma. *Living Culture* is created when peoples live their lives according to their own cultural philosophies and practices. This methodology was developed while Zohl lived and worked with the elderly women of the remote desert community of Balgo (in the south-eastern Kimberley region of Western Australia) to develop the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre, a dynamic inter-generational cultural knowledge transmission initiative aimed at recentralising the elders so that they can raise the community's children and youth with pride in their Indigenous identity.

Brian McCoy writes about researching with Indigenous men from what he calls a "Desert Experience" in **Chapter 12**. Brian suggests that while some research amongst Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is extensive, it is only in recent years that research has focused on Aboriginal men and what they understand about living healthily and well within a cultural and contemporary context. He describes his long history of involvement with a group of Aboriginal people in the desert region of the south-east Kimberley of Western Australia. This history, as also relationships he had formed with other Aboriginal communities, led him in 2001 to return to the desert. There, he sought to research with the men issues affecting their health. Using an ethnographic, grounded theory approach to research, as also an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, he describes the background of the research, how it developed, and how the results were later disseminated back to the men and their families. As a non-Aboriginal researcher, he also describes some of the particular problems he encountered when beginning the research process (not always from Aboriginal people), and how an ethical process developed to guide and monitor the research. He used a number of different research methods to listen to the "voice" of these desert men and their families. Apart from holding individual and group interviews, he also explored with men their use of art. Some of the traditionalist healers, and other men, offered paintings that described their health or the provision of healing to others. These came to form a significant part of his research. He contends that these paintings, as also the narrative style that many men adopted, revealed a fresh and new understanding of Aboriginal health set within a very specific geographical, gendered and historical context.

In **Chapter 13,** Carolyn Brooks, Jennifer Poudrier and Roanne Thomas-MacLean provide a critical appraisal of cross-cultural research, using the photovoice method with Aboriginal women. Photovoice is defined as a participatory action research method, as well as a process towards health promotion. Participants take pictures to document their realities and engage in critical reflection individually and in a group process, using images and stories to advocate community and policy changes. This chapter focuses on some of the methodological challenges and accomplishments associated with photovoice and their project entitled 'Visualising Breast Cancer'. Their participants were 12 Aboriginal survivors of breast cancer from Saskatchewan, Canada. Carolyn and colleagues discuss their collective successes as well as some of the responsibilities and risks of conducting research with Aboriginal women, including recruitment, participation, retention, community-building, advocacy and ethics. What they show us in this chapter is that interpretive boundaries and the 'truths' of qualitative research (relative to the research setting) add a further appraisal of the complexities of this type of qualitative research and the powerful lessons of research and unplanned happenings.

Elisabeth Gotschi, Bernhard Freyer and Robert Delve, in **Chapter 14**, present their research on participatory photography in cross-cultural research and make use of a case study which investigates farmer groups in rural Mozambique. Elisabeth and colleagues contend that visual tools are increasingly popular as alternative qualitative approaches for enriching and complementing quantitative studies, but also as a tool in its own right. The "participatory photography" methodology has been used for understanding group-formation processes, obtaining insights into group dynamics, social capital distribution, assessing and documenting tangible and visible impacts of development projects. They contend that putting cameras into the hands of people changes power relations between the researcher, the researched and between the researched themselves. From a methodological point of view, many questions arise: How to introduce the tool into the community? What guidelines to follow when training and accompanying a group during the process? How to analyse the multitude of data generated? And, finally, how to deal with ethical challenges? This chapter discusses the use of participatory photography in a cross-cultural research in Búzi district, Mozambique. The process they adopted consisted of three cycles of photography with eight farmer groups (11–35 members each) where they took pictures to analyse critically and collectively their group membership, required investments, problems they face, coping strategies and benefits/incentives from being in the group. Together as a group and in individual sessions, farmers explained their choice of picture and its interpretation of what it means to them. Handing cameras to people and observing how groups were handling the camera allowed insights into group processes and the ability of working together for a common purpose. It allowed further insights into group hierarchies and power distribution; in weak groups the introduction of participatory photography can cause conflicts and the researcher risks losing control over the process. However, the advantages, such as visualisation (e.g., of group activities and social realities), the incorporation of everyday knowledge and the active integration of various stakeholders in the research, outbalance the dangers and disadvantages. Elisabeth and colleagues found that observing group processes of handling photo cameras yields insights into new aspects of social capital (i.e., degree of mutual cooperation, solidarity and altruism, ability to handle the camera as a group). These insights, they suggest, can be used to develop indicators that describe the groups' maturity.

Erminia Colucci, in **Chapter 15**, talks about the use of focus groups in cross-cultural research. She contends that in spite of the diffusion of focus groups method across disciplines and in several areas of research, and although scholars have indicated the utility of this method in cross-cultural research and research with ethnic minority groups, focus groups have been used in this kind of study to a limited extent. One of the reasons for this might be due to the lack of confidence of the researcher in using this method in culturally diverse populations. Being culturally sensitive and, at the same time, pursuing data comparability, makes cross-cultural focus group research a difficult task that necessitates adequate preparation. In this chapter, Erminia presents advantages and possible pitfalls of the use of focus groups in cross-cultural research, referring to her recent experience as moderator of focus group discussions in Italy, India and Australia. She also provides suggestions and recommendations for the use of this method with culturally diverse groups, looking at the three phases of the focus groups process: planning, conducting and analysing/reporting.

Chapter 16 focuses on the use of vignettes in focus groups discussions in his research on HIV/AIDS among migrant and mobile men in Goa, India, and is written by Ajay Bailey. He contends that talking to men in India on sexuality in in-depth interviews is easier than in focus group discussions, and this he realised when he started the research on HIV/AIDS risk assessment. Hence, he introduced vignettes in the focus group discussion; they were derived from in-depth interviews which were real experiences of migrant and mobile men. The vignettes were localised by including names such as Lingappa – a name common for rural migrant men from north Karnataka – and by situating Lingappa in a migrant area in Goa. This projective technique yielded lively discussions about Lingappa. Ajay found that men were more vocal when they had to talk about this fictitious person. Men also shared with him other stories of people living with HIV/AIDS or about incidents relating to HIV/AIDS. Fieldwork was carried out in Goa, India, in 2004–2005. In this chapter, Ajay presents examples of the vignettes and some reactions to them. The use of the fictional people and the manner in which he culturally adapted the vignettes show that men could both identify with the character and find other anecdotes to make sense of the situation.

In **Chapter 17**, Guendalina Graffigna, Albino Claudio Bosio and Karin Olson tell us about their study on face-to-face versus online focus groups in two different countries. They pose the question: Do qualitative data collection strategies work the same way in different cultural contexts? Recently, there has been renewed interest in cross-cultural qualitative research underscoring the epistemological and methodological pitfalls implied in this kind of research. In particular, focus groups, because of their intrinsically relational nature, require an accurate analysis of how the setting influences interpersonal exchanges and people's attitudes towards participation and, thus, the results achieved. In this chapter, Guendalina and colleagues consider how the data collection medium framed the results of a study involving 16 focus groups on HIV/AIDS, 8 conducted with Italians and 8 with Canadians aged 18–25. The focus groups were designed to reflect four techniques (face-to-face, online forum, online chat, online forum+chat) and were distributed equally in the two countries. Data were analysed using software-based content analysis (T-lab), psychosocial discourse analysis, software-based discourse analysis (Atlas.ti) and conversational analysis. The different techniques had specific influences on the findings, which were fairly consistent between the two countries. They discuss the importance of these findings in cross-cultural qualitative studies, as researchers frequently make situated choices regarding data gathering in various settings according to their research objectives.

The last chapter in this volume, **Chapter 18**, is on refining the occupation of research across cultures and is presented by Anne Shordike, Clare Hocking, Soisuda Vittayakorn, Wannipa Bunrayong, Phuanjai Rattakorn, Valerie Wright-St. Clair and Doris Pierce. This chapter discusses an 8-year international collaboration involving research teams from three countries: New Zealand, Thailand and the United States. The purpose of this research was to explore and compare the meanings that the food-related occupations associated with potent cultural celebrations (Christmas and Songkran, the Thai New Year) hold for elder women. Anne and colleagues began with what seemed a straightforward multi-site study in three countries, and then found that the richness and complexity of the data and analysis required the development of methods to work across all three cultures. The team created and lived a lengthy and rigorous process as the methods were implemented and refined. This process was informed and enriched by their growing understanding of the participants' cultural uniqueness as well as their own cultural differences. They discuss their team process as they learned to communicate effectively and with integrity for their study. The team's development is illustrated with some of the data, methods and findings as they emerged. Anne and colleagues conclude their chapter with a summary of what was helpful to this team of international researchers to look across cultures in a trustworthy way.

About the Editor

Pranee Liamputtong is a Professor at the School of Public Health, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia. She has previously taught in the School of Sociology and Anthropology and worked as a public health research fellow at the Centre for the Study of Mothers' and Children's Health, La Trobe University.

Pranee's book *Qualitative research methods: A health focus* (with Douglas Ezzy, Oxford University Press, 1999) has been reprinted in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and the second edition of this book is titled *Qualitative Research Methods* (2005). Her new focus is on the use of the Internet in qualitative research and she has recently completed an edited book on *Health Research in Cyberspace: Methodological, Practical and Personal Issues*, which was published by Nova Science Publishers, New York, in 2006. Her new book, *Researching the Vulnerable: A Guide to Sensitive Research Methods*, was published by Sage, London, in 2007, and her book on *Undertaking Sensitive Research: Managing Boundaries, Emotions and Risk* (with Virginia Dickson-Swift and Erica James) was published by Cambridge University Press in 2008.

In her own research, Pranee has a particular interest in issues related to cultural and social influences on childbearing, childrearing and women's reproductive and sexual health. She has published a large number of papers in these areas, and her three books on these issues have been used widely in the health field: *My 40 Days: A Cross-Cultural Resource Book for Health Care Professionals in Birthing Services* (The Vietnamese Antenatal/Postnatal Support Project, 1993); *Asian Mothers, Australian Birth* (editor, Ausmed Publications, 1994); *Maternity and Reproductive Health in Asian Societies* (editors, with Lenore Manderson, Harwood Academic Press, 1996). Other recent books include: *Asian Mothers, Western Birth* (new edition of *Asian Mothers, Australian Birth*, Ausmed Publications, 1999); *Living in a New Country: Understanding Migrants' Health* (editor, Ausmed Publications, 1999); *Hmong Women and Reproduction* (Bergin & Garvey, 2000); *Coming of Age in South and Southeast Asia: Youth, Courtship and Sexuality* (editors, with Lenore Manderson, Curzon Press and Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (NIAS), 2002); and *Health, Social Change and Communities* (editors, with Heather Gardner, Oxford University Press, 2003). She published two books for Nova Science Publishers in 2007: *Reproduction, Childbearing and Motherhood: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, and *Childrearing and Infant Care Issues: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Her most recent book on *The Journey of Becoming a Mother Amongst Thai Women in Northern Thailand* was published by Lexington Books, Lanham, Maryland, in 2007. She has just completed a book for Oxford University Press which will be published in 2008: *Population Health, Communities and Health Promotion* (with Sansnee Jirojwong).

About the Contributors

Ajay Bailey is a research fellow at the Population Research Centre, University of Groningen. His Ph.D. research is on ‘Risk assessment of HIV/AIDS among migrants and mobile men in India’. He has experience in conducting in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and small-scale surveys. He is an anthropologist by background and holds a Master’s degree in Anthropology from the University of Pune, India, and a Master in Population Studies from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His publications include: Bailey, A. and I. Hutter (2006), Cultural heuristics in risk assessment of HIV/AIDS. *Culture Health & Sexuality* 8(5): 465–477.

Albino Claudio Bosio is Professor of Consumer and Marketing Psychology, Applied Social Research, and Qualitative Methods at the Faculty of Psychology, Università Cattolica, Milan, Italy. At the same university he is also scientific director of the Master in Qualitative Methods for Social and Marketing Research. He has published more than a hundred scientific publications on the subject of health care, prevention, public opinion and methodological issues in quantitative and qualitative research. In addition to his academic achievements, he has been a researcher in GfK-Eurisko, Milan, since 1975, where he is now executing the role of vice-president. Since 2006, he has been directing the Centre for Research Training in ASSIRM (Italian Association of Social and Marketing Research Institutes).

Caroline Bradbury-Jones qualified as a nurse in 1983 and then as a midwife in 1988. She practised as a health visitor for 10 years in both rural and urban communities in England before moving into nursing education about 6 years ago. She is now a lecturer in adult nursing at the Bangor University, Bangor. She teaches on several modules and has a particular interest in teaching public health, health promotion and research. She has a Master’s degree in Education and is in the second year of her Ph.D. studies. In 2005, She was awarded a Research Training Fellowship by Health Professions Wales which allowed her to undertake a qualitative study of student nurse empowerment utilising the Critical Incident Technique. She has an interest in cross-cultural research and has just co-authored a paper that reports on a comparative study of the experiences of empowerment between student nurses in the UK and Japan. She has published in an edited book by contributing a chapter on Early Childhood Studies.

Carolyn Brooks is currently a Ph.D. student in Sociology at the University of Saskatchewan. She worked as an instructor of sociology and criminology at the University of Saskatchewan, St. Thomas More College and St. Peter's College for the previous 12 years, and in non-governmental organisations related to justice. Her Ph.D. dissertation uses the new empowering method of photovoice, informed by anti-oppressive theories, to develop a contextual understanding of the meaning of breast cancer survivorship for Aboriginal women. Her main teaching and theoretical interests are in social control and justice – exploring issues such as globalisation and punishment, restorative justice and women in trouble. She is the co-editor of *Marginality and Condemnation: An Introduction to Critical Criminology* and has published a number of articles on critical criminological theory and punishment and social control.

Wannipa Bunrayong completed her BS in Occupational Therapy and Master's degree in Mental Health. She is currently working on her dissertation, which focuses on participatory learning processes with the elderly. She works with The Aging Center in Chiang Mai to enable older adults to reach their potentials and to manage their own centers within the changing social context of Thailand. She has almost 20 years of teaching experience with occupational therapy students in both theory and clinical practice, as well as work with people in communities. Her teaching area is Occupational Therapy for Older People.

Erminia Colucci obtained her Ph.D. from The University of Queensland. Since February 2006 she has been a visiting scholar in the Centre for the International Mental Health (CIMH), University of Melbourne. The focus of her Ph.D. was on the cross-cultural meaning of youth suicide (partially supported by UQ Travel Award) and she carried out her research in India (Trivandrum and Bangalore), Italy (Padua) and Australia (Brisbane). In the last years of her study she was working part-time on spirituality and suicide and hold series of seminars on youth suicide for the Department of Psychology, Padua University, Italy. For the same university, she also supervises Honours students and trainees in research. Her main interests are in Suicidology (particularly youth suicide), the ethnocultural aspects of suicide and, more in general, of mental illness and well-being (especially meanings and social constructions, spirituality, stigma, help-seeking strategies and traditional healing), and in Anthropology, the use of arts in research and therapy and qualitative methodology (particularly focus groups, ethnography and narrative analysis).

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Robert Schweitzer currently directs the Clinical Psychology Program at the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. He has been involved in mental health and refugee research over the past 4 years and is on the Advisory Committee of the Queensland Integrated Refugee Community Clinic. He has recently published the first study of the mental health of refugees from Sudan. His expertise in methodology includes advanced qualitative approaches to data explication. This is evidenced by his Ph.D. utilising a phenomenological approach to understanding healing as practised by the Nguni peoples of Southern Africa. Robert has a long history in researching meanings within cultural contexts. He is currently engaged in a collaborative research programme examining refugee issues. He is also the founding editor of the electronic journal *Indo Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*.

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Chapter 1
Doing Research in a Cross-Cultural Context: Methodological and Ethical Challenges

Pranee Liamputtong

Abstract Conducting cross-cultural research is rife with methodological and ethical challenges. Researchers are challenged with many issues when carrying out their research with people in cross-cultural arenas. This chapter serves to set the scene of this book and points to several salient issues in doing research in cross-cultural settings. I aim firstly to provide discussion on the essence of cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural research. I will then discuss matters relating to language issues and the use of bicultural researchers in cross-cultural research. I shall suggest strategies to gain access to research participants in cross-cultural research. Lastly, I will examine moral and ethical issues in cross-cultural research, and discuss the thorny subject of informed consent in cross-cultural research.

Keywords Cross-cultural research, Ethical challenge, Methodological challenge, Language issue, Bi-cultural researcher, Accessing research participant, Moral issue, Informed consent, Trust and rapport.

1.1 Introduction

Cross-cultural research has been an important part of anthropological discipline. Researchers within this discipline have worked with people in different social and cultural settings, using mainly ethnography as their method of data collection. Despite this, discussions on culturally sensitive methodologies are largely absent from the literature on qualitative and ethnographic methods. As a result, researchers who are working within socially responsible projects often confront many challenges with very little information on how to deal with these difficulties.

Many researchers have also started to conduct research in a cross-cultural context. It is imperative that researchers ensure that their research is conducted ethically and take into account the cultural norms so that their research may not harm

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but benefit local people (Borkan et al. 2000; Liamputtong 2007). But, there has not been any discussion on performing sensitive cross-cultural research. Similarly, the presence of indigenous populations in countries such as Canada, the US, New Zealand and Australia has a great ramification for social researchers. These indigenous peoples have been colonised, damaged and have become marginalised in their own native lands (Smith 1999, 2005). Due to concern about reducing inequalities between the indigenous peoples and the "white" populations, there have been attempts to include these vulnerable people in the research arenas (Bishop 2005; Smith 1999, 2005). Again, it is only recently that we have started to see some discussions concerning research with indigenous peoples in the literature.

In conducting cross-cultural research, it has been found that it is rife with methodological and ethical challenges. Some salient issues will be discussed in this chapter. I aim firstly to provide discussion on the essence of cultural sensitivity in cross-cultural research. I shall then discuss issues relating to language and the use of bicultural researchers in cross-cultural research, and suggest strategies to gain access to research participants in cross-cultural research. Lastly, I will examine moral and ethical issues in cross-cultural research, and discuss the thorny aspect of informed consent in dealing with cross-cultural research.

1.2 Cultural Sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity is an important issue in conducting research with people from different cultures (Weinfurt and Maghaddam 2001; Papadopoulos and Lees 2002; Hall and Kulig 2004; Birman 2005; dé Ishtar 2005a, b). Cultural sensitivity is referred to as knowing the cultural context of the group with whom the researchers wish to work. The researcher "demonstrates cultural sensitivity and competence through knowing key values and stakeholders". They need to also "exhibit culturally appropriate communication and willingness to learn" (Eide and Allen 2005: 4). See also Chapters 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 in this volume.

Doing cross-cultural research necessitates the acquisition of cultural knowledge of the social group that researchers wish to learn from (Papadopoulos and Lees 2002; Hall and Kulig 2004; Birman 2005; Struthers and Peden-McAlpine 2005). This means researchers must have a thorough understanding and knowledge of the culture which includes extensive knowledge of "social, familial, cultural, religious, historical and political backgrounds" (Jackson and Mead Niblo 2003: 24). In some situations, communication styles such as asking questions may also impact on the data collected. This may involve some intensive training on cross-cultural issues (Laverack and Brown 2003), but it is only by immersion in the particular culture that researchers may have an in-depth and accurate understanding of the cultural groups. This necessitates a long-term relationship with, or a long stay within, the group (Corbie-Smith et al. 2002; Meadows et al. 2003; Sixsmith et al. 2003; dé Ishtar 2005a, b, c; Eide and Allen 2005). For researchers who share social and cultural characteristics, this may not be too problematic, but there are many subtle issues that they may need to take into consideration (see Izugbara 2000; Papadopoulos and Lees 2002; Ezeh 2003).

In conducting cross-cultural research, there are several cultural sensitivities to be carefully considered (Laverack and Brown 2003). Cross-cultural researchers need to have the following skills and qualities for the success of their research: “tolerance for ambiguity, patience, adaptiveness, capacity for tacit learning and courtesy” (Laverack and Brown 2003: 334). Researchers need to prepare for some practical issues including respect for cultural beliefs and practices of the research participants. For example, in a group discussion in Fiji, research participants may be seated according to their status. This means those with a higher status will be seated in the front and those with less status will be placed in the back. This may create some problems with interaction in the group, but it is up to the skill of the moderator to ensure full participation from all members of the group. Some participants may turn up late at the interview sites and the procedure may go slowly. This may be due to a perception of time in this cultural setting which Laverack and Brown refer to as “Fiji time”. Glenn Laverack and Kevin Brown (2003: 340) elaborate: “Fiji time means that priorities are different in different cultural contexts. The social ceremonies and customs of Fiji are of great importance and can take precedence over ‘just getting things done’. A casual pace is taken as a normal part of rural Fijian life, and plans can be changed at short notice” (see also Chapters 5, 15 and 16 in this volume). Laverack and Brown suggest that researchers working in a cross-cultural context must be flexible in order to accommodate an uncertain and different time frame of the local cultural group.

In cross-cultural research, asking questions can also be problematic with certain groups. Christopher Dunbar et al. (2002: 294) assert that researchers need not only to ask culturally sensitive questions, but also to “ask questions in a culturally relevant and explicit manner”. If researchers are not cautious about this, it can jeopardise their research process and, worse, the data collected may be inaccurate. In their research regarding education with black young people in the US, Dunbar et al. (2002: 294) tell us that when they asked Bobby, one of the participants, if anyone at home helped him with his homework or prompted him to go to sleep at a reasonable time, Bobby said: “Wat yu trying to say, Mr. Dunbar, dat dare’s somtin’ wrong with my family?” Dunbar et al. (2002: 294) point out that the majority of poor African American children have been “interviewed, tested, incarcerated, restrained, denied, abused, lied to, and misled” too often that they learn to have “a keen ear for what is being asked *implicitly*”. Some children will question what they have been asked, but others might say what they think the researchers want to hear.

It is also important to point out that researching people from a cross-cultural perspective requires more time for the project to be completed (Winslow et al. 2002; Meadows et al. 2003; Laverack and Brown 2003; Hall and Kulig 2004; Birman 2005). It may take a considerably longer time to gain access to the potential participants, building trust and rapport, collecting data and other involvements after the fieldwork is done. This “extra” time needs to be acknowledged when writing a research proposal and applying for funding.

To collect excellent and reliable data from individuals from different cultures, researchers need to develop a trusting relationship with their research participants and establish a good rapport maintaining cultural sensitivity. This should be developed before any interviews take place as well as throughout the life of the research (Corbie-Smith et al. 2002; Papadopoulos and Lees 2002; Ryen 2002; Laverack and Brown 2003; Hall and Kulig 2004; Sin 2004; Fisher and Ragsdale 2005; Smith 2005). As Chih Hoong Sin (2004) suggests, when undertaking research with minority ethnic older people, researchers must spend time building up trust and rapport with the participants. Similarly, Phylliss Eide and Carol Allen (2005) point out that, developing trust is more crucial, but it can also be more difficult when the researcher and the participant do not share the same culture. This is particularly so if the researcher is from a group that has historically been an oppressor or coloniser of the potential participant group. In this case, building up trust can be difficult and requires more time (Lindenberg et al. 2001; Corbie-Smith et al. 2002).

There are several practical ways that researchers might adopt to build up this relationship. Respect for the research participants is one essential issue (Smith 2000, 2005). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000: 242) asks researchers to show respect for indigenous peoples like the Mäori by showing their willingness “to listen, to be humble, to be cautious, to avoid flaunting knowledge, and to avoid trampling over the *mama* of people”.

Some practical aspects such as sharing meals and becoming involved in family activities are good strategies for establishing rapport and good relationship (Liamputtong Rice 2000). In my work, after my interviews with ethnic women in Melbourne, I was often invited to stay on to share meals with the women and their families. I accepted their invitations without reluctance. By accepting such invitations, it helps the researcher to form a more trusting relationship with the participants. This has been my real-life experience. Many times, I would be invited to travel with the women on their community outings. Women would also ask me to be involved more in their daily lives, particularly when it was something to do with children, not only theirs but mine too.

It is also imperative to have a team that includes members of the local community. A person who is working closely with the local people will be most suitable for cross-cultural research (see Benatar and Singer 2000; Lindenberg et al. 2001; Michaud et al. 2001; Laverack and Brown 2003; Redmond 2003; Hall and Kulig 2004; Birman 2005). As Eide and Allen (2005: 2) suggest, research which will benefit the local group must be developed and carried out in collaboration with local members. This can be done when the researchers get to know, and are also known by, community members and their leaders. They suggest that in some Aboriginal communities such as Hawaiians and Micronesians, “knowing and being known are crucial to every activity”. This “knowing and being known” will accommodate research entry and success in recruiting potential research participants in these cultural groups. See Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 in this volume.

Some researchers have tried to overcome cultural insensitivity by establishing an advisory committee for the research project consisting of members of the cultural groups or who have extensive knowledge about the group. This committee can assist the research team with a range of issues (Small et al. 1999a, b; Hall and Kulig 2004; Gibson et al. 2005; Molzahn et al. 2005). A study on beliefs about organ donations amongst Chinese Canadians was carried out by Anita Molzahn and colleagues (2005). They were assisted by a Chinese Canadian advisory committee which was formed essentially because all members of the research team were white. The committee provided advice on the selection of research participants, strategies to recruit the participants and how to elicit good information from the participants, for data analysis and validation of the results.

I was one of the chief investigators in the Mothers in a New Country (MINC) project conducted with immigrant women in Melbourne, Australia (Small et al. 1999a, b). We established a Reference Group to advise us with our project. The Group broadened the research team's expertise in researching three immigrant groups of women: the Filipino, Turkish and Vietnamese. The Group comprised advocates from all three immigrant groups and one invited community member. The Group assisted us with the selection of bicultural researchers, translation of research tools, training programme, interpretations of research data and dissemination process. I found the Group proved to be an invaluable aspect of the success of our cross-cultural research.

1.3 Language Issues and Bicultural Researchers

It has been suggested that researchers who undertake cross-cultural research should be an "insider", meaning only those who share social, cultural and linguistic characteristics as the research participants would be suitable to do so (see Smith 1999; Brayboy and Deyhle 2000; Merriam et al. 2001; Tillman 2002; Hall and Kulig 2004; Bishop 2005; see also Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume). This will reduce cultural and linguistic barriers. Russell Bishop (2005: 111) argues that "cultural 'insiders' might well undertake research in a more sensitive and responsive manner than 'outsiders'". Dina Birman (2005: 172) puts it succinctly that "cultural insiders have the additional advantage over outsiders because they have facility with the language and culture that allows them access to the cultural community, which can be extremely difficult to gain even by sensitive and knowledgeable outsiders". Esther Madriz (1998) contends that sharing the same race and ethnicity as the participants assisted her in establishing rapport and hence increased the willingness of participants to respond to her research. Participants tend to believe that they have common experiences and viewpoints with the researchers who share the same race or ethnic background. Josephine Beoku-Betts, for example, is a black West African female researcher. In her study with the Gullah women (African American women residing in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia) (1994: 416), one participant told her that she preferred to have a black scholar, like Beoku-Betts, to carry out research in her community because "black scholars have a sense of soul for our people because they have lived through it".

It has been suggested that research participants provide their "best" accounts to researchers who share social and cultural characteristics (Adamson and Donovan 2002). But, this may not be so in all cases. There have been some discussions of difficulties faced by researchers who have the same social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds as those of research participants (see e.g., Bhopal 2001; Izugbara 2000; Phellas 2000; Dunbar et al. 2002; Ezeh 2003). Also, as Bishop (2005) suggests, insiders may be biased, and they can be too close to the culture to ask essential questions.

Nevertheless, Esther Madriz (1998) contends that sharing a social and cultural background will reduce the distance between both parties and in her thinking, language is the most important element. This enhances the pace of participation and the success of the research. In her study, one woman told her: “I would not have come if we were going to speak English. I speak very little English. Besides, it makes me shy” (p. 5). Before accepting to participate, another woman asked the recruiter if the interview would be in Spanish.

The most common difficulty encountered by “outsider” cross-cultural researchers is the inability to speak the local language (Laverack and Brown 2003; Temple and Edwards 2002). Typically then, a bicultural research assistant is employed to work on the research project to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in cross-cultural research (see Small et al. 1999a, b; Maynard-Tucker 2000; Lindenberg et al. 2001; Ahmad et al. 2004; Tsai et al. 2004; Hall and Kulig 2004; Gibson et al. 2005). Bicultural researchers share not only the language with the participants, but also many social and cultural aspects. They are people who are likely to have the best of knowledge of the groups. See Chapter 3 in this volume.

Some researchers may choose to work with an interpreter or translator in cross-cultural research (see Edwards 1998; Spicer 2005; see also Chapter 2 in this volume). This may not be as efficient as working with a bicultural worker and some researchers have reported difficulties associated with working with interpreters (Ryen 2002). Interpreters are often worked for short periods and they rarely become involved in the research (Temple 1997; Edwards 1998; Jentsch 1998; Adamson and Donovan 2002; Temple 2002; Tsai et al. 2004). Therefore, they do not have a full understanding of the research aims and questions. It is well known that “concepts do not always exist across cultures and languages” (Tsai et al. 2004: 8; Michaud et al. 2001; Lange 2002; Marston 2005). In qualitative research, the context is extremely important and, without it, misunderstanding can easily arise. This problem tends to occur when working with an interpreter. But, as I have suggested, concepts can move problematically across cultures. We cannot assume that because an individual speaks a particular language, he or she can represent a culture. Being able to speak the language may be insufficient in cross-cultural research.

As such, Adamson and Donovan (2002) and Temple and Edwards (2002) argue for more involvement by interpreters and translators in cross-cultural qualitative research. Bogusia Temple and Rosalind Edwards (2002: 3) suggest that in order to undertake sensitive and meaningful research with people who speak little or no English, the researchers must discuss important issues in their research with the interpreter with whom they are working. Joy Adamson and Jenny Donovan (2002: 823) strongly advocate this. From their experiences, they suggest that it would be better if researchers work with fewer interpreters, but more frequently. This way, each interpreter has a good opportunity to be more familiar with the particular research process as well as to be more knowledgeable about the nature of the information to be collected. Therefore, it is important that the interpreter must fully understand the research questions and the process of research prior to undertaking any data collection. A debrief after each interview is essential because the researcher and interpreter have an immediate opportunity to talk about the particular interview, the data collected and any observations which could be essential for the interpretation of their findings. Edwards (1998) recommends that an interpreter needs to have a clear understanding of his or her role and hence a training or induction process is needed. In this way, the interpreter will be sensitive to the research topic and objectives. In fact, Edwards (1998) suggests that the interpreter should form part of the research and should be made more visible in research projects.

When language is a concern in cross-cultural research, the use of professionally trained translators is essential (Esposito 2001). However, some writers have challenged this notion. Temple (2002: 846) contends: "[T]ranslation is more than an exchange of words from one language to another. Translators, as much as researchers, produce texts from their own perspective." If the translators are aware of the issues relating to the research areas and if they consider these issues in their translation process, non-professional interpreters/translators can be as good as the professional ones (Temple and Edwards 2002). See more discussion on language in Chapters 2 and 3 in this volume.

1.4 Gaining Access to Participants

Gaining access to research participants in some situations can be problematic (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005; Liamputtong 2007). This is also applicable to research participants in cross-cultural research. In some cases, it may even be more problematic because of the involvement of cultural differences. Phyllis Eide (in Eide and Allen 2005: 2) undertook research on aboriginal Hawaiian women and breast cancer in the state of Hawaii. Originally, she planned to recruit potential participants through orthodox means of letters and posters/flyers, but this proved to be inefficient. Fortunately, her supervisor introduced her to the clinic nurse, who was known and trusted by her targeted group. Eide (in Eide and Allen 2005: 5) relied on the "knowing the person" concept for her recruitment. She strongly suggested that "not only must the researcher know about the group being studied, he or she must be known by at least some group members to gain access that allows for trust building". Hence, having many connections with community members or the culture is extremely beneficial. Often, potential research participants want to identify a common person whom they themselves and the researcher know as a way for them to check the researcher's credibility and trustworthiness.

Very often, researchers gain access to their potential participants through relationship with community leaders or stakeholders. Stakeholders may include formal and informal group leaders, service providers, business people and residents who have an interest in the particular community (Sixsmith et al. 2003; Hall and Kulig 2004; Sin 2005). These stakeholders help researchers to develop important links with the community and to identify and respond to important issues and situations within the community. Wendy Winslow and colleagues (2002) approached the Abu Dhabi Women's Association, an organisation that provides the education and domestic skills to care for family to Emirati women who left school early, to recruit women to participate in their focus group research. The Association was a place where these women congregated for their educational and social gatherings. It was an ideal place for focus groups, as it reduced problems with transportation for the women who participated in this study.

However, stakeholders may also act as gatekeepers who control access to community members (Groger et al. 1999; Sixsmith et al. 2003). When Thomas (1990: 8–9), in her study with Afro-Caribbean older people, attempted to recruit people at a West Indian centre, the centre supervisor told her that these elders are fed up with researchers who come to ask them about their life histories, because there have been too many who have done so. One member of the centre even said this to her: "[W]e hope you are not one of those who want to come and ask endless questions. If you are, forget it! We have given enough already".

Chih Hoong Sin (2004) suggests that researchers who work with older people from ethnic communities should not rely on a particular organisation for the contact. They need to work with community organisations that provide different aspects of social, cultural and welfare needs of ethnic older people because different groups within ethnic communities may have contacts with, or seek help from, different community organisations. Karen Aroian and colleagues (2005), in their study on the use of health and social service among Chinese immigrant elders, initially recruited the participants from two social service agencies that cater for Chinese elders in the greater Boston area. However, they realised that recruiting participants from service agencies would only yield elders who used the services. They, therefore, attempted to recruit elders who did not use the service by means of network sampling. This means those who were participating in the study were asked to suggest elders who were not using services at the two initial recruitment agencies. With this alternative approach, they succeeded in recruiting nine elders and three adult children in their study.

Phyllis Eide and Carol Allen (2005) propose that potential participants may be recruited by a "cultural broker". Cultural brokers are people who serve as "links between individuals or groups who are culturally different" (2005: 6). They have an understanding and sympathy of the values and social issues of the relevant cultures. As such, cultural brokers "bring people together and reduce misunderstandings and conflict". Cultural brokers can also assist the researcher to make contact with potential research participants. Janice Crist and Socorro Escandón-Dominguez (2003: 267) suggest that the knowledge of the cultural brokers is "valuable in helping the researcher enter the culture, learn how to understand behaviors, avoid social errors, and sustain good relationships". They also help to refer potential participants for the study. But, similar to gatekeepers and stakeholders, cultural brokers may also deny researchers access to cultural groups.

As in recruiting strategy with any hard-to-reach group, snowballing seems to be appropriate for cross-cultural research, particularly when researchers work through cultural brokers or community leaders (Adamson and Donovan 2002; Lu et al. 2005). The researcher or the cultural broker may commence with a group of people they know and recruit more potential participants through contacts of the original group members (Eide and Allen 2005). The potential pool of research participants can be enlarged this way (Miles and Huberman 1994). Eide and Allen (2005: 6) remark: "[T]his is an effective method of helping the researcher to be known to others by the process of positive recommendation. … Snowballing provides opportunities for the culture broker and participants to vouch for the cultural competency of the researcher to new contacts." Yun Lu and others (2005: 1152) conducted research with rural Chinese who contracted AIDS through selling blood. Lu, as a principal researcher, made contact with an advocate for AIDS orphans through the Beijing Research Office. He was then introduced to five key persons of the village and three became his gatekeepers who assisted him with access to potential participants within the village. Their initial recruitment led to snowball sampling groups; villagers heard about the research and were invited to participate. When they arrived at the first participant's home, about 30 people were waiting to take part in the research. The potential participants told Lu and colleagues that when they learnt from the gatekeepers that some "kind-hearted, learned people" need villagers to help them with their research, they told the gatekeepers that they wanted to be included because "they wanted their stories to be heard". Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 in this volume have also discussed this issue.

1.5 Moral and Ethical Issues

Researchers have questioned the moral and ethical conduct of researchers in cross-cultural settings (Macklin 2004; Marshall and Batten 2004; Smith 2005). Some of the major concerns regarding cross-cultural research include exploitation, damage to the community group and reporting of inaccurate research findings (Freimuth et al. 2001; Leaning 2001; Corbie-Smith et al. 2002; Macklin 2004; Bishop 2005; Fisher and Ragsdale 2005; Smith 2005). Although these moral issues can be applicable to people in general, those from different cultural settings may be affected more due to many complicated historical, political, social and cultural agendas (Mulder et al. 2000; Freimuth et al. 2001; Macklin 2004; Birman 2005; Smith 2005; Barata et al. 2006). Dina Birman (2005: 197) points to the moral and ethical issues in research which involve undocumented immigrants in the US. She suggests that these people may be identified by authorities by their involvement in research. This will lead to their prosecution and deportation. The question is then: Is it morally and ethically just that researchers should include these people in their research? When embarking on any cross-cultural research, but particularly research concerning the historically marginalised groups, Joy Adamson and Jenny Donovan (2002: 822) argue that the most important question that researchers need to ask is about the relevance of their research to the cultural groups and the likely outcomes. Research can only be justified if the outcome will benefit the community rather than further damaging it (Benatar and Singer 2000; Macklin 2004; Leaning 2001; Smith 2005).

Phyllis Eide and Carol Allen (2005: 5) suggest that aboriginal communities tend to have a negative view about research processes and outcomes. These groups, such as native Hawaiians and Micronesians, have been exploited by White *Haole* researchers who turned up at their communities to collect information about their personal and professional goals without sharing the results with, and providing benefits of the research to, the group they researched. Thus, these people could not see if and how the research benefited, or harmed, them. These experiences have led to resistance to participation in research among these groups (see also Bishop 2005; Smith 2005). Researchers must plan their projects to ensure that the results are available to the communities and that the individual participants have an opportunity to validate the findings. Adamson and Donovan (2002: 823) suggest that bringing back the research results to the community for feedback is essential if researchers wish to reduce the likelihood of ethnocentric interpretations of their findings, which have resulted in damage to the community groups (see also Hall and Kulig 2004; Gibson et al. 2005; Shin et al. 2005). This attempt will benefit both the research participant and the researcher.

The way research results are disseminated is also an important moral and ethical issue in cross-cultural research. Barry Hall and Judith Kulig (2004: 366) undertook an innovative dissemination process in their research with Kanadier Menonites. They created an audiotape which provided an easy-to-understand summary of the research findings. They recorded one side of the tape in English and another in Low German. They intended to ensure that the Kanadier Mennonites would have access to the research results, and that they could listen to it at the time that suited them. By recording one side in English, they also hoped that the English language skills of these people would be improved. Those who heard the tape found it useful, and people shared the information from the tape with their neighbours and friends who did not wish to use the technology. Hall and Kulig (2004: 366) contend that researchers must be innovative in their attempt to get the results to the study groups "without compromising their belief systems". See other aspects of ethical issues in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 in this volume.

1.6 Informed Consent in Cross-Cultural Research: A Thorny Issue!

In its current practice, a signed consent form is required from individual participants (Hoeyer et al. 2005). However, in some circumstances and with some cultural and ethnic groups, obtaining a signed consent form can be a challenging task or it can be problematic (Macklin 2004; Bishop 2005; Dawson and Kass 2005; Birman 2005; Smith 2005; see also Chapter 9). It is also a moral and ethical issue, particularly in research concerning ethnic minorities (see Gostin 1995; Barata et al. 2006) and indigenous peoples (see Smith 1999, 2000, 2005).

Additionally, written consent can be intimidating to many cultural and ethnic groups, particularly those who are doubly vulnerable like refugees (Fluehr-Lobban 1998; Hennings et al. 1996; Birman 2005). For refugees, Birman (2005) contends, the promise of anonymous participation is taken away by the need to sign informed consent forms and this may create fears about loss of confidentiality among research participants. I had a similar problem when I conducted research with Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian refugees in Australia. Their reluctance to sign an informed consent stemmed mainly from negative experiences of living under the communist regimes and their difficulties in attempting to resettle in a third country, when they had to sign countless forms, and most often their attempts were not successful (Liamputtong Rice 1996).

Some cultural and ethnic groups may also be illiterate even in their own language (see Fluehr-Lobban 1998; Winslow et al. 2002; Dawson and Kass 2005; Lu et al. 2005; Smith 2005; Barata et al. 2006). Hence, signing an informed consent can be difficult for them, as they may not fully understand what is said on the form. In international collaborative research, where cultural differences and language barriers exist, obtaining informed consent is particularly challenging (Dawson and Kass 2005). These types of problems may result in a refusal from potential participants to take part in the research (Macklin 2000; Molyneux et al. 2004, 2005). Researchers need to take this into consideration when working with people from a cross-cultural perspective.

Under these circumstances, it would be appropriate and sensible if the details of the consent are read out to the participant and a verbal consent is secured, and this can be done by recording into a tape recorder prior to the interview (see also Liamputtong Rice 1996; Winslow et al. 2002; Meadows et al. 2003; Dawson and Kass 2005; Eide and Allen 2005; Lu et al. 2005; Molyneux et al. 2005; Barata et al. 2006). The Emerati women in the research by Winslow and colleagues (2002) were illiterate, and hence oral informed consent was given by the women. In a study with Aboriginal women Meadows and colleagues (2003: 6) adopted oral consent, which follows the oral traditions of Aboriginal peoples. The Aboriginal committee also required them to make the process of securing informed consent as unintrusive as possible. In their study of the meaning of death as experienced by elderly women of a Korean clan, Kyung Rim Shin and others (2005: 7–8) also used verbal consent. As most of the elderly women were illiterate due to their lack of formal education, permissions for the researchers to undertake interviews and to participate in their live events were given verbally in preference to writing. Yun Lu and colleagues (2005: 1152), in their research on AIDS in rural China, learnt that their potential participants were illiterate. They developed "a voice signature consent system" to go with their written consent form. The Chinese research assistants read the consent form to the participants, and once they agreed, they were asked to speak to the video camera with the message "I agree to participate in this study".

Solomon Benatar and Peter Singer (2000: 825) advocate that for any ethically grounded cross-cultural research, informed consent must be obtained in the local language of the participants and "with an understanding of their world view or value system". In Kathleen Ragsdale's research in Belize with sex workers (cited in Fisher and Ragsdale 2005), informed consent was administered in Spanish with a clear indication that the women could refuse to answer any question and terminate the interview at any time. She made sure that the women were fully informed about their rights as research participants and she made a special effort to inform her interpreter not to rush this process.

It is suggested that informed consent in cross-cultural research should be written simply (Crigger et al. 2001; Birman 2005; Meadows et al. 2003). In a study with Aboriginal women, Meadows and colleagues (2003) sought permission from their institutional ethics review board to use a simple, one-page informed consent form. The form essentially contains study information which is written in an easy-to-read format and omits some standard clauses regarding injury and liability required by the university. They argue that these standard clauses "are awkward and at times disconcerting, raising issues such as harm from the research and cost of subsequent treatment" (p. 5). They adopted a similar approach in other studies concerning marginalised groups including immigrant women and women with disabilities (see also Laverack and Brown 2003; Birman 2005; Eide and Allen 2005).

Some writers point to the fact that within some cultural groups, an informed consent has to be obtained from significant others rather than from the potential research participants. For example, women in some societies cannot participate in research unless their husbands give consent to do so (see Loue et al. 1996; Leflar 1997; Macklin 2000, 2004). In other cultural groups (like in villages or tribes where traditional chiefs are influential), consent may have to be obtained from community leaders (Meadows et al. 2003; Macklin 2004; Marshall and Batten 2004; Dawson and Kass 2005; Molyneux et al. 2005). This has led to some heated debate over the rights of an individual in cross-cultural research. However, researchers have argued that such a practice is justified by the social and cultural context of the country where the research is being undertaken (Macklin 2000, 2004). Natalie Piquemal (2001) points to potential problems in attempting to identify the legitimate person who can give informed consent for all members within an aboriginal nation. Anne Marshall and Suzanne Batten (2004: 3) point out that some tribal councils are distanced and mistrusted by members of the community. In cases like these, it is unethical and illegitimate for researchers to obtain consent from the authority of the community.

But, within indigenous research ethics, particularly those of the Kaupapa Mäori research, collective consent is more culturally appropriate than individual consent (Bishop 2005; Smith 2000, 2005). This is obviously not in line with the principle of informed consent that is based on the right of individuals to give consent (Smith 2005: 99). Research ethics with indigenous peoples like the Mäori, Smith (2000: 241) asserts, go further beyond individual consent and confidentiality. As Clifford Christians (2005: 157) puts it: "[T]he characters of various indigenous peoples are rooted in a participatory mode of knowing and presumed collective, not individual, rights." The collective rights, Norman Denzin (2003: 257) suggests, include "control and ownership of the community's cultural property … and the rights of indigenous peoples to protect their culture's new knowledge and its dissemination". This characteristic has ramifications for the way researchers may secure informed consent within indigenous communities.

In cross-cultural research, researchers would argue for more emphasis on trust building, reciprocity and rapport than the mechanistic process of securing informed consent (see Fluehr-Lobban 1994, 1998, 2003; Denzin 2003; Christians 2005; Barata et al. 2006). Indeed, in cross-cultural research examining people's perceptions on research participation and informed consent conducted by Paula Barata and colleagues (2006) with Portuguese Canadian and Caribbean Canadian immigrants in Canada, the important themes which emerged from the participants were trust and mistrust. The participants expressed their concerns regarding fear of exploitation and issues of mistrust which would deter them from participating in research. They also wanted to have more information before agreeing to take part and signing the consent form. A similar type of concern has prompted Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (1994, 1998, 2003) to advocate for an open and sincere process of securing informed consent from research participants in cross-cultural research. Fluehr-Lobban (1998: 185) contends: "[T]he genesis of informed consent and its guiding spirit is that of openness and disclosure in research practice." When applying the spirit of informed consent to cross-cultural research, it requires that the researchers openly discuss the methods and likely research outcome with the research participants. This will allow the establishment of an open relationship between the researcher and the researched. Ideally, informed consent discloses a two-way channel of communication, and, once disclosed, information and ideas will continuously flow.

In their interviews with researchers working in cross-cultural research, Liza Dawson and Nancy Kass (2005) propose three different models of securing informed consent in cross-cultural research: regulatory, individual and community models. Researchers who adopt the regulatory paradigm (adhere to the standard written format of informed consent in any social and cultural setting) will ensure that the written consent form is correctly used and approved. Usually, the consent form will be translated and back-translated to ensure that the form remains accurate in "its intended sense" (Dawson and Kass 2005: 1213). However, researchers also call for more flexible consent regulations in cross-cultural research and they suggest that members of any ethics committee need to be more knowledgeable about the social and cultural context of the research setting.

Researchers who advocate the individual paradigm suggest that the process of informed consent needs to occur at an individual level. Due to cultural differences, limited education and unfamiliarity with research, the participants may have difficulties in understanding the concept of research (see Benetar 2001; Molyneux et al. 2004, 2005, Turner 2005). Under these circumstances, the researchers need to tailor their communication style to suit the local setting. Dawson and Kass (2005) suggest that researchers may use community meetings to inform potential participants and have a local health worker to adopt "a conversational approach" instead of reading an information sheet before asking the participants to participate in the research at these meetings. Some researchers suggest that informed consent needs to be prepared as "an ongoing communication intervention, using various media to convey messages over a period of time" (Dawson and Kass 2005: 1217–1218).

The researchers who argue for the need for the community paradigm in cross-cultural research rather than adhering to the principle of informed consent in Western research suggest that respecting individuals and their choices is an essential part of ongoing relationships between the researchers, their collaborators and communities where research is carried out. The respect of individuals necessitates the researchers to pay closer attention to the social and cultural contexts in which individuals and families belong (Dawson and Kass 2005; see also Turner 1998, 2005; Tangwa 2004 for their arguments regarding making informed consent relevant to local cultural settings).

Cross-cultural research ethics, Anne Marshall and Suzanne Batten (2004: 2) contend, "cannot be singly defined because each group has its own conception of ethics, based on its culture, which must be individually understood by researchers". Natalie Piquemal (2001), for example, suggests that the concept of ethics in an indigenous community is fluid. It necessitates "constant re-examination and redefinition", and its implementation must be done as an ongoing process. Marshall and Batten (2004: 4) suggest that cross-cultural researchers may not need to adhere strictly to any universal ethic in planning and carrying out their research. They, however, need to "respect the particular and contextual ethical norms of a given social or ethnic group". Being flexible is an efficient way to deal with cultural differences in cross-cultural research.

1.7 Conclusion

While performing cross-cultural research, researchers may encounter many challenges in preparing and undertaking their research. However, cross-cultural research also brings many joys. In this chapter, I have suggested several salient issues in carrying out cross-cultural research. I have provided readers with ample examples from researchers who have performed cross-cultural research. I strongly endorse that listening to some of the key issues that previous researchers have encountered can be helpful to us, as sensitive researchers, and assist us to prepare our research in a cross-cultural setting which ensures the success of our research.

Cross-cultural research will continue to be on the horizon of debate among researchers. And, as Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin (2005) suggest, although social researchers have worked in collaboration with ethnic minority and indigenous peoples, there is much more to be done when it comes to performing research with groups within a cross-cultural context. And I believe qualitative researchers can take leadership in this.

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Chapter 2
Language and Communication in Cross-Cultural Qualitative Research

Monique M. Hennink

Abstract Language and communication are the bedrock of qualitative enquiry. Language is a fundamental tool through which qualitative researchers seek to understand human behaviour, social processes and the cultural meanings that inscribe human behaviour. However, when conducting cross-cultural research, issues of language and communication become more complex and often require the assistance of interpreters/translators as "cultural brokers". Cross-cultural research poses numerous methodological, epistemological and practical challenges, which are rarely debated in qualitative research. This chapter outlines the epistemological approach to language and communication in different research paradigms and demonstrates the implications of this for the rigour of qualitative enquiry. In particular, concepts of transparency, subjectivity and reflexivity, which are indicators of methodological rigour in qualitative research, are typically not applied to language assistants in cross-cultural qualitative research despite the critical role of language assistants in the generation of knowledge and its cultural interpretation. Improving cross-cultural qualitative research involves understanding how language and communication can affect rigour and addressing language and communication issues that underlie the entire research process. Failure to recognise and acknowledge the role of language and communication issues in cross-cultural research may impact on the rigour and reliability of the research.

Keywords Language and communication, Translator, Cultural broker, Rigour and reliability, Knowledge generation, Qualitative inquiry, Methodological challenge, Epistemology and research paradigm, Cultural interpretation.

2.1 Introduction

Language and communication are central to qualitative research. Language is a fundamental tool through which qualitative researchers seek to understand human behaviour, social processes and the cultural meanings that inscribe human

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behaviour. Language represents data in qualitative research and communication – the process through which data are generated between a researcher and study participant. However, issues of language and communication become increasingly complex when conducting cross-cultural research where the assistance of interpreters/translators as “cultural brokers” is required. In cross-cultural research, the researcher is often at a greater distance from the study participants both culturally and linguistically. Cross-cultural research poses numerous methodological, epistemological and practical challenges, which are rarely debated in qualitative research. This chapter highlights the approach of different research paradigms towards language and communication and the consequent implications of these approaches on the research processes and outcomes. To improve methodological rigour in cross-cultural qualitative research, it is argued that greater attention is needed towards embracing language and communication issues throughout the entire research process. Greater transparency is needed in the conduct of cross-cultural research to highlight how data that originate in another language are produced and interpreted. Reflexivity towards language assistants involved in the research process is also necessary to acknowledge their contribution to data production and data quality. Finally, embracing language assistants as a critical part of the research team is also encouraged as a reflection of their critical role in the process of cultural interpretation in cross-cultural research. See also Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume.

2.2 Theoretical Positions on Language and Communication in Research

If language is understood to be the words we use to convey messages, then communication involves the exchange of words through meaningful interaction, such as with study participants when seeking research information. To fully understand the importance of both language and communication in qualitative research, it is necessary to reflect on how language is viewed under the differing theoretical constructs of positivism and interpretative approaches. The treatment of language within both research paradigms and the consequent implications for the role and importance of language is discussed below.

In the positivist research paradigm, research is seen as objective and language is viewed as a neutral component of communication through which researchers obtain information (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Charmaz 2006; Temple 2002). Positivism assumes that a single truth exists which can be “captured” from participants through research instruments such as a survey questionnaire (Green and Thorogood 2004; Ritchie and Lewis 2003). In terms of methodology, researchers are largely written out of the research process, their role in collecting information is minimised and, if acknowledged, researchers are viewed as objective, value-free conduits through which information is captured from participants. Positivism, therefore, views researchers as "neutral transmitters of messages" (Temple 2002). In positivist research, the use of language in constructing survey questions, for example, is given careful consideration for the potential impact that question construction may have on bias in the information received (Green and Thorogood 2004). For example, survey research focuses on language specifically to reduce various biases, such as reducing *respondent recall bias* by using language in question wording to enable respondents to accurately recall facts; reducing *instrument bias* through language clarity in questions and using appropriate response categories; reducing *social desirability bias* (where respondent wishes to appear socially or morally worthy) through language structure and question phrasing; and reducing *interviewer bias* in language emphasis and careful phrasing and instruction to interviewers on how to ask questions (Green and Thorogood 2004). Therefore, the positivist researcher's interest with language is focused on the selection of words and careful phrasing of questions to reduce bias and so increase the accuracy of participant's responses. Language is essentially seen as neutral in positivist research. The focus on language is purely as a means to capture accurate responses from participants, and not an interest in language *per se* as a reflection of the sociocultural world of respondents. Green and Thorogood (2004: 82) state that in the positivist paradigm, "if language is a window to the world, it is a potentially transparent one through which more or less accurate measures of human belief and behaviour can be taken, if we are careful with the linguistic prompts used".

In the interpretive paradigm, which encompasses much qualitative research, language and communication are central to the research process, the resulting data and its interpretation. In qualitative research, it is widely accepted that knowledge is "created" through the interactive exchange between researcher and participant in an interview setting (Green and Thorogood 2004; Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Language enables meanings of the world to be identified (by a participant), and the interaction (between interviewer and participant) produces an interpretation and understanding of the social context of the participant. It is not only the words used by participants that are of interest to qualitative researchers, but perhaps more importantly the meanings and concepts attached to the words, descriptions and expressions that provide a deeper understanding of the research issues within the sociocultural context of the study participants. The interactive communication that occurs in a qualitative interview is critical in developing this mutual understanding of the research issues and the social world of the research participants. In qualitative research, language represents data that help us to decode behaviour, processes and cultural meanings attached to different social worlds. Language and communication are, therefore, fundamental tools through which qualitative researchers understand human behaviour, sociocultural processes and cultural meanings.

The interpretive approach is further distinguished from the positivist paradigm (in terms of the use of language) in its approach to seeking truth and reality through research (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). While positivists prescribe to the notion of a single truth that can be sought through a research instrument, the interpretive approach embraces the notion that "multiple realities" exist as different individual perceptions of reality, that each individual's reality can be understood in a research interview and the combined individual perceptions of reality constitute a broader "social reality" (Temple and Edwards 2002). In qualitative research, language is used in an interpretive way to enable participants to identify their own individual experiences of reality through which researchers can understand their perspectives of the social world they inhabit. Therefore, qualitative researchers use language to explore the social realities of study participants from their own perspectives, rather than seek a factual response to a closed question, as in quantitative survey research. For example, a positivist researcher may seek to capture a factual truth by asking "How often did you visit the clinic this month?" while qualitative researchers use language to elicit a more experiential, interpretive perspective by asking "Can you describe your experience of using the clinic during your last visit?" Such contrasting approaches mean that language is used in very different ways in the two research paradigms; in the positivist approach language is used to gain an *etic* (external, researcher-driven) response, while in interpretive approaches language is used in powerful ways to understand the *emic* (insider, participant) perspectives on the issues and the social context.

Further evidence of the unique and important role of language in qualitative research can be seen in its dual purpose. In qualitative research, language represents both the research *data* and the *process* by which the data are generated (Green and Thorogood 2004). Firstly, language comprises the main form of data used in qualitative research, textual data, which are the words spoken by participants. These data typically originate in oral form (as in a tape recording of an interview) and are later developed into written form for analysis (such as a verbatim written transcript). In addition to language as data, language also comprises the process of communication through which data are generated, that is through the dynamic exchange in an interview or group discussion. Language is critical to the process of data generation because of the interpretive manner in which it is used to seek individual (*emic*) perspectives on the research issues. Language and communication are, therefore, fundamental to qualitative research as they represent the dual functions of *data* and the *method* through which data are generated, so careful consideration is needed on methodological and analytic issues related to language as they may impact on the quality, validity and utility of qualitative research (Larkin 2007; Birbili 2000; Twinn 1997).

The role and influence of language in qualitative research becomes increasingly complex when conducting cross-cultural research. A growing amount of qualitative research is conducted by researchers who are not familiar with the language and/or culture of study participants. This is true not only in cross-national research where researchers may be "outsiders" who do not share the language or culture of the study participants, but also in national research where participants speak another language from researchers or simply prefer to converse in their own language. This is often evident in research amongst minority groups such as migrant populations. For example, studies within Hispanic communities in the USA found that 70% of participants preferred to speak in Spanish, despite knowledge of English and their level of acculturation (Marin and Marin 1991). However, language remains the tool to understand human behaviour and social processes in these studies. We can learn a great deal about a culture through the language people use to describe their worlds, the words and phrases that are used and the cultural meanings attached to these expressions (Winchatz 2006). Examining language as a window into understanding culture is fundamental in qualitative research, but this process often requires language assistants when conducting cross-cultural research. Researchers often bridge the language gap through the employment of bilingual interviewers or interpreters. These language assistants play a critical role in conducting research interviews and are therefore central in the interactive process through which knowledge is created in qualitative research. In addition to conducting interviews, they play a significant role in the translation of participants' words into a written transcript which involves interpreting their meaning and transferring these meanings into the language of the research team. When research is conducted in a language not understood by the research team, researchers rely on language intermediaries and are therefore, at a greater distance from the language participants use to convey issues. This can be problematic when trying to identify subtle meanings attached to participants' words or phrases, particularly where these hold recognisable meaning within a cultural context. Cross-cultural qualitative research, therefore, requires a significant dependence on interpreters/translators and field assistants familiar with both the language *and* culture of the study population. These language assistants are often referred to as "cultural brokers" who convey the underlying cultural meaning of participants' words and expressions to the researchers (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Dunkley et al. 2003; Temple and Edwards 2002; Simon 1996). The contribution of language assistants in cross-cultural research is vital in the creation of knowledge and its cultural interpretation, both of which are the bedrock of qualitative research.

Despite the importance of language assistants in cross-cultural research, the methodological literature is quiet about the contribution of these personnel in the research process (i.e., data generation) and their influence on the research outcomes (i.e., data interpretation). The "invisibility" of language assistants is demonstrated in several ways. First, the methodological literature on qualitative research focuses primarily on the selection and use of interpreters/translators. However, there is little critical discussion on the implications of introducing language assistants into the interview context and hence into the knowledge-creation process within qualitative research (notable exceptions are Larkin 2007; Temple 2002; Temple and Edwards 2002). Second, academic journal articles on empirical research in cross-cultural settings may identify that language assistants were used in the study, but rarely do they discuss the influence of interpreters/translators (and translation) on the data itself. Even in traditional anthropology, where anthropologists must rely heavily on interpreters/translators to understand the sociocultural worlds of their study populations, the role of interpreters and local assistants is often not discussed in the research documents (Winchatz 2006). Third, the role of language assistants, especially translators, is often erased from the research process once the data are translated into the language of the research team. There is often no transcription of interviews in their original language, so the process of translation and any potential differences in interpretation tend to vanish as the focus of analysis becomes the translated transcript (Temple 2002). The role of language assistants in cross-cultural qualitative research, therefore, remains largely invisible, their presence is noted, but the effect of their actions is not acknowledged or discussed.

Cross-cultural research is, therefore, conducted with an unquestioning acceptance that the use of language assistants is unproblematic, their influence is not acknowledged and the question of their perspectives is not debated (Temple 2002). Language assistants are, therefore, treated as transparent conduits through which language and its cultural meaning are transferred seemingly without any influence from the perspectives or interpretation of language assistants themselves. It can be argued, therefore, that language assistants in cross-cultural qualitative research are viewed in the positivist model of knowledge-seeking, whereby the role of the researchers (and by extension interpreters/translators) is minimised and that the interview is conducted "through" rather than "with" a language assistant. A language assistant is, thus, seen as a neutral mouthpiece and is rarely considered as part of the research process. This lack of acknowledgement of the influence of language assistants is a curious omission in qualitative research, particularly given the attention to subjectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research, whereby researchers recognise the potential influence of their own perspectives, cultural background, experience and opinions on the interview process. It is now accepted that the characteristics of the researcher, such as their gender, social class, culture, background, experience or stance on the research topic, may impact on the interview situation and hence the data produced (Temple 2002; Alibhai-Brown 2000; Chui and Knight 1999; Mahony & Zmroczek 1997). The argument being that a researcher's "social location" in the world influences how they interpret and respond to others' perceptions and experiences (Temple and Edwards 2002). Language assistants, just like researchers themselves, bring their own perspectives and background to the research and calls for reflexivity need to embrace this added layer of subjectivity. Temple and Edwards (2002: 11) note that the effect of this is that "the research thus becomes subject to 'triple subjectivity' (the interactions between research participant, researcher and interpreter), and this needs to be made explicit". Translators are also integral to the knowledge-creation process in qualitative research, as they are central in translating research instruments into the language of the study participants and in translating the tape-recorded interview into the language of the research team. Translators, therefore, become active producers of knowledge who add an additional layer of subjective understanding to the data. There is often no exact translation of words or concepts, so translators need to *actively select* words or phrases to accurately convey equal meaning, and construct the social world of study participants in the language of the research team. Researchers need to become aware of how using a translator or cultural broker influences the generation of meaning in cross-cultural interviews. This requires a significant amount of knowledge about the language and context of the research in order to go beyond the essential content of what a participant says, to identify cultural meaning through the *way* in which language is used, for example, through phrasing, proverbs, irony, humour or with body language. Therefore, a translator has the potential to significantly influence the interpretation of the information gained through their attempt to communicate cross-cultural meaning from the original language and culture into that of the researchers (Culley et al. 2007; Maynard-Tucker 2000; Edwards 1998; Simon 1996). Translators are much more than neutral conduits of information in cross-cultural research; translators are more often "cultural brokers" who convey an understanding of both the words used by participants and the cultural meaning within those words. Temple and Young (2004, cited in Larkin 2007: 171) state that "the translator always makes her mark on the research, whether this is acknowledged or not, and in effect, some kind of 'hybrid" role emerges in that, at the very least, the translator makes assumptions about meaning equivalence that make her an analyst and cultural broker as much as a translator". However, the role and influence of language assistants do not receive the same methodological scrutiny as do researchers themselves. "Interpreters and translators seem to be excluded from such calls to investigate their perspectives" (Temple and Edwards 2002: 2).

2.3 Improving Rigour in Language and Communication

Improving rigour in cross-cultural qualitative research involves embracing language and communication issues that underlie the research process. A greater transparency of how language and communication issues are addressed throughout the entire research process is needed. This would enable a better understanding of how data that originate in another language are produced, translated, interpreted and reported. Improved rigour would also involve considering subjectivity and extending reflexivity to any language assistants involved in the research process, particularly translators, cultural brokers and field assistants, who become part of the knowledge-creation process and ultimately influence the data produced. Furthermore, embracing language assistants as a critical part of the research team acknowledges their contribution to data generation in terms of translation and interpretation of cultural meanings. Failure to recognise and acknowledge the role of language assistants in the research process may inhibit a complete understanding of the study data and ultimately have implications for the reliability of research outcomes. Suggested ways to begin to address these areas in cross-cultural research are highlighted briefly below.

2.3.1 Greater Transparency in the Research Process

Greater transparency in cross-cultural research around language and translation issues can strengthen the rigour of qualitative research (see also Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume). Greater transparency would involve not only acknowledging the use of language assistants in research, but also providing detailed descriptions of activities, decisions, discussions, challenges and resolutions regarding language and communication issues that occur throughout the entire research process. Scientific enquiry involving multiple languages and interpretation of the meanings conveyed requires a thorough description of the process from decisions made at the formative stage to the strategies employed to seek understanding from data that originated in a second language. One aspect of transparency is making visible in research documents and presentations the presence of language assistants in cross-cultural research, the nature of their contributions and the extent of their involvement. The degree of involvement of language assistants may vary from contributing only to translation and transcription tasks, or they may have contributed to project conception, study design, study site selection and design of the research instruments; or their involvement may have extended to intellectual contributions to data interpretation, cultural meaning and development of implications from the data. Being transparent about the use of language assistants and their contributions to the process of knowledge generation in qualitative research provides a more realistic reflection of the interpretive tradition in which the research was conducted and thus reflects validity of research outcomes. It is important to situate any language assistants in the research process and acknowledge them as active contributors to the production of research accounts. Some questions for researchers to consider in improving the transparency of language assistants in the research process may include:

- *Were language assistants used in the research? Why were they used?*
- *What type of language assistants were used in the research (i.e., interpreter, translator, bilingual local assistant, cultural broker, etc.)?*
- *How were they selected and by whom?*
- *What were their roles in each stage of the research process?*
- *What were the difficulties faced in using language assistants?*
- *How were they trained in the research tasks?*
- *Did they contribute to ongoing dialogue and decision-making during the research?*
- *Is their presence in the research made clear in project documents and publications?*
- *How were the challenges of using interpreters and translators overcome?*
- *What were the decisions made during the research process on communication and language issues?*
- *How was translation of the research instruments conducted?*
- *What was the process of translating research interviews and how was translation quality monitored?*

2.3.2 Extending Reflexivity to Language Assistants

The concept of reflexivity is central to qualitative research, whereby researchers acknowledge the contribution of their presence and their background characteristics on the generation of research data (Green and Thorogood 2004; Ritchie and Lewis 2003). However, reflexivity is often not extended to language assistants in cross-cultural research, even though their presence will influence the generation of research data just like the researchers themselves. Researchers have a responsibility to acknowledge not only their own impact on the research process and outcomes but also that of any language assistants or fieldworkers who are involved in the process of knowledge creation through conducting interviews, translating interview guides, translating interviews and acting as cultural brokers to transfer cultural meaning into the research data.

Each member of the research team, including field or language assistants, have perspectives of their own about the research topic, research context or study population that underlie their interactions in a social or research context. Rigorous reflexivity with language assistants (and all members of the research team) is needed to identify the social, cultural, political positioning of each towards the research issues. Such reflexivity involves interviewing each language assistant about their own background, experiences and perceptions of the research topic and study population (Temple and Edwards 2002). With such knowledge about each language assistant, researchers can be sensitised to the potential influence of each assistant to the process of knowledge generation, through the translation and interpretation of data. For example, it is important to be aware of the language competence of assistants, both in the language(s) of the study population and that of the research team. While field assistants may have an understanding of local dialects or regional languages, this may not be sufficient to effectively understand subtle meanings or expressions from research participants, leading to a loss in meaning when data are translated.

Similarly, assistants with a low level of English language competency may find it challenging to translate and equate concepts across cultural divides, again impacting on data quality due to the potential loss of meaning. Reflexivity with language assistants not only makes them more visible in the research process, but also contributes to a sense of accountability of language assistants in the generation of the research data. Researchers may consider the following questions to extend reflexivity to language assistants:

- *What are the personal characteristics and background of each language assistant?*
- *What are their perspectives on the research topic?*
- *Do they have experience of the research topic, what is the nature of the experience?*
- *Do they have an "agenda" or strong position on the research topic, were these views noted?*
- *How was any variation between language assistants identified and monitored?*
- *Are they from the study community, if so, what is their role/position in the community?*
- *How do they relate to or perceive the study population?*
- *How are they similar or different from the study population?*
- *What is their level of language competence in the local language or dialects?*

- *How was their language competency tested (particularly for local dialects)?*
- *What is their level of fluency and competence in English?*
- *What is their experience in the sociocultural context of the research team?*
- *Was the potential influence of language assistants acknowledged in research documents?*
- *How was the potential influence of language assistants identified and/or managed?*
- *Were language assistants acknowledged as an additional contribution to subjectivity in translation and interpretation of the data?*

2.3.3 Embracing Translators as Research Collaborators

In cross-cultural research, language assistants such as interpreters/translators and bilingual field staff are critical. From a pragmatic stance, their roles involve facilitating communication between the study population and the researchers, translation of research instruments and translation/transcription of interviews conducted in the local language(s). However, a translator's contribution to the research often goes beyond the "technical" tasks of translation, to involve the development of meaning from the data (Culley et al. 2007; Winslow et al. 2002; Temple and Edwards 2002; Esposito 2001; Twinn 1997). The words and language used by participants often incorporates particular sociocultural meanings and inherent values and beliefs, which need to be understood, translated and transferred to the language of the research team. The translator's role, therefore, becomes an intellectual contribution to understanding the research data within the study context and in seeking equivalence of these understandings in the language and context of the research team. This process is described by Simon (1996: 137–138 in Temple and Edwards 2002);

> The solutions to many of the translator's dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities. Translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries, and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds they inhabit are "the same". … In fact the process of meaning transfer has less to do with finding the cultural inscription of a term than reconstructing its value.

The process of translation, therefore, becomes an important part of conceptualising data by incorporating values, beliefs and the meanings of participants' words and phrases; it involves constructing a particular social reality of the study participants that may not have the same conceptual equivalence in the language into which it is being translated (Bassnet 1994). The words and language chosen by study participants are important and can have subtle but important differences that may be lost if translated into a generic term in the researcher's language (Culley et al. 2007). Three examples will illustrate this point. First, the words spoken by study participants carry implied meanings or references. For example, in Malawi the Chichewa terms for "pregnant" include *Wa Mimba* (someone with a tummy), *Wodwala* (sick woman), *Wa Pakati* (an in-between state, between life and death). Each of these may imply a different meaning, so that translating all simply as "pregnant" may lose subtle differences in intention of the speaker and what these may imply (Hennink 2007). Second, there often exist terms, phrases or proverbs in a local language that refer to very specific cultural concepts, for example, *purdah* refers to the cultural concept of gender segregation; *dowry* in the Asian context refers to the goods or wealth a woman brings to her husband upon marriage; which differs from *lobolo* in the Southern African context which refers to an opposite payment, that of a bride wealth payment given from the groom to the family of his fiancée. Such terms encompass not only the translation of words but reference a specific set of cultural norms and behaviour (Hennink 2007). Often, these terms are retained in the original language in the transcript to preserve important cultural references. Third, there may be specific colloquial phrases used by specific subgroups within the population that infer specific meaning within that group. For example, Hennink (2007) describes a study amongst adolescent boys in the UK about contraceptive methods. Within this population, the term "withdrawal" was not used, but they referred to it as "getting off at parkway (train station)" a very colloquial phrase meaning to get off the train at the station right before the central station. Therefore, the task of translation is not simply a literal translation of words or information (Temple 1997; Simon 1996). Temple and Edwards (2002: 5) contend, "the translator is involved in discussing concepts rather than just words, and that context is all important in deciding equivalence or difference in meaning". In addition, a good translator "should be able to translate not just the literal meaning of the words used by respondents, but the contextual information also carried, such as humorous use of words and phrases, sarcasm and metaphoric use…this relies on not just bilingualism on the part of the interpreter, but biculturalism, so that meanings, rather than just words, are being translated" (Green and Thorogood 2004: 84). Thus, translation of cultural meaning is a challenging task.

A translator, therefore, contributes vital knowledge to the research process in terms of information, cultural interpretation of the data and contextual implications of the study findings. The translator's role clearly contributes to data analysis and therefore can impact on data quality and validity. "[D]ecisions about translation have a direct impact on the trustworthiness of research and, as such, require a balance between language and cultural knowledge" (Larkin 2007: 471). Failure to acknowledge a translator's role and the influence of translation on the data poses a considerable threat to rigour. In many ways, a translator becomes a vital collaborator in the research process, whose contribution can significantly strengthen the rigour of cross-cultural research. Translators who are hired on short-term basis during the fieldwork phase of research are often not recognised as part of the research team, but as "administrative" field assistants. Larkin (2007) suggests that translators in cross-cultural research should be removed from the "shadowy figure" in research to that of interpretive guide and co-researcher. There is often a two-way exchange between translator and researcher to seek, sometimes complex, conceptual equivalence across languages, whereby the research investigator "exchanges his or her research skills for the trainees' [*translator's*] knowledge of the cultural context to decode meaningful key words and to grasp the participants' concepts, views and opinions" (Maynard-Tucker 2000: 409). Translators often contribute to a mutual consultation during data collection and analysis to explore different meanings and their cultural implications with regard to the research issues investigated. Recognition and inclusion of translators as collaborators and co-investigators in cross-cultural research acknowledge one of the central tenets of interpretive research, that knowledge generation and interpretation are co-creative processes which require reflexive discussion and debate on the meaning of words and language used by participants. The failure to acknowledge such processes in cross-cultural research may significantly reduce its rigour. Researchers may consider the following questions to assess the extent to which translators and language assistants are recognised as part of the research team:

- *Are translators recognised as part of the research team?*
- *What is the extent of their involvement in the research process?*
- *How are they recognized, referenced and acknowledged?*
- *Do the research documents reflect the true extent of translators or cultural broker's contributions to the research?*
- *Did they participate in collaborative translation of the research instruments or interviews?*
- *Does acknowledgement go beyond "technical" or administrative" tasks?*
- *Are they acknowledged in contributing to the development of knowledge in interviews and to cultural understandings through interpretation of the data?*
- *Did they participate in discussion on the meanings and development or cultural equivalence in interpreting data?*
- *Did they contribute as "cultural brokers" to the research process?*
- *What was the nature of collaborative interaction between the translators and the research team?*

2.4 Conclusion

Language and communication issues are clearly critical in cross-cultural qualitative research. This chapter has outlined the epistemological treatment of language in different research paradigms and demonstrated the implications of this for the rigour of qualitative enquiry. Improving the rigour of cross-cultural qualitative research involves, first, understanding how language and communication affects rigour in qualitative research, then, ensuring greater transparency, broader reflexivity and an acknowledgement of the critical contribution of language assistants to the generation of qualitative research data.

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Chapter 3
The Researcher as Insider Versus the Researcher as Outsider: Enhancing Rigour Through Language and Cultural Sensitivity

Fiona Irvine, Gwerfyl Roberts, and Caroline Bradbury-Jones

Abstract Evidence suggests that in research studies involving minority language users, rigour is enhanced when researchers share a common language and culture with research participants and thus are considered to be "insiders". However, it is clear that the use of "insiders" is not always possible and where the researchers and the researched do not share a common culture and language, measures can be taken to ensure that the research is rigorous. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic concordance does not in itself guarantee rigour; researchers must also demonstrate that their approach stands up to judgement against criteria that are congruent with the relevant research paradigm.

In this chapter, we consider best practice in research studies involving more than one language when the researchers are either insiders or outsiders. We draw on examples from published literature and from our research experiences as insiders and outsiders to examine approaches for enhancing rigour when conducting qualitative research. Attention is given to cultural issues, which we argue are inextricably linked to language, and therefore require cultural sensitivity on the part of the researcher in order to effectively capture and interpret data. We also examine sampling and recruitment, in which we demonstrate the measures that can be taken to facilitate the recruitment of participants with different language backgrounds. We give some consideration to

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data collection and identify strategies that can be adopted to gain rich data from participants where researchers either share or do not share the same language as the researched. Translation and interpretation are both identified as approaches that can facilitate rigorous cross-cultural research if addressed appropriately. The process of transcription, which is rarely addressed in the literature, is also examined and suggestions are given about how this can be tackled when operating in more than one language. Finally, we consider data analysis and offer suggestions for best practice when analysing data collected in two or more languages.

Keywords Researcher as insider, Researcher as outsider, Language issue, Cultural sensitivity, Rigour, Minority language, Translation and translator, Interpreter, Research involving multi language.

3.1 Introduction

If researchers are to undertake rigorous research where either they do not share the same language with their participants, or respondents have access to another preferred language, then they must take account of the linguistic diversity of the participants with whom they propose to complete their work. Much of the published literature relating to cross-cultural research and research involving different language speakers indicates that researchers should be "insiders"; that is, they should share the culture and the language of the researched (Esposito 2001; Culley et al. 2007; Shklarov 2007; see also Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume). However, it is clear that the use of insiders is not always possible and where the researchers and the researched do not share a common or preferred language, measures can be taken to ensure that the research is rigorous. Furthermore, even where researchers have access to the same language as participants, and thus, are considered to be insiders, they must still demonstrate that their research stands up to judgement against criteria that are congruent with the relevant research paradigm.

This chapter will consider best practice in research studies involving different language speakers where the researchers are either "insiders" or "outsiders". We will discuss some of the methodological issues that should be considered by researchers when undertaking studies in settings where a common language and culture is not shared between the researchers and the participants, or in settings where researchers and participants use more than one language. We will draw on our experiences of undertaking qualitative research studies in cross-cultural settings (Japan and the UK) (Bradbury Jones et al. 2007; Irvine et al. 2007) and with bilingual (Welsh and English) research participants (Irvine et al. 2006; Roberts et al. 2007) to demonstrate how rigour in research of this nature can be enhanced. Specifically, we will consider approaches for enhancing language awareness when conducting qualitative research, and give an account of the particular attention that needs to be paid to cultural issues, recruitment and sampling, data collection, translation and interpretation, transcription and data analysis.

3.2 Cultural Issues

In research that involves different language speakers, it is inevitable that diverse cultural mores come into play since, as authors such as Safran (2004) identify, language is a distinct marker of culture through which individual experiences are often shaped and expressed. Indeed, O'Hagan (2001) argues that since language is a communal tool, which reflects peoples' sense of community, it is pivotal to culture. In view of this evident relationship between language and culture, it is not surprising that language awareness is widely considered to be an essential aspect of culturally competent research. For example, the use of appropriate communication styles, conceptualisations and translation processes are concepts that are firmly embedded amongst the proposed evaluation criteria for rigour in cross-cultural research described by Meleis (1996), Papadopoulos and Lees (2002), and Im et al. (2004). See also Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume.

A major threat to rigour in cross-cultural research is a failure to reflect the reality of the situation accurately due to unfamiliarity with the research setting (Laverack and Brown 2003). With this in mind, we contend that researchers must pay due regard to the cultural behaviour of a society so that they are confident in their ability to report findings in a way that remains true to the respondents. This will facilitate accurate portrayal of the phenomenon under investigation, and thus, enhance the truthfulness of the research (Slevin and Sines 2000). Therefore, it is imperative that researchers should prepare for their research work to develop a sound understanding of the culture from which they will be collecting and interpreting data. In relation to cross-cultural research, we suggest that this means spending time in the setting, in order to become familiar with the processes, systems and traditions that characterise the setting. When undertaking research in Japan, which focused on nurse education in the university and clinical setting, we prepared for our research by spending a week in Japan prior to commencing data collection. During this time, we observed teaching sessions that took place in both the university and hospital setting, we visited a number of different hospitals, and we participated in social events with student nurses and faculty staff. This period of orientation helped us to develop some understanding of the social and cultural norms, the health care system and the process of nurse education. This awareness was crucial in preparing to work with lecturers and students whose professional practices and cultural behaviour differed in some respects to our own.

The issue of cultural understanding is also of relevance when the researcher is considered to be an insider (Shklarov 2007). Clearly, a sound understanding of the cultural norms of the participants under study can allow for insightful interpretation of the research data. However, as Gerrish (2003) suggests, in this situation it can be difficult to differentiate between the role of researcher and the position of insider. An intimacy with a culture may lead to complacency, whereby an over familiarity with the setting results in a loss of objectivity and the consequent disregard to particular nuances. One way of overcoming this difficulty is to adopt a reflexive stance, which involves being sensitive to the ways in which the researcher as an individual, with a particular social identity and background, has shaped the data collected (Robson 2002; Pope and Mays 2006).

In an ethnographic study, which involved participant and non-participant observation, we (FI and GR) used autoethnography as a reflexive approach in an attempt to maintain equilibrium between involvement and detachment and ensure a balanced interpretation of the findings. Autoethnography differs from reflexivity in that it consciously explores the relationship between the self and the culture under study and focuses personal revelations directly on the fieldwork at hand rather than on individual thoughts and feelings (Ellis and Bochner 2000). The study centred on the work of field officers whose role was to promote the transmission of the Welsh language by parents to their new babies. We, therefore, focused our autoethnographies to reveal our personal characteristics and experiences relating to Welsh language (Fig. 3.1). Despite the stark contrast in our language backgrounds, when we compared our biographies we identified balancing constructs which, we propose, act in such a way as to maintain our collective objectivity as researchers.

For example, Researcher 1 (GR) is a fluent Welsh speaker whilst Researcher 2 (FI) is a Welsh learner. As a child, GR was actively encouraged to speak Welsh at home, whilst FI experienced strong opposition to the language by her parents. Although GR was raised in an English-speaking community, she was actively involved in Welsh language social networks. FI on the other hand was raised in a Welsh-speaking community but isolated from such networks. GR was privileged to have an upbringing that gave her a true sense of Welsh identity. On the other hand

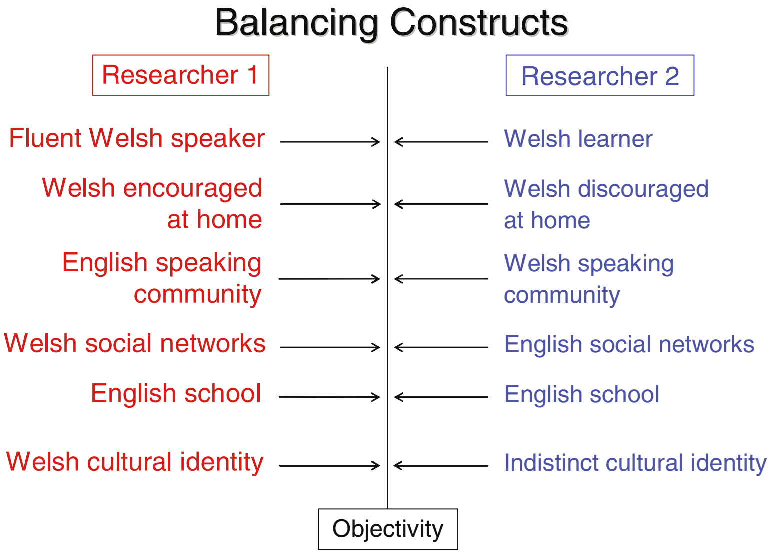

Fig. 3.1 Individual autoethnographies

FI still struggles with her Welsh identity, largely because of her anxieties concerning her Welsh language proficiency. In this research study, GR could be considered an insider since she had access to the same culture as those under study. In contrast, FI was an outsider since the group under study operated outside her zone of cultural comfort.

As a result of our contrasting autoethnographies, we were able to position ourselves in the data collection and analysis to facilitate a coming together of interpretive perspectives from the insider, emic position (GR) and the outsider, etic position (FI).

We argue that adopting a dual self-critical approach, through combined autoethnography enhanced the objectivity and rigour in the data analysis, since we were both able to consider the issue of culture from a perspective that was previously unknown to us. The use of autoethnography gave us an increased self-awareness and highlighted the contribution of "self" to the research process. Furthermore, the duality of the process facilitated an accurate reflection of the situation through a convergence in interpretation. Thus, the approach provides insight and understanding of the significance of language in social discourse, particularly within bilingual settings.

3.3 Recruitment and Sampling

McArt and Brown (1990) suggest that three principal recruitment and sampling issues should be considered when undertaking cross-cultural research. First, they highlight the importance of equivalency of sample, in which demographic characteristics amongst the sample are comparable across the cultural settings under study as this allows for comparisons to be made between the two groups. The second issue is time equivalency; whereby researchers should ensure that the time that lapses when collecting data from two settings is not lengthy. Keeping to a tight timescale allows the researcher to ensure that new variables, such as organisational or policy changes do not impede comparison between settings. Third, McArt and Brown (1990) believe researchers should ensure culturally sensitive access to sample groups in the different settings. For example, mechanisms for inviting potential respondents to participate in research or gaining ethical approval may vary considerably between different cultural settings. Researchers will need to consider these issues of recruitment and sampling and familiarise themselves with the different requirements before embarking on recruitment to their study. To address these issues in qualitative research, it may be worth considering the use of a sampling matrix, which factors in the requirements of the research and the cultural mores of the setting. For example, this might include timelines, inclusion criteria and measures for gaining access to research settings.

In a bilingual research setting where two languages are used, the issues of recruitment and sampling also pose particular challenges to researchers, especially when one language is dominant. For example, Hussain-Gambles and colleagues (2004) demonstrate

Table 3.1 Evaluation criteria for language awareness in the recruitment of participants

No.	Criteria
1	Does the recruitment strategy take account of the language profile of the community of interest?
2	Are different language networks appropriately targeted?
3	Does the planning team have direct contact with community brokers?
4	Are the recruitment materials available in relevant languages and bilingual format?
5	Do the recruitment materials give due consideration to issues of translation and language style?

that there are significant levels of exclusion of minority language speakers in research studies. They attribute this fact to a lack of language awareness amongst researchers, a lack of bilingual staff, financial and time constraints and an inability to support a range of minority languages. Li and colleagues (2001: 1) argue that:

> In view of strong national commitments to (1) improving the inclusion of minorities in clinical trials; (2) reducing health disparities among subpopulations; and (3) developing cultural competence in health service delivery; researchers and policy makers should give added attention to language as a potential barrier excluding people from national surveys, as well as from access to health and social services.

The literature reports a range of approaches to overcome barriers to the inclusion of minority language speakers in research studies and we have summarised these by posing questions that researchers should address in planning their sampling and recruitment strategy and these are produced in Table 3.1.

Reflecting on their large-scale study of social support and family health carried out in a disadvantaged urban area of the UK, Oakley and colleagues (2003) claim that inclusive recruitment procedures, such as those outlined above helped to establish a heterogeneous sample of recruits with different language backgrounds. They maintain that this sampling strategy increased the external validity of the findings since it enabled the findings to be generalised to a wide population.

3.4 Data Collection

According to Im and colleagues (2004), health research with diverse language populations needs to be evaluated in terms of its appropriateness to communication styles, conceptualisation and the translation process. This is particularly evident during the process of data collection and is equally pertinent for researchers who are insiders or outsiders, whether they adopt quantitative or qualitative methodology. Given the need to respect respondents' language preference in research studies, it is imperative that researchers take account of the challenges of working across language barriers when collecting research data.

It is clear that the dominance of the English language has influenced its position as the main language of health research (Bradby 2001). Therefore, it may seem inevitable that the involvement of people who have English as a second language in qualitative research studies is often viewed as problematic (Marshall and While 1994). However, Im and colleagues (2004) identify the critical understanding of the preferred communication styles of respondents within linguistically diverse populations as a key aspect of ensuring research rigour. Moreover, Twinn (1997) argues that qualitative methods that enable participants to use their own language are vital in order to gain insight and understanding of the lived experiences of linguistically diverse populations.

A number of published qualitative studies give details of the measures taken to enhance language awareness in the conduct of research amongst members of diverse language communities. For example, in their accounts of cross-language research using focus group interviews, Esposito (2001) and Culley and colleagues (2007) recommend the conduct of interviews by bilingual facilitators to enable the use of the preferred language of participants (see also Chapters 2, 15 and 16 in this volume). In a focus group study that included Welsh- and English-speaking participants, we were able to offer language choice to participants by operating bilingually. This meant that as facilitators, we switched between two languages. Bilingual (Welsh and English) participants were able to use the language of their choice and a simultaneous translation service was offered to monolingual participants so that they were able to stay abreast of the discussion.

Where there is a lack of language concordance between researchers and respondents and a shortage of bilingual researchers, there is often a heavy reliance on translators and interpreters within research studies and this has important implications for maintaining methodological rigour (Twinn 1997; see also Chapters 1 and 2).

3.5 Translation

Schmieding and Kokuyama (1995) believe that accurate translation in cross-cultural research is crucial, since any translation errors can cause results to be erroneously attributed to cultural differences rather than to lexical or contextual errors. Moreover, Tsai and others (2004) contend that when researchers are not fluent in the respondents' language and when immersion in the original data is not possible, the use of translated data may compromise the depth of analysis and the credibility of findings. Temple and Edwards (2002: 5) suggest that this is because:

> Language is an important part of conceptualization it speaks of a particular social reality that may not necessarily have a conceptual equivalence in the language into which it is to be translated.

According to Papadopoulos and Lees (2002), paying regard to the issue of concept equivalence so that materials have the same meaning in two or more cultures is one way in which researchers can avoid an ethnocentric approach. This can be achieved through approaches such as consensus reviews (Maneesriwongul and Dixon 2004); collaborative discussions and the involvement of researchers, professional translators and community brokers in negotiating appropriate terminology and language registers (Bradby 2002).

Building on the work of Twinn (1997), Esposito (2001) examines a number of approaches to translation that can be used to enhance validity. These include:

- The use of two different translators
- The use of back-translation by converting one set of data into another language
- Multiple focus groups
- The triangulation of participants, methods and investigators, including outside bilingual reviewers

Esposito's (2001) appeal for researchers to specify their translation methods in the analysis of qualitative research is echoed by Temple and Edwards (2002) and Wallin and Ahlstrom (2006) who add that accuracy in translation may be enhanced through encouraging open dialogue.

In our cross-cultural studies undertaken in the UK and Japan (Bradbury Jones et al. 2007; Irvine et al. 2007), we adopted a series of translation steps in an attempt to ensure the rigour of the study. Firstly, a translator translated the research instruments from English into Japanese. These were then back-translated by a bilingual Japanese faculty member to ensure conceptual equivalence of the instruments. The Japanese elements of the bilingual data that were elicited from the studies were also translated into English and then back-translated to make certain that the terminology used was similarly understood in both Japanese and UK cultures (Schmieding and Kokuyama 1995). Discrepancies were discussed between translators and research members until agreement was reached on the most appropriate use of terminology. Similarly, in the studies with bilingual (Welsh and English) participants in the UK, where the research team were also bilingual, it remained important to undertake rigorous translation to confirm concept equivalence.

On the basis of these studies, three key recommendations are proposed for incorporating accurate translations into cross-language research, as follows:

- Adopt a credible, sound approach to translation.
- Build translation costs into proposals.
- Describe language translation methods in publications.

3.6 Interpretation

Twinn (1998: 660) argues that in order to "*maximise the quality of data*", it is important to interview participants in their first language. This approach is made possible when the researchers are insiders and have access to the same language as the participants. However, where researchers are outsiders who do not share a common language with participants, this can be facilitated through the use of interpreters; a strategy that requires careful consideration to ensure a rigorous approach (see also Chapters 1 and 2). Kapborg and Berterö (2002) highlight a number of factors that come into play when undertaking cross-cultural research. These include the characteristics of the interpreter, cultural factors and the role of the interpreter during data collection. There is a possibility that interpreters might bring their own opinions and values to the study without wholly comprehending the context of the questions and this might jeopardise the trustworthiness of the research. Furthermore, interpreters may not be familiar with the different cultures that are operating in cross-cultural research, and therefore, might struggle with the intricacies of uniting the two perspectives during interpretation. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) argue that this lack of knowledge and experience may jeopardise the quality of the data gained through the interview and pose a threat to the validity of the research. The interpreters can assume different roles in a qualitative interview, either providing verbatim translation between the researcher and participants or facilitating the interview through a more independent role (Kapborg and Berterö 2002; see also Chapter 1).

Given the threats that deficient interpretation pose to the rigour of cross-cultural research, paying due consideration to the appointment of an interpreter who is familiar with the customs of the different cultures is vital to the success of the research. Moreover, reaching an agreement at the planning stage on the role that the interpreter will assume in the research will help to evade any confusion during data collection. Often, however, the nature of a semi-structured research interview means that there is flexibility in the phrasing and sequencing of questions (Parahoo 1997), and this cannot always be fully anticipated at the planning stage. This will call for a more adaptable approach, where new questions and answers might need to be translated during the interview. When this occurs, we recommend that it is noted in the field notes so that care can be taken when analysing and interpreting the data.

3.7 Transcription

Maclean and colleagues (2004) argue that transcription is central to the process of analysis in qualitative research, and since it provides a record of what has been said, transcription is critical to the dependability and validity of the research. In multilingual research, Twinn (1998) indicates that where possible, analysis of transcripts should be undertaken in the language of the interview. However, in cases where this is not possible, measures can be taken to overcome this limitation, as indicated in Table 3.2.

In situations where the researchers are bilingual, we concur with Twinn's (1998) assertions and recommend that the language of choice of the participants is preserved throughout the research process. Therefore, transcriptions should be produced in the original language, and thus, in planning a project, consideration should be given to the additional costs associated with transcribing different languages.

Table 3.2 Measures to improve rigour in transcription

Step.	Measures to improve rigour in transcription
1.	Transcription by bilingual transcribers using languages spoken during the interview
2.	Production of second copy of transcriptions with dialogue translated to language of researchers
3.	Back-translation of transcripts to ensure concept equivalence
4.	Peer review of transcriptions and tapes by bilinguals with context-specific knowledge to ensure that the translation accurately conveys the meaning of the dialogue
5.	Member checking with participants to ensure the credibility of the transcription

3.8 Analysis

It is crucial that qualitative researchers demonstrate the validity or trustworthiness of findings and this presents particular challenges when analysing cross-language data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria for the assessment of qualitative data and these provide a framework for maintaining rigour in cross-language research, as illustrated in Table 3.3.

Researchers who are insiders and share the language of the participants have access to primary data sources during analysis and thus avoid many of the challenges associated with translation. Insider researchers are able to immerse themselves in the original data and, if bilingual or multilingual, can mediate between linguistically diverse data sets, this may provide added insight and clarity to the interpretative process. Baker (2006) believes that the metalinguistic awareness of bilingual and multilingual speakers means that they have a greater sensitivity to language in general and a greater awareness of meaning and structure in language. This ability can help researchers to extract the nuances of participants' speech and align the concepts generated from the data.

Although qualitative research methods offer valuable ways of capturing the perspectives of diverse voices and eliciting rich data, there are specific challenges associated with the analytical processes. Within a monolingual context, these challenges call for strict adherence to the specific evaluation criteria relating to qualitative enquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Moreover, in the bilingual and multilingual contexts, researchers need to apply multiple means of assuring the validity of their cross-language data sets through adopting a credible and sound approach to analysis.

We undertook a research study in which all the researchers were bilingual (Welsh and English) and some of the participants were bilingual, whilst some spoke only English (Irvine et al. 2006). In this situation, we were able to offer the participants language choice throughout the study. This meant that all research materials and all data were produced, transcribed, coded and analysed in the original language. This

Table 3.3 Maintaining rigour in qualitative cross-language research (Adapted from Lincoln & Guba 1985)

Criterion	Definition	Rigour checks for language awareness
Credibility (Internal validity)	Confidence in the truth of the data	-Data collection processes take into account the preferred language of respondents -Language concordance between researchers and participants -Language awareness of researchers -Transcription of data in source language -Analysis of data in source language -Standard translation procedures
Transferability (External validity)	The extent to which the findings from the data can be transferred to other settings or groups	Details of the language profile of participants/community/research setting
Dependability (Reliability)	The stability of the data over time and over conditions	Independent analysis of language specific data sets followed by comparison of findings generated across data sets
Confirmability (Objectivity)	The objectivity or neutrality of the data	Audit trail of data sets by independent bilingual reviewers

necessitated the construction of an analytical framework which could be operated through both languages whilst ensuring the concept equivalence throughout. This involved the production of the framework in both languages followed by discussion and refinement until consensus was reached amongst the researchers on the suitability of the framework. Having established this framework, we were able to code, analyse and interpret the data without having to translate any data into another language. This process was maintained through to the production of a bilingual research report. However, writing papers for publications posed a particular challenge, and here, it was necessary to translate Welsh data into English to meet with requirements of the publishing journals.

Where the researchers are outsiders and do not have access to the language of the respondents, the issues of translation and interpretation, discussed earlier are of particular relevance.

3.9 Conclusion

The literature demonstrates that unless researchers take full account of the linguistic diversity of their sample populations and respond positively to the language preferences of their participants, there is potential for bias within research that may compromise the validity of findings and impede the development of new evidence for policy and practice. This chapter shows that in research studies involving diverse language speakers, data collection, transcription and analysis is best undertaken in the preferred language of the respondents, using native researchers; or insiders. However, the deployment of researchers who have a combination of strong, appropriate linguistic and research competencies is particularly challenging and in some situations, unattainable. In this case, it would not be appropriate to abandon good quality research and deny the opportunity for individuals to engage in research that might offer insights that could improve people's future well-being. Rather, the best alternative is to build a series of systematic measures into the research process to enhance cultural and linguistic sensitivity. However, this does not release insider researchers from ensuring that sufficient regard is paid to the rigour of their research. This chapter has offered some insight on best practice in cross-cultural and bilingual research for researchers who consider themselves either to be insiders or outsiders to the culture under study.

In this chapter, we have outlined a way forward for the cross-cultural and multilingual research community by giving due consideration to language at key stages of the research process, through ensuring appropriate recruitment and sampling approaches; effective data collection; quality translations, transcriptions and interpretations; and adequate analytical approaches. In this way, health and social care research should truly reflect the linguistic diversity of the international population that is scrutinised in cross-cultural research and provide the evidence base for best practice and policy that meet the needs of service users.

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Chapter 4
Respecting Culture: Research with Rural Aboriginal Community

Jennene Greenhill and Kerry Dix

Abstract Cultural sensitivity: easy to say, difficult to do! This chapter explores the process of doing cross-cultural research in the context of working with Aboriginal people. It follows our journey in search of methods to collect meaningful data and reveals the successes and struggles encountered. We address the question: "How do we maximize cultural sensitivity as white women doing research with Aboriginal people?" We share our experience in finding ways to do culturally sensitive research. The many ways that participants tell their stories, how to achieve a degree of trust and rapport with the communities, the elders, the individuals, their families and the service providers is examined.

Many Aboriginal people have good reason to be sceptical about research and doubt whether it is really useful to their communities. Aboriginal communities are often the focus of research but are rarely the recipients of tangible benefits of this intense interest. Given the history of research being "done to" Aboriginal people the importance of building relationships, showing respect and a willingness to learn is foremost in our minds when we embark on research. Researchers need to be cognisant of the history of exploitation within communities and the associated ongoing cultural dyslexia that characterises our society. We argue that cultural dyslexia is a result of dissonance, institutional racism and positivist research and management approaches that are preoccupied with "evidence", data quality and outcomes and too often lead to the objectification of participants.

The need for research to be grounded in participatory methodologies such as action research and community-based ethnography is well documented. A reflexive approach is essential because it promotes community inclusion and confronts the traditional exclusivity in academic culture of research expertise. By sharing experiences and fostering a collaborative culture through research, we can learn from communities and we can undertake more meaningful research.

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4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss our experiences in conducting cross-cultural research in rural and remote Aboriginal communities of South Australia. We present this as a case study through our reflections following a challenging external evaluation which was able to bridge cultural boundaries. This project is useful as a case study as it tells a story about overcoming adversity in rural communities as they marshalled their local resources to develop locally owned suicide prevention strategies with support from other services and government.

Rural South Australia is extremely geographically and culturally diverse. We were engaged to conduct an external evaluation of the Suicide Prevention Initiative for Country South Australia Department of Health. There were seven regions involved in the project. Each region developed their own action plans with their main target group being young men, in particular young Aboriginal men.

As researchers, we were conscious of the history of research being "done to" Indigenous peoples and the importance of building relationships, showing respect and a willingness to learn was foremost in our minds. Our challenge was to find ways to achieve this as "outsiders" when asked to research such a psychologically and socially complex issue as suicide prevention. The ability to achieve a degree of trust and rapport with the communities, the elders, the individuals, their families and the service providers in short time frames was vital.

The people and systems operating at the local level in rural communities presented powerful messages relating to service delivery with particular reference to Aboriginality. The importance of inclusivity, relationships, connections, credibility, building trust, networking and holistic approaches that are intrinsic to Aboriginal culture were identified as essential to project success.

By sharing our research experience, the challenges and successes, we hope to assist other researchers by providing valuable knowledge that can inform policy on youth mental health and primary prevention. The lessons also provide insights into primary health care practice with Aboriginal communities.

4.2 Contextualising Research on Suicide Prevention

In an attempt to tackle this significant public health concern, the South Australian government provided funding for a Suicide Prevention Initiative that targeted young males, in particular young Aboriginal males in rural and remote communities. The experiences of seven rural communities in developing and implementing local strategies to prevent suicide provide insights into the struggles and successes of such an initiative.

> The subject area of self-harm, para suicide and suicide among Aboriginal Australians is one of persistent and overwhelming tragedy marked by expressions of pain, disconnection and despair (Procter 2005: 237).

Suicide in Indigenous populations is an area that has a limited number of adequate studies. Ernest Hunter (2001) in his book Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide noted that until two decades ago, suicide among Indigenous Australians was very uncommon. He emphasises that due to problems with identification of Aboriginality in death records, suicide figures are almost certainly underestimated. In South Australia, from 1981–1988, the incidence of suicide in the Aboriginal population rose from 10.7 per 100,000 people to 105.3 per 100, 000. In addition, 71.4% of the Aboriginal suicides occur in people under the age of 29 with males far more likely to die from suicide than females (Clayer and Czeckowicz 1991).

Most research on suicide prevention is positivist, quantitative studies concerned with suicide rates, mortality ratios and risk factors. Whilst these studies provide some useful information on how suicide can be prevented by identifying and highlighting risk factors, they tell us little about why suicide prevention is difficult, particularly in Aboriginal communities. Moreover, quantitative studies are problematic due to the inaccuracy of data and are at best a minimum count of such deaths (Auseinet 2006). Some studies do explain that addressing risk factors is only part of the story. There is a need to improve the social conditions for Aboriginal people by enhancing protective factors (De Leo 2002). Such attempts to build on the limited knowledge on the surrounding social conditions and protective factors that exist in Aboriginal communities are often seen as paternalistic. There are serious limitations in undertaking research that has a focus on Aboriginal communities from a non-Aboriginal perspective because scientific research has been used throughout Australia's history to support racist policies and practices (Hunter 1991). Many Indigenous peoples have good reason to be doubtful about whether research is really useful to their communities (Humphery 2001).

At a workshop for mental health professionals in South Australia, Daren Garney quoted Sandra Bailey who said in 1993 at the first National Aboriginal and Islander Mental Health Conference held in Sydney.

> It's peculiar to say the least that as one of the most consulted and researched people in the country, we are the least listened to. We have to go continually to the Government with cap in hand, bowing, scraping and proving that we're here, justifying our existence and our numbers and our needs, of course. As Kooris, we are born into a situation according to which our communities are in isolation. We're subjected to a constant procession of academics, researchers, government agents, anthropologists, archaeologists, and sociologists, perhaps psychologists, who come to our door requiring information. As sure as one leaves, another arrives. We rarely see the report and often too late. We sometimes get quoted out of context or not at all, usually to our detriment. There are no improvements in our conditions and no improvements – and that's a deliberate mistake there that I've repeated those three words – there are no improvements in our conditions or benefits for our efforts. They, on the other hand, have either tidied up their files, made a decision on our behalf, made a

> scientific breakthrough, attained doctoral status, published their opinions, become experts in the field, provided a consultant's report, moved on to another theory, gained a new prestigious portfolio, attracted lucrative publicity, gained political kudos, offered legislation, made an impressive speech, attacked our credibility, denied our Aboriginality, advised us as to what we should be doing, or created another problem for us on which we will soon be consulted.

As non-Indigenous researchers, we must be conscious of and sensitive to these power differentials and the exploitative history of research in Aboriginal communities. This kind of research makes little or no difference in these communities.

Our journey as researchers searching for ways to collect meaningful data was both professionally and personally meaningful and revealed the difficulty of navigating through cultural differences in bureaucracies, rural communities and Aboriginal cultures. We experienced this struggle as symptom of what we call the "cultural dyslexia" that exists in our society. The thought of perpetuating this tragic parody with yet another short-term project was agonising.

4.3 Cultural Dyslexia

Cultural dyslexia has been defined by Palsson (1995: 4) as "a failure to 'read' other cultures and come to terms with the difference" and has emphasised the repeated failure of groups in the same society to understand each other. Cultural dyslexia is not specific to different ancestral cultures, but relates to the different cultures that exist within our society. It has significance in relation to differences in spirituality, economic conditions, political orientation, gender, age, social status and occupation.

An understanding of this message of "cultural dyslexia" is important to researchers who are undertaking cross-cultural research because it emphasises how we view the differences in each other from preconceived paradigms. An example of this is in the dissonance between Aboriginal community and bureaucracy including language and ideas. This way of thinking often restricts our ability to really listen in order to understand and learn about each other. In understanding this concept and exploring its foundations, we can encourage the creation of new approaches to working across cultural environments. By suspending judgement and surrendering ourselves to new experiences, we can see things through different lenses. This increased insight will help us to embrace the remarkable differences that make up our society, to truly work alongside each other collaboratively with respect and care.

We are privileged to be welcomed into these communities and need to find ways not to simply take information, do interviews, observe and report our findings to politically powerful entities. Information provided by researchers can legitimate oppressive decision-making. We have learnt that working in a cross-cultural environment requires long-term commitment and continuous reflection upon assumptions and operating styles. This approach coincides with the argument for cultural competence by experienced researchers (Westerman 2004).

4.4 Selecting a Methodology

The importance for research to be grounded in participatory methodologies such as action research and community-based ethnography is well documented (Palsson 1995; Bailie et al. 2007). Additionally, a reflexive approach is essential because it promotes community inclusion and confronts the traditional exclusivity in academic culture of research expertise (Lutschini 2005; Cunningham-Burley 2006; Newman et al. 2007).

It is appropriate to develop a tailored methodology that can be flexible and not labelled. To us, the methodological label is less important than the process. One option is to do a series of case studies collecting data about each site, but in this kind of research, it is important not to compare the sites but to value the uniqueness of each of the sites. Our approach uses elements of community-based ethnography. To do this, we spend as much time as possible with the participants and try to appreciate the context of their lives and the ideas that they developed for their projects in each site. Our main constraint was that we did not really have enough time to become embedded in each of the communities. However, by sharing experiences and fostering a collaborative culture across sites through research, we can learn from communities and we can undertake more meaningful research (see Chapters 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 in this volume).

An appreciative inquiry approach with the aim of establishing positive learning relationships emerged as a useful methodological process. This approach enabled us to work alongside project participants with a greater concentration on benefits rather than processes or outputs. This focus builds on people’s strengths and uses human relationships as influential in understanding and encouraging creativity, innovation and bringing out the best in people and programmes (Carter 2005).

It was helpful to articulate the underlying values that guided our research process. This achieved the dual purpose of giving clarity to the research approach and an ongoing appreciation and commitment to our participants. In our research, we placed emphasis on three aspects: (1) respect for the participants and their communities; (2) understanding the socio-political and cultural context; and (3) dissemination of what the project participants had learnt.

Cross-cultural research requires a deep commitment to participation (Rifkin 2001; Oliver et al. 2006). We used a two-tiered approach to provide cultural advice and support for our research. It can be difficult to find good advisers, but it is important because their wisdom and support provides credibility for the research. Firstly, cultural advisers were engaged to assist with presentation of the information in culturally appropriate ways. These individuals, one male and one female, one was Aboriginal and the other was married to an Aboriginal person, both had extensive familiarity working in Aboriginal communities and they had experience in the media and the arts, and had undertaken research relating to Indigenous social and legal issues and most importantly they each had a good knowledge of the Indigenous communities involved. Secondly, a cultural reference group was established consisting of a small group, only five people but with vast experience in Indigenous research and were in key positions, for example, they worked in the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, and others were Indigenous clinicians and policy experts. Our relationship with this group was invaluable. They led the development of the methodology for the research. We asked the cultural reference group for advice on the regions, including the cultural history of each region and current sensitive issues in each region. Before the regional visits, we discussed in detail the process of data collection, identified links with Aboriginal groups, organisations and individuals that the members thought important for us to meet prior to initial meetings with local Aboriginal communities.

Our reference group members emphasised the importance of humility and understanding respectful ways of interacting and building relationships with Indigenous peoples. They also advocated the importance of participatory approaches and being flexible, understanding community protocols, choice of location for meetings and most importantly to refrain from being the expert.

Fundamental interpersonal skills and attitudes were essential in our relations with others involved in the project. Like any qualitative research, we must be open and honest, genuine and sincere, sensitive, respectful, non-judgemental, listen and not assume to know what is best for individuals or groups. Researchers need to be prepared that self-disclosure of personal information and your background is not only appropriate but a sign of respect for your participants. It is a symptom of cultural dyslexia that there is a need to reiterate the importance of these fundamental communication traits.

We were open to new approaches with the aim of community inclusion that confronts the traditional exclusivity of bureaucratic structures and the academic culture of research expertise. We sought to learn from and with communities. We shared the information learnt from the literature, experiences of the other rural communities involved and those aspects of the initiative that were working well. This reciprocity and shared knowledge was our way of giving something back to the communities we were visiting, and was well received.

We have learnt that working in a cross-cultural environment requires long-term commitment and continuous reflection upon assumptions and operating styles. This approach coincides with the argument for cultural competence beyond traditional research skills. Health promotion projects adopting a model of health improvement recognising strengths and capacities of Indigenous peoples have been advocated in the past (Brough et al. 2004; Mikhailovich et al. 2007). We found that by undertaking a strength-based approach, we dispelled some of the anxiety associated with being externally evaluated and allowed participants to reflect on their own knowledge and experiences of successes and created a learning environment.

4.5 Key Messages – Results and Implications

In presenting the findings and results of research, it is helpful to have a congruent approach with the values your research espouses. Our research findings emphasised the qualities and ideas that came directly from participants. Like some interpretive methods and methods such as grounded theory, the findings are not filtered misrepresentations of the views of participants. In our suicide prevention study, there were messages relating to the people and systems that were operating at the local level and insights into how service delivery was achieved particularly as it related to Aboriginality. This approach is the antithesis of popular positivist analysis such as programme logic which is frequently used to evaluate programmes, nor does it present information in an inaccessible intellectual overindulgent way.

4.5.1 The People

Our data revealed that by highlighting cultural differences in notions such as time, acknowledging that people have different personal qualities and expertise, and the importance of assistance and development of local leaders, we show how people were intrinsic to the successes that were achieved in suicide prevention projects. We found that the people in these projects were successful when they took the time to establish relationships and developed their credibility. We concurred with others who have found that Indigenous workers, who are trusted and respected by the community serve as a bridge between peers and health professionals (Nemcek and Sabatier 2003; Keren 2005; Cunningham-Burley 2006). Engaging people who have already spent time and developed positive relationships and credibility in their communities is an effective method to achieving positive connections in short time frames.

Workforce issues in all South Australian country regions are crucial to the evolution of successful projects. Issues of recruitment and retention and potential burnout are key elements that are important to improving workforce capacity. Research and projects that can provide mentoring programs will assist in the development of local leaders, build local capacity, encourage collaboration, support and debriefing for staff, promote transparent processes and access to training and education, and an understanding of intergenerational learning. High turnover, particularly in mental health services, has previously been highlighted for rural communities along with their detrimental impacts. Fuller and colleagues (2004: 78) contend that “staff turnover thwarts the development of trusting relationships between local residents and the health service”. Projects that have short-term funding perpetuate high staff turnover in rural communities. The planning and consultation phases of short-term projects require careful consideration and a respectful time commitment to enable workers on the ground to be able to implement the project and maximise the potential sustainable factors.

4.5.2 The Systems

Institutional racism is still prevalent and continues to restrict and limit the progress of programmes and real collaboration. Government policies at the commonwealth, state and local levels also continue to create obstacles for local workers and result in the perpetuation of resentment and reluctance in engaging with short-term projects.

Despite awareness of the enduring damage which has ensued from the implementation of racist policies they persist. Hunter (2007: 89) states that “even with the ‘best of intentions’ social policy has often further disadvantaged the original peoples of this land”. Research that uses a systems perspective is able to appreciate the connectedness within rural and Aboriginal communities.

In our research, the most influential processes that were implemented related to the establishment or use of existing groups and established connections and partnerships with local workers. This enabled communities to create local action and raise enthusiasm for activities providing young people with the ability to engage in new experiences, learn new skills and have fun. This research highlighted specific local strengths and capacities mainly through education and training providing people with alternative learning opportunities, fun and enjoyment, socialisation and general inclusivity. There were activities focused on art and creativity, music, dance, sport, recreation, storytelling, Aboriginal culture and intergenerational support and learning.

The people involved in this initiative have been inspirational committed champions of their field who have shown tenacity, creativity and innovation to overcome obstacles and competing pressures. Their personal commitment and skills are even more profound when confronted with systems that hinder progression. These bureaucratic systems have shaped a “cultural dyslexia” that is exclusive by nature. Embedded in these bureaucratic commonwealth, state and local approaches is jargon, power, fear and blame, service agreements, memorandums of understanding, rationalisation and an output focus. This language and discourse has detracted from the importance of inclusivity, relationships, connections, credibility, trust, networking and holistic approaches that are intrinsic to Aboriginal culture.

4.5.3 Aboriginality

An appreciation of Aboriginal history and the grief, loss and pain that exist in Aboriginal communities which are unquestionably associated with colonisation can significantly improve researchers’ ability to be more culturally competent. The building of relationships and establishing trust and credibility are of paramount importance in working alongside Aboriginal communities.

There is a substantial research on cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural appropriateness and cultural safety (Ramsden 1993; Tamase and Waldergrave 1993; American Psychological Association 2002; Martin and Booran-Mirraboopa 2003). Cultural competence challenges us to think about culture and our relationship with Indigenous peoples and creates spaces where people can uncover invisible institutional structures like racism (Sonn 2004).

> The ability to really try and put yourself into the shoes of Aboriginal people, to see things as much as possible from an Aboriginal perspective, is at the heart of cultural respect. And

> think outside of the social services square, because there is no "one size" that will fit all. (Rosemary Wanganeen)

In our research, we are conscious of the importance of being aware of the heterogeneity of Indigenous identity and diversity of Aboriginal culture, that is, traditional, urban, different mobs. Some researchers (Eckersley 1993; Rigney 1997; Sonn 2004) argue that we have to try and move beyond thinking about cultural competence, to understand power structures that are embedded in the different groupings that we belong to within a particular society whether these are related to gender, ethnicity or age. These power structures provide the lenses through which we view and interpret the world and expose us to particular sorts of experiences. Power structures influence the ways we respond in different cultural contexts.

The Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (Matthews 2002) published a monograph series outlining research methodologies that are compatible with the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda. Power and control of the research process have contributed to tensions between Indigenous peoples and researchers. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) advocates for research methods that build capacity, are respectful, ethical and useful to Indigenous peoples. Indigenist research can be achieved by placing the interests and concerns of Indigenous peoples at the centre of the research (Rigney 1999).

Participatory, collaborative research methods are compatible with research involving Indigenous peoples (Stillitoe 1988). Participatory research methods emphasise respect and facilitate social change (St. Denis 1992; Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). Participatory action research is one method promoted by proponents of health promotion with a potential for improved health outcomes for participating communities (Jewkesb 1995; Reason 2001). Although critics of such an approach argue that it is difficult to attract funding (Baum 2006) and that the claims that power is shared are extravagant (Silverman 2001). Our research approach was influenced by Ernie Stringer's community-based ethnographic approach (1997). This methodology is participatory and focuses on listening to the diverse interests within a community to build a consensus and using the language of participants to articulate what needs to happen. So, how is this achieved when dealing with an issue as sensitive and devastating as suicide? The answer is: with great difficulty.

NACCHO's (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation) Community LIFE Project undertaken in 2003 details the difficulties encountered with the project and offers several solutions within a holistic framework for programmes aimed at addressing suicide in Aboriginal communities. Some of the problems included departmental interference, short-term positions of only 12 months, inconsistency with the principles of self-determination, delays in contractual agreements and lack of community networks. Social and emotional well-being workshops held in each State and the ACT provided valuable feedback to improve outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. These include more accessible and culturally appropriate counseling, training and community development activities, grief, loss and bereavement programs especially for youth and need for programs to be developed, implemented and monitored by the local Aboriginal community. Workforce and training issues are a major challenge, and consequently, programmes that do exist are under-resourced. NACCHO calls for a whole-of-community approach supported by strong, not forced partnerships, honouring principles of community control and self-determination and a long-term coordinated and adequately funded strategy developed by Aboriginal people working with mainstream programmes (NACCHO 2004).

4.5.4 Dissemination of Research Findings

The dissemination of research findings has three main purposes, according to researchers from the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health (Henry 2004). These three aims are: (1) to inform policy including resource allocation; (2) to facilitate changes in practice; and (3) to influence behaviour change. However, research findings that are not presented in an accessible form and delayed feedback can inhibit the potential usefulness of findings. Our participants said that credibility and long-term commitment are key elements in working within a community to achieve social change.

> We need to attain credibility otherwise nothing or very little will be achieved. (Participant 1)

Researchers have an obligation to disseminate findings of their studies because this is the only way to initiate or contribute to the wider debate. Latour (1987: 40) states:

> There is something still worse, however, than being either criticised or dismantled by careless readers: it is being ignored. Since the status of a claim depends on later users' insertions, what if there are no later users whatsoever? This is the point that people who never come close to the fabrication of science have the greatest difficulty in grasping. They imagine that all scientific articles are equal and arrayed in lines like soldiers, to be carefully inspected one by one. However, most papers are never read at all. No matter what a paper did to the former literature, if no one else does anything with it, then it is as if it never existed at all.

4.6 Conclusion

As governments struggle to address the major challenges that confront rural and remote areas, they continue to suffer from a lack of community cohesion and the capacity to address serious social issues without substantial and sustained financial support, and in particular workforce capacity building. Research projects may be funded primarily to identify solutions and recommendations for government policies. An alternative approach is to undertake research to provide fundamental insights into the inherent strength, resilience and creativity that exist in disadvantaged communities.

Our research in South Australia shows that rural communities would be well served to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to retain and develop more change agents who are experts in translating and navigating through the socio-economic vortex generated by cultural dyslexia. Through an understanding of cultural dyslexia, we can encourage the creation of new approaches to working across cultural environments. Through a participatory action research approach informed by appreciative inquiry, researchers would be well placed to determine the essential ingredients needed for future workforce development and sustainable systems for socially disadvantaged communities. Short-term research projects on rural communities produce findings that are often unrealistic and/or unsustainable. There is a need for research that respects culture and aims to build knowledge, insights and partnerships through local participation in planning and undertaking culturally sensitive research for a sustainable future.

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Chapter 5
Kaupapa Mäori Research, Supervision and Uncertainty: "What's a Päkehä Fella to Do?"

Clive C. Pope

Abstract In Aotearoa New Zealand, we have seen a welcome burgeoning of researchers and graduate students adopting Kaupapa Mäori as a preferred methodology. Over recent years, appropriate ways to conduct research with Mäori and within Mäori communities have evolved. As a supervisor working within an institution where Kaupapa Mäori has established a high profile, I have found myself in the role of supervisor to several Mäori students. Furthermore, as a Päkehä New Zealander I have in recent years, discovered myself standing on tricky ground, learning and appreciating this methodology and its associated world view. How can a white, male, middle-class supervisor contribute to the conduct of Kaupapa Mäori and the growth of Mäori graduate students? Such an experience has revealed a different way of knowing, far removed from the "colonial gaze" that has marked much of my own research. Grant (2005) has recently described the act of supervision as an uncertain practice marked by a plethora of contradictory and competing discourses. Between such discourses are spaces that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) has termed "tricky ground". Such a term is pertinent because it highlights the complexity, uncertainty and shifting nature of not only the ground upon which researchers work, but also the individuals and communities who perform the research, the epistemologies and understandings they hold, the practices they indulge in and the effects such research can have on the participants. Russell Bishop (1996) has argued that storytelling is a culturally appropriate way of empowering participants and I will employ this strategy to share my experiences as a supervisor working on tricky ground.

Keywords Aotearoa New Zealand, Kaupapa Mäori methodology, Mäori community, Research supervision and challenge, Tricky ground, Different ways of knowing, Storytelling, Empowerment.

E nga mana
E nga Reo
E nga mätäwaka katoa

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P. Liamputtong (ed.) *Doing Cross-Cultural Research*,

Tena koutou katoa
The warmest of greetings to each one of you
With your individual and unique qualities
Your individual languages
Your different ethnic backgrounds

5.1 Introduction

This chapter unveils my limited knowledge and growing appreciation for Kaupapa Mäori research and places it on "tricky ground" (Smith 2005). I find such an exercise to be both problematic and delicate. I am explaining myself, addressing two worlds hinged by numerous tensions and underpinned by a concern of getting it wrong. This is partly because of who I am, a middle-aged, middle-class Päkehä or non-Mäori male. With this status, there are significant ontological and epistemological differences between my Päkehä world views, and those of Mäori. But, perhaps more importantly, is an acknowledgement that such differences do exist. I can, therefore, provide only a partial and probably cosmetic interpretation of my limited experiences of things Mäori. Within Aotearoa New Zealand, one of the biggest challenges we must face is that such differences are not fully understood or even acknowledged by many non-Mäori. Throughout our society, there is a "we are one people" position where Päkehä refuse to acknowledge any culture other than the dominant colonial variety. Linda Smith (1999) declares that one of the ways that non-Mäori researchers tackle any such investigation is to avoid it. Research related to Mäori people and or issues are subsequently filed in the "too hard" basket.

I teach and research in a department of sport and leisure studies at the University of Waikato. Approximately 120 students commence the three-year degree each year, and of these, between 20% and 25% of that intake identify themselves as Mäori. Since 1997, we have offered graduate qualifications that allow students to complete honours, masters and doctoral programmes. One of the significant trends that evolved over the last decade has been a small but constant presence of Mäori students completing graduate work. In addition to a departmental compulsory course examining the philosophy and method of research, students may opt to complete a masters-level Kaupapa Mäori research paper taught by Russell Bishop. Naturally, some of our Mäori students have chosen to complete dissertations or theses that utilise this indigenous research method. While this development is heartening, an absence of Mäori faculty has made the process of supervision quite a challenge.

Barbara Grant (2005: 337) has recently described graduate supervision as "a deeply uncertain practice" marked by a strong potential for student–supervisor misunderstandings. Grant argues that a proliferation of discourses has contributed to supervision being acknowledged as a cultural practice. The situation I have found myself in has been marked by a need for what Bishop and Glynn (1999) refer to as "cross cultural competency: whereby selected methodologies reach beyond traditional colonial derivatives. In my country, such a position is likely to proliferate as more and more Mäori students seek the graduate experience but who may find only non-Mäori faculty to act in a supervisory role. Uncertainty thrives. Moreover, the relatively sound Western methodological foundation I have previously drawn on is now placed on what Linda Smith calls “tricky ground”. This status is because “it is complicated and changeable, and it is tricky also because it can play tricks on research and researchers” (Smith 2005: 85). Crossing the cultural fence has, for me, been complicated yet rewarding and erudite, thanks to the many people who have collectively supported what for me, has been a significant challenge.

5.2 The Challenge

In days gone by, my association of challenge with Mäori focused on my often-projected images of the formal challenge to visitors to the marae or the challenge of the Haka popularised by our national sports teams. But, a more recent challenge has been to explore and come to terms with aspects of Kaupapa Mäori. It is not my intention to discuss in detail the nature and nuances of Kaupapa Mäori research – that has already been done (Bishop and Glynn 1999; Jahnke and Taiapa 2003; Bishop 2005; Smith 2005). However, a brief discussion of this methodology is now given.

After 130 years of colonisation, there has been a gradual but significant acknowledgement of the need for New Zealand to move away from a hegemonic Western society. One of the flagship examples of such a shift is the field of education. Indigenous Mäori education programmes now span pre-school to tertiary education levels. Such programmes have affirmed the right for Mäori to be Mäori.

The challenge to Western-based approaches has included how certain forms of knowledge are legitimated while other forms remained unsupported and under-resourced. Kaupapa Mäori research is regarded as research conducted by Mäori, for Mäori and with Mäori (Smith 1999). As a research approach, it fully acknowledges the cultural values and systems of Mäori. This means the underpinning philosophy as well as the conceptual and operational aspects are controlled by Mäori. Research is, therefore, self-determined aligning with the Mäori desired status of *tino rangitiratanga* or autonomy. To understand Kaupapa Mäori research, one must understand the cultural understandings and practices of Mäori or a particular world view (Bishop 1996). For example, a crucial aspect of Kaupapa Mäori research is *whakawhanaungatanga* that promotes the opportunity to locate oneself through the establishment of relationships, particularly through lineage. Once established a platform of trust and sharing can then be built upon. Connection between participants and researcher supports the idea of *whanau* or family, especially extended family, who collectively become the guardians of the research and its findings.

Kaupapa Mäori research is not a particular method requiring specific strategies. Rather, it is a wider philosophy of what research means which in turn drives how it should be approached. And while it has been acknowledged in academic circles (see Bishop 2005; Smith 2005) it is more importantly a vehicle for empowerment that is both accepted and endorsed by Mäori. This research approach challenges mainstream versions, but more importantly, it is Mäori saying “this is what works for us”.

The crucial point I wish to make here is that if a research partnership is to firstly be restored and then grow and flourish in my country, it is people like me who must change. More specifically, it is both desirable and necessary that I experience first-hand how Kaupapa Mäori and/or self-determination relates to the research process.

For such interaction to occur, Mäori would invite visitors to meet on an appropriate cultural space. Such a space referred to as a marae is the repository of all things Mäori; the history, mythology, traditions and lifestyle. The marae is also the site where Kaupapa Mäori research belongs; “Mäori research by Mäori, for Mäori with the help of invited others” (Bishop 2004: 113). In the next section of this chapter, I would like to share one of my experiences as an invited visitor where a colleague and co-supervisor and I travelled to the marae of a graduate student to attend a research hui. This was the He kanohi kitea or fronting up, a value that is integral to the Kaupapa Mäori research process.

Russell Bishop (1996) has argued that storytelling is a culturally appropriate way of empowering participants and I will employ this strategy to share my experiences as a supervisor working on tricky ground. While this statement may have related to storytelling within Kaupapa Mäori settings, I feel it is also pertinent for this project. People construct stories to make sense out of their experiences, and during that process, certain experiences are given weight at the expense of others, to promote a lucid storyline. The following brief narrative offers one perspective on this process.

5.3 “Fronting Up”

“You’ve got a long drive ahead”, warns Clair from Hertz.

“So we’ve given you the ‘Purple People Eater’. It should make the journey more comfortable.”

A wry grin reveals her anticipation of our reaction … yep it was purple all right … a V8 Ford Falcon designed to tease any unsuspecting speed camera.

I accept the keys and paperwork while grabbing my gear for the trip ahead. My loaded arms prevent the return of a wave to Clair as she leaves in the support vehicle – a nod of the head will have to do.

Sharon, my colleague and co-supervisor, and I agree to take the back roads from the campus to try and save some time from the expedition. A chat over morning coffee with Paul (a colleague) has prepared us for a six and a half hour journey “make the most of the straights cos once you hit the coast you’ll feel like you’ve been stuck in a blender”. His words are diminished within my thoughts as the V8 gurgles along the Kohukohu Plains. The plains and the blender will be after lunch.

As the coast approaches, Sharon and I relax – a recent stop for frittata and salad with a strong latte acts as a sedative for the coastal leg of the journey. Our attention turns to the focus of the next two days– a hui, hopefully to launch Marama's thesis project.

Sharon glances nervously at the dashboard clock. "Do you think we'll beat darkness?" she inquires.

"God I hope so. I'm not too excited about sleeping the night in the car", I replied.

"Do Marama's iwi allow a powhiri after dusk?"

"I'm not sure – I think Tuhoe won't but I don't know about others – not much we can do; even the Purple People Eater won't help in this blender."

My eyes are cast to the coastline – a procession of bays we must enter and leave as we slowly ascend and round the cape before heading inland.

We both seek a distraction from the topic of time. Sharon suggests;

"Let's sing that waiata again – I keep forgetting the words."

Sharon's request alerts my attention to my korero that must precede our song– 23 essential lines all of which must be in the right order – spoken in Mäori. This is way beyond anything I have done like this before – my stomach feels like somebody turned the blender up a notch.

We break into song thankful our tremolo's are sealed within the cabin and diminished by the gurgle of the V8 as another bay is passed. Our arrival at the last rural town has been delayed by road works where recent rains have washed parts of the road away. We are still an hour from our destination.

"I'm gonna ring her – just so she knows we're here."

Sharon's suggestion signals concern.

"No coverage. Let's stop and try."

"Okay I'll try mine to", I concur.

The stop is brief and unproductive. We are now isolated from much of the world. Our failure to make contact hastens our return to the Purple People Eater and our need to complete the last leg of the journey.

The sun has surrendered to the mountain that stands supreme beside us. The rich greens of tree ferns and native flora become darker and less conspicuous. We are suspicious of the map that tells us it is not far to go, yet the convoluted lines indicate more time than we would like will be required.

A clearing reveals the river, the second significant icon that I will hopefully be acknowledging in my korero before night's end.

We pass three marae – their whare standing out in clearings surrounded by tree ferns. "The next one should be ours!" and before the thought is completed, we are past our destination requiring a hasty gesture on the brake pedal, selection of reverse and a slow cruise towards the marae entrance while the undulations are negotiated until the ignition signals the final gurgle of the V8.

"What do we do now?" asks Sharon.

"Well we can't go and announce our arrival so I guess we wait."

Dusk has set, but there is still enough light for Marama's family to see us parked on the perimeter.

The marae is busy. Bodies zip between the whare nui and the whare kai – surely they know we're here?

Marama eventually emerges from the whare towards the car and gives Sharon and I a big hug. She explains what will happen. We are ready but the blender has suddenly flicked on the turbo – Our korero and waiata await.

Marama's whänau are relaxed and welcoming – their song is polished and accompanied by guitar. It is nothing like the response we will shortly be offering. The all important speech and supporting song to follow. Twenty-three lines – "please don't forget any and for God's sake get them in the right order", a voice in my head warns. … I now understand why speakers on the Paepae pause so often. Some of my pauses are not for confirmation but to search for the words that seem to have gone back to the car – they are eventually recalled and I am finally relieved to hear Sharon signal our waiata has begun. The koha is laid down and I step away – it is now time for the two groups to connect, chat and laugh. Connection occurs through hongi, a symbolic pressing of the noses signalling the exchanging of the breath of life. The hongi is often followed by a brief verbal exchange before all participants partake in refreshments offered by the hosts. Never has a cup of tea tasted so good – I was ready to drink the pot!

In the whare, kai the alluring smell of burning manuka draws us around the fireplace and we chat until dinner is ready. A procession of bodies file into the whare kai as dinner gets closer – everybody is welcomed as they enter and conversations expand accordingly. There is no television, radio, or daily paper. Rather, there is more conversation and the sparking of manuka bark on the fire.

The next morning begins with Rua (Marama's partner) and Tane arising at 5.30 a.m. to prepare breakfast for the guests. The rest of the whänau are wrapped in sleeping bags repelling the cold. The instruction to shower and prepare for breakfast is given. The inhabitants of the whare stagger towards the shower block which is fanned by a cold wind with barbs that break through the vents and tear at my skin making sure I am completely awake for the ensuing hui.

Marama invites Sharon and me to breakfast. The boys have been busy, breakfast is ready and they are on to lunch preparation. The breakfast is almost as big as the mountain behind us. Time is ignored as breakfast takes as long as it needs to. The conversations ensue and our cups are constantly replenished. The first participants of the hui begin to stream in and partake in the perpetual cup of tea. Although most of the visitors live close by each is greeted like a long lost stranger. Uncle Hemi has been called to our capital city for a high-powered political meeting. Despite the best laid plans and the robust organisational skills of Marama, it is times like these that one cannot control. The hui will, therefore, be led by Koro, Marama's Dad.

"Who are we waiting for?" Koro asks his daughter.

"We just need Eddy. He's probably at the rugby ground mowing the grass".

"I'll send Piri over to get him. He's probably forgotten".

The hui begins with a karakia and Koro explains the Kaupapa for the day. The group is arranged in a circle within the whare, relaxed on the mattresses obviously aware of how long such a gathering could take. The outcome will be a yes or no to Marama's thesis topic, and if yes how it should happen and who should be involved. There is no mention of regulations, policy or process. Rather, each person speaks and it feels as though we are circling again and again – there are no votes, no arguments and all contributors are valued through word and gesture. It is a forum where Sharon and I are comfortable as listeners, responding only to questions the group asks about the thesis process. My warning of the deadlines the system places on students is met with partial resolve.

The hours slip by and the consensual nodding of heads appears more united and regular until Koro somehow indicates that we are done and it's probably time to adjourn for some kai.

I have no idea if a decision has been made and I can feel the furrows on my brow as I glance sideways to notice an equally puzzled expression on Sharon's face. But, Marama knows better. She confirms a resolution as we amble to lunch. "So we just need the blessing from Uncle Hemi and we can make a start, but that might take some time"

"take some time!"

Marama's final words remind me of what lies ahead for Sharon and I tomorrow; seven hours in the Purple People Eater, but this time the blender will be turned down!

5.4 Lessons Learned

Linda Smith (2004: 103) has recently stated "qualitative researchers, however, must be more than either travelers or cultural tourists". While this story represents a metaphoric version of travelling and "fronting up", the actual experience has provided a litany of lessons and issues, many of which I am still coming to grips with. I would like to share some of these as a gesture of closure but only in relation to this story. Firstly however, I would like to declare a strong appreciation of Rose Pere's (1988: 14) frustration with "the hermeneutic difficulty of expressing the concepts of one culture in the language of another". The constant shifting of language, culture, values and meanings can resemble the intense rallies of a Wimbledon tennis final. These shifts merely compound the ambiguity that exists for those who seek to understand biculturalism. Despite that, a journey of this nature has yielded many taonga or treasures.

Among the richly nuanced world of Kaupapa Mäori, perhaps the most important learning for Päkehä is the total reordering of values that must apply in the Mäori world. For example, the importance of people or *aroha ki te tangata.* While appreciated in many cultures, it is the essence of tikanga Mäori.

In forums such as the research hui's I have attended, decisions are made only after exhaustive discussion where all have had an opportunity to speak. The bigger the hui, the longer it will often take as more whänau relationships are established. This "culturally constructed metaphor" refers to a process, termed whakawanaungatanga which not only connects people, but also mountains, rivers or islands that are part of these relationships. To be invited on to a marae and to speak at such a hui, creates and confirms a connection, something that can only be contextual. For Päkehä, the opportunity is offered to form part of a "whänau of interest". Bishop (in press: 16) advocates that "time as a research metaphor also means that researchers understand themselves to be involved somatically in the research process; that is physically, ethically, morally and spiritually and not just as a 'researcher' concerned with methodology". Arrival and subsequent connection for Päkehä begins with acknowledgement of all people and places, all constituents. Distance (represented through not connecting) or the creation of distance is not a favoured word in the Mäori lexicon. Our protracted journey is no big deal – it is just part of the way things happen around here.

Another treasure I have discovered is the treatment of time. It does not govern lives or events but is peripheral. All things take time and as much time should be taken as is deemed necessary (see also Chapter 1). It is merely a guide, not an enforcer. I learned a wonderful expression *a te wha* which loosely equates to "all in good time". There is always time available for what is considered to be most important. In particular, this applies to *manaaki* or hospitality and *awhi* (helpfulness). How alien this wonderful concept is, to much of the colonial world. There are so many other treasures to acknowledge, but ironically, so little time.

My story is perhaps a brief preview of the distance that must be covered before any real connection can be established. As Glynn and Berryman (2001: 3) advocate "any attempts to improve relationships with indigenous people are best seen as first steps on a long journey". Clearly, as a Päkehä New Zealander, there are many tensions that I must address and overcome. And perhaps the most difficult concerns the biases I have established while growing and living in a colonial world. I am reminded as I reflect on this journey "…that our interaction with others are deeply affected by our everyday intuitive theorising about how other minds work" (Bruner 1996: 45). The risk can, therefore, see "Päkehä ideas…used to make observations and judgements about the Mäori world with little or no attempt to reconcile the different epistemological bases of the two cultures" (Irwin 1992: 8).

Scheurich and Young (1997: 11) argue that the epistemologies drawn on in educational research are typically biased as nearly all legitimated epistemologies in educational research stem from a white social history. By choosing to endorse such decisions, "we white researchers are unconsciously promulgating racism on an epistemological level". To ameliorate such biases requires what Heshusius (1994: 17) refers to as a *participatory mode of consciousness* that "results from the ability to temporarily let go of all preoccupation with self and move into a state of complete attention". Moreover, Pallas (2001: 7) eloquently advocates why epistemological diversity is needed:

> If educational researchers cannot understand and engage with one another, both within and across at least some educational research communities, the enterprise is doomed to failure. Thus, to prevent a recurring pattern of epistemological single-mindedness, educational researchers will need to engage with multiple epistemological perspectives to the point that members of different communities of educational research practice can understand one another, despite, or perhaps through their differences.

However, not all agree with this espoused need for expansion. Siegel (2006: 3), for example, has recently responded by proposing that "the call for epistemological diversity is not, where justified, as radical or significant as it is often taken to be; and that, where it is radical or significant, it is, alas, not justified". Diversity or not, the landscape has changed.

The traditional role of supervisor has undergone a potentially discursive richness whereby students and supervisors have opportunities to seek and experience new ways of mutual learning. By example, Kaupapa Mäori research fosters and promotes collectivity as a central characteristic thereby situating the supervisor beside co-researchers and contributors of the research whänau. For me, such a move could only be described as uncertain. It has meant a reassessment of who I am, what I do and how I see the world. In some ways, it has meant a re-examination of my Kaupapa. Part of that process has included revisiting the work of Michael King, a notable historian in our country who was recently taken from us in tragic circumstances. In his watershed text *Being Päkehä Now*, King (1999: 239) states "to be päkehä… is not to be European; it is not to be an alien or a stranger in my own country. It is to be a non-Mäori New Zealander who is aware of and proud of my antecedents, but who identifies as intimately with this land, as intensively and as strongly, as any Mäori. It is to be … another kind of indigenous New Zealander". Many would argue that Michael King gained great respect from Mäori because he "fronted up". While arguing his right to be "another kind of indigenous New Zealander", he spent a great deal of his life articulating his knowledge of and sensitivity for things Mäori. His work helped many Päkehä New Zealanders to understand the aspirations and rights of Mäori while advocating "that Mäori had every right to be Mäori in their own country and to expect Päkehä to respect them" (King 1999: 9).

My re-examination process has also called on the work of James Ritchie, author of *Becoming bicultural*. Ritchie (1992: 204) succinctly states:

> Mäori use the word kaupapa in various ways. It is the term for purpose, agenda, intention, reason. At a deeper level it is the basis, the platform, the standpoint, the assured philosophy. And beyond that is the medium through which wairua is made manifest, emerges in action in the palpable world. To be true one must find one's kaupapa. It simplifies. It organises. It gives assurance. You return to it when you get lost.

And the search for my Kaupapa continues.

5.5 A Final Word

Kaupapa Mäori is not something that can be read up on thereby achieving a sufficient level of literacy. While a growing collection of relevant literature can be found on many library shelves, it will not provide all that you need to know. Nor will conversation with students and colleagues versed in this research process. It is not a matter of rules, conventions, tips and tricks. This methodology is different, and perhaps more importantly, must be approached differently. Most methodologies you can learn and do. Kaupapa Mäori you must be. That requires what Bishop (1996: 238) terms *cultural consciousness* "a way of knowing that is born of time, connectedness, participation and commitment". It is not just a language, intellectual notion or protocol marked by ceremony. Nor is it just about history or an appreciation of artefacts. Kaupapa Mäori requires an acknowledgement beyond the palpable that addresses the mystical, the spiritual, the ethos, the life force. Many such intangibles will only be partly understood and never completely known by non-Mäori. For the Mäori world is deeper and protected. Any approach towards such a world must be marked by reverence and authenticity. It is a world that cannot be uplifted and transported from its rightful place to be conveniently called upon by those who know not of its heart. Such a gesture is sheer folly.

Na reira
Ka nui to mihi
Ki a koutou

Glossary of Mäori Terms

Aotearoa	New Zealand
aroha	love, respect, sympathy
hongi	press noses in greeting
hui	formal Mäori meeting
iwi	tribe
kai	food
karakia	incantation, chant
Kaupapa	philosophy
Kaupapa Mäori	Mäori philosophy and practice
koha	gift
korero	to speak
mana	status, prestige, dignity
marae	formal Mäori meeting venues
mihi	greeting
Päkehä	non-Mäori, mainly European New Zealanders
powhiri	ceremony of welcome
taonga	property
Tuhoe	a Mäori tribe
wairua	spirit
whänau	family
whare nui	large house
whare kai	dining house

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Chapter 6
Researching Anger in Indigenous Men in Prison: A Perspective from Non-Indigenous Researchers

Linda Davey and Andrew Day

Abstract In this chapter, the attempts of non-Indigenous researchers to develop an appropriate research methodology to investigate anger in Indigenous men in prison are described. The chapter examines the need for research that can meaningfully inform service provision to be conducted in the context of Indigenous critiques of mainstream research methodologies and describes some of the issues that arose in our attempt to achieve this. What emerged was an appreciation of the way in which the research methodologies that were available to us were inescapably representations of our own cultural backgrounds and that effective and culturally acceptable research practice was not a question of mere methodology, but of being prepared to remain conscious of the potential for our research to do harm.

Keywords Indigenous Australian, Anger research, Men in prison, Research dilemma, Ethical issue, Harm in research, Indigenist research, Skepticism and resistance.

6.1 Introduction

For most Australian qualitative researchers, colonialism is considered to be a thing of the past. Many non-Indigenous researchers in Australia would argue passionately for the improvement of conditions for Indigenous communities and would

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strongly support political and social action that aims to improve the rights of Indigenous Australians.[1] However, notwithstanding these noble intentions, many commentators (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) consider the practice of research with Indigenous participants, to be intimately bound up with the political process of colonisation, with the results used to promote inequity and maintain the status quo. Concerns have, for example, been raised about the exploitative and disrespectful treatment of Indigenous peoples as research subjects for the building of academic reputations, the adoption of research processes where control and conduct of the research and the publication of findings were retained solely in the hands of non-Indigenous researchers and institutions, the failure of researchers to deliver either short- or long-term benefits to Indigenous communities and individuals, and the misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures, practices, individuals and communities by non-Indigenous professionals (Humphrey 2000).

These critiques of research now resonate strongly throughout Indigenous communities, both amongst the Indigenous academic, cultural and political leadership and among the broader Indigenous population. The Indigenous community has become aware of the dangers of research for their well-being as individuals, as communities and as cultures (Rigney 2001). Consequently, non-Indigenous researchers wishing to embark upon work which addresses Indigenous issues may be faced with skepticism and significant resistance from Indigenous gatekeepers. They are increasingly being challenged to justify their motivations and methods.

6.2 The Research Project

In this chapter, we describe our efforts as non-Indigenous researchers to engage in research which explores the need for effective tertiary intervention programmes within correctional settings as a way of reducing Indigenous reincarceration. Since the publication of the report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC 1988), it is now common knowledge that Indigenous Australians are grossly over-represented in the prison population; a situation that remains largely unchanged despite the widespread delivery in recent years of a range of offender rehabilitation programmes. The context for this research was widespread dissatisfaction expressed by service providers about the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of programmes that are currently offered to Indigenous men in Australian prisons, and the need to develop new ways of thinking about their problems with anger and violence. Our project

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[1] In this paper the word Indigenous is used to refer to Australian Aboriginal peoples. This group is made up of a number (over 600) of different cultures and tribal groups and represents what is probably the oldest continuous culture of people in the world today. When Australia was colonised in 1788 it was regarded as "terra nullius" (literally meaning land of no peoples) and Indigenous Australians were both dispossessed from their lands and denied basic human rights. It is only in recent times that Indigenous Australians have been given the right to vote (1967) and had any land rights acknowledged (1992).

sought to address some of these identified shortfalls in existing anger management programmes in which Indigenous prisoners were engaged.

Most people who work in correctional settings are familiar with the debate over the last 30 years surrounding the effectiveness of offender rehabilitation programmes. This debate has gradually, over more recent years, given way to a consensus that appropriately designed and delivered interventions do have a significant impact upon recidivism, with ideas of evidence-based practice dominating the field in much the same way as they have in other areas such as physical and mental health (Chambless and Ollendick 2001). The dominant paradigm for service delivery in Australian prisons (and in other Western cultures) is commonly referred to as the "what works" approach, whereby decisions about appropriate service delivery are informed by empirical research investigating the impact of different types of intervention upon recidivism (Day and Howells 2002). The most rigorous experimental studies are selected and their results aggregated, using the statistical method of meta-analysis, to produce an average effect size for a particular type of intervention. This enables different types of interventions to be classified according to the evidence relating to their effectiveness (Andrews and Bonta 2003). In short, there needs to be a strong evidence basis for the further development and delivery of services for Indigenous men in prison.

6.3 Developing a Research Methodology

This dominant research paradigm became problematic for us. As we began to design this project, we became aware that the "what works" approach, with its reliance on the scientific model, makes a number of assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon being studied and that these assumptions do not sit well within the context of exploring Indigenous rehabilitation programmes. In addition, the focus of the "what works" approach on recidivism reduction creates an ethical dilemma when discussing the notion of effectiveness of Indigenous programmes. We became increasingly aware of the possibility that traditional evaluative methods would not only give us the wrong information, but would potentially lead to research that undermines Indigenous cultural experience and cultural integrity (cf., Chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13 in this volume).

The "what works" approach to programme evaluation operates within a positivist research framework (Day 2003). It assumes that research methods that have been found to be effective within one culture are likely to be universally valid, and hence generalisable, across different groups. According to this etic approach, it is considered unnecessary to develop specific approaches for different cultural groups given that any differences between cultures are likely to be quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. For example, a core consideration task for those responsible for the management of offenders is to assess the risk or probability of an individual committing a further offence. Theoretically, it has been suggested that those factors associated with re-offending should not vary substantially across different ethnic groups and that such risk assessment tools developed for use on non-Indigenous offenders can reasonably be used with Indigenous offenders (e.g., Bonta LaPrairie and Wallace-Capretta 1997). This is in the absence of any serious consideration of whether Indigenous and non-Indigenous offenders in Australia display the same risk of re-offending markers, the extent to which the social context in which offending occurs may influence risk, and in spite of cautions against applying measures that have been developed for use with other populations (e.g., Dawson 1999). Further, a positivist framework assumes that the phenomena being studied are essentially independent of each other. Indeed, the classical Neyman-Pearson framework using experimental and control groups (Van de Vijver and Leung 2000), does not, by its very construction, allow for the object of study to be understood within a context, but conversely strips behaviour of all complexity. Historically, such psychological research has been met by the Indigenous community with suspicion and has led to Indigenous people disengaging with research (Smith 1999; Rigney 2001). The privileging of context, relationship and story by Indigenous communities has meant that many experimentally framed research projects have been considered politically unacceptable.

Given our interest in conducting research that could inform the development of rehabilitation initiatives and policies for Aboriginal men in prison that would reduce the risk of further offending (and ultimately rates of over-representation), we immediately faced a problem. On the one hand, the only type of knowledge considered valid by those responsible for funding services is that obtained through positivist research methodologies; on the other hand, positivist research methodologies are unlikely to be welcomed by the Indigenous communities with whom we wished to work. We were becoming acutely aware of the need to inform our research practice using an interpretive framework, where context could be acknowledged and complexity could be accommodated. We were also becoming aware that the aim of our research was not necessarily to evaluate, but rather to explore the cultural appropriateness of programme content and delivery. Consequently, we embarked on a research design which would allow us to explore how anger itself was understood and experienced by Indigenous men in prison. By using these men's stories as a data source, we sought to allow the context of anger experience to remain alive thereby engaging with these complexities rather than disregarding them.

The danger here was that by undertaking such qualitative research in this context, we would end up with a research project which, although enabling Indigenous voices to be heard in the data, would be unlikely to lead to any short- or long-term changes to programme delivery or policy. The very real risk of policy makers rejecting the research as anecdotal and subjective would lead to yet another piece of Indigenous research that was ineffectual in terms of bringing about real benefits to Indigenous communities (Humphrey 2000). In addition, the pressure to generalise beyond the current participant group in order for policy and programmes to be developed demanded more than just an exploratory study. At the same time, any research utilising conventional experimental methods would run the risk of not being approved by the Indigenous community, potentially leading to a lack of cooperation from potential participants. In addition, such methods would miss the point of our interest in cultural appropriateness through a narrow focus on individual variables and potentially fuel racist interpretations of the data (e.g., Aboriginal men are more violent that white men).

We were, then, anxious to devise the best design to access the cultural constructions of anger as well as the individual experiences, to place the subject at the centre of the enquiry and treat the subject and object of knowledge (i.e., Indigenous prisoners and anger) as co-constitutive and interdependent. It, therefore, seemed appropriate to utilise a methodology that acknowledged the importance of narrative, context and culture to explore how anger as an emotion is understood and experienced by a group of Indigenous men in a South Australian prison. This methodology seemed broadly consistent with the principles of what has been referred to by some as “Indigenist” research (Rigney 2001). This approach to research argues that all research involving Indigenous people should be undertaken to serve and inform the Indigenous struggle for recognition and self-determination, giving a voice to Indigenous people. For Rigney (1997, cited in Foley 2003: 18): “Indigenist research is research which focuses on the lived, historical experiences, ideas, traditions, dreams, interests, aspirations, and struggles of Indigenous Australians.” We embarked then on a research project which privileged context, narrative and experience. Enabling Indigenous people to tell their story was considered respectful and constructive by the Indigenous community and their approval and trust was gained (see also Chapters 10, 11, 12 and 13).

6.4 The Research Methodology

The methodology we developed involved individual interviews with each participant conducted by an Indigenous researcher. In the interview, participants were asked to recount two short stories about anger in as much detail as possible. One story focused on the participant’s personal experience of being angry and the other on a time when anger was witnessed in another in order to gain a varied understanding of anger from the perspective both of the subject and also as a social participant. Our hope was that eliciting stories of anger would allow the individual to contextualise the emotional experience. The request for detailed stories allows for aspects of the story that may be deemed “irrelevant” to the teller to be included, details that might indicate aspects of the experience which are outside the person’s conscious awareness. It may well be that details and descriptions elicited during the accounting of the story may be of particular analytical interest, precisely because they are not considered significant. These interviews were digitally recorded on a digital video camera. After the interviews were conducted, the digital footage was viewed and six stories were chosen. These six stories were edited (over the fieldwork period by an Indigenous researcher) into a short video – *Stories of Anger*. This video was screened at the beginning of the reflexive session to half the group. This process allowed for the topic of anger to be explored within a group setting, privileging the social and cultural context within which personal meaning is constructed and understood. This method also had the advantage of not presupposing what the experience of anger was for these men. Rather than relying on predetermined definitions of anger and its experience – a feature of established psychometric measures of anger, and in structured interview approaches – this method allowed for a stance of "not knowing", where Indigenous experience was not assumed to be equivalent to non-Indigenous experience of anger. This stance echoes the calls for a non-Indigenous stance of "humility" in Indigenous matters (Wanganeen in press).

The development of trust between the researchers and potential participants (men in prison) was particularly important to the methodology, and in particular to the recruitment process. Although more demanding of financial resources and time, face-to-face recruitment was done at the prison, a four-hour drive from Adelaide, one week prior to collecting data. These meetings proved crucial to the men agreeing to participate, allowing them to meet the researchers, and as a group, discuss their support for the research. During these recruitment meetings with prisoners, our Indigenous collaborators asked that we supply the prison inmates with food, as a way of acknowledging the contribution that the inmates were making in attending our meeting and providing a small redress to a perceived imbalance in disadvantage. Whilst the inmates and Indigenous researchers were eating, kinship ties and relationship webs were being discussed informally, once again reinforcing the central importance of relationship in any Indigenous activity.

6.5 Discussion

The methodology adopted here would appear to be broadly compatible with Linda Smith's stance on the need to develop decolonised research methodologies. Smith (1997: 28) talks of the imperative for Indigenous voices to be heard in research in the following way: "Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying". The method allows for Indigenous critiques of the way in which history has been characterised to emerge from the data, with participants recounting numerous examples of the way in which intergenerational trauma has influenced their capacity to regulate their emotions in the present day. In Smith's terms "coming to know the past" is an important part of the critical pedagogy of decolonisation, and from a psychological perspective is clearly critical to improved social and emotional well-being.

Whilst critics of research methodology, such as Smith, present powerful arguments there are few accounts (beyond community development research in remote communities) of what a truly Indigenous research methodology might look like. The methodology described here represents our attempt as non-Indigenous researchers to develop something that at the very least is acceptable to the Indigenous community, and hopefully avoids some of the more obvious pitfalls of non-Indigenous research practices.

Emerging from this process of designing this research methodology was our growing awareness of the potential for dissonance between various notions of accountability. As academics, accountability to the funding body, to the university and to the scientific community was at times at odds with our desire for accountability to Indigenous cultural priorities. In most instances, this emerged as a conflict between "heart and head", between the demand for "academic rigour" in a research setting, and the primary place that relationship, emotion and instinct held for our Indigenous colleagues. This conflict emerged at the stage of data collection. As researchers, we have been trained to value objectivity, as psychologists to value interpersonal boundaries. Hence, our demeanour as non-Indigenous researchers on entering the prison was one of "compassionate professional distance". From an Indigenous perspective, this was absurd. For many Indigenous people, prisoners are victims of a society that has undermined their identity, their dignity and more often than not their connections with kin. They are regarded as "troubled brothers" – the embodiment of Indigenous disadvantage. The notion of incarceration is seen as ineffective at best, and as a socially violent form of discrimination at worst. Consequently, our Indigenous colleagues were often profoundly moved and disturbed by the narratives of the men. The delineation between the task of data collection and the desire to counsel was a difficult one to negotiate and we were conscious of the significance of the interviews for our Indigenous colleagues. We confronted our own desire for "untainted data" and objectivity and learned to accept the reality of research as a profoundly human activity.

At the point of analysis we considered how subjectivity might be acknowledged without falling into the traps of over-identification or romanticisation. As Hoshmand (2005: 184) has recently articulated, "serving as an author in recounting the lives of others requires a critical reflexivity and sense of humility. It is important to avoid being patronizing when giving voice to the voiceless and to be sensitive to the asymmetrical power in the researcher–participant relationship". In the first instance, each story was independently analysed by two researchers who coded text relating to two core questions: (1) "How does the person define and understand the experience of anger?" (2) "What are the triggers for anger?" Single cases were independently analysed by answering the core questions from the text. Relevant text was extracted and labelled with a thematic code (Strauss and Corbin 1990). These themes identified in single cases were then cross-checked across cases to allow for emerging themes to be collated and modified where necessary. This process assisted in the elaboration of themes; textual evidence across cases was used to add to one's understanding of the theme, to register negative cases and make decisions regarding the appropriateness of the theme's label. For example, it is at this point that the choice of a theme such as "loss" as opposed to "bereavement" is made. The analyses from both researchers were then collated, then common themes identified. These themes were then compared to the issues raised by the participants in the group discussion. Although this analysis was performed by two non-Indigenous researchers, the Indigenous interviewer then reflected upon the final analysis and commented on the extent to which the themes accorded with her own experience of the interviews. She also pointed out unnecessary use of overly objective language which distanced the reader from the men's experience. In practice, a balance between subjectivity and over-identification was struck between us: on the one hand, by the constraints and rigour of our analytical process and, on the other, by the interviewer's reflections on the findings on the analysis. This, in reality, was a process of mutual understanding and compromise in an effort to come to an interpretation that was emergent from the data, useful but respectful. Once again the positive outcome was largely dependent upon goodwill and the establishment of trust.

Differing notions of accountability have also been evident in the ways in which our research is being disseminated. Accountability to university demands for research publication, academic journals for sophistication and academic excellence and funding bodies for defined research outputs, has at times been at odds with requests from our Indigenous collaborators for "non-academic" outputs that are more accessible to members of the community. Finally, our awareness of the risk of misrepresentation of Indigenous experience has led us to consider ways in which we might best talk about Indigenous experience without reifying the construct of Indigenality or reproduce stereotypes. We consider this issue to be particularly pertinent to psychological research, which is built largely upon notions of both individualism and universalism (see above). Both homogenised and individualised ways of thinking underestimate the role of culture and history and depoliticise questions relating to the definition of psychological issues. We felt that the nature of the research project itself disrupted a universal psychological view of anger management programming (i.e., that Indigenous offenders have the same needs as non-Indigenous offenders in terms of anger treatment). Interestingly, this question highlighted an array of views held by the Indigenous collaborators in our project. On the one hand, there was an awareness of the need for "an Indigenous viewpoint" of "Indigenous experience" (the project itself was focused on articulating an "Indigenous experience of anger") where the notion of cultural identification was fundamental to the rationale for the research, which was widely acknowledged as a worthwhile, indeed urgently needed, endeavour. However, there was also the awareness that there was some danger in constructing Indigenous offender stereotypes and reinforcing victimhood and disempowerment, and a danger of not recognising difference within Indigenous experience which problematises Indigenous identity formation. Likewise, there was a recognition that a one-size-fits-all "cure" for problems such as anger control or violence in Indigenous offenders comes at a cost. Anger in Indigenous people was not simply a direct result of historical losses but a complex composite of past and present, all culturally and politically embedded and constantly in flux. Similarly, we were aware that there was a danger of the qualitative research outcomes being read as unproblematic, unified narratives, that state "what Indigenous experience is". We were also aware of the danger of a politicised reading of the findings which might support a notion of European cultural superiority; for instance in our discussions of Indigenous substance use and early family violence. The notion of a unitary Indigenous experience is problematic and we present this as a caveat to our work. Thus, whilst we identified significant themes, we do not suggest that these represent the experience of all Indigenous offenders.

For Nakata (in press: xx), a key question in a study of this type is not how colonialism has affected the lives of Indigenous men, but rather on how colonialism manifests in the ways Indigenous men can respond to the ongoing issues. Nakata suggests that theorising about Indigenous issues (such as anger) has largely relied on anthropological constructs of cultural difference, positioning Indigenous people "as 'other', and in a secondary and subjugated position to all that is understood as 'not Indigenous'". Similarly, Hart and Whatman (1998) have talked about the role of research methodology in fixing Indigenous cultures in time an approach which they regard as being grounded in the discourse of racism, and which continues to delimit the type and usefulness of research conducted in Indigenous communities. Nakata warns against any approach to analysis that puts forward explanations couched in simplistic binaries. In Nakata's words (in press: xx):

> Indigenous men occupy a space that is *a priori* mediated by a 'commonsense' about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations, which has been inscribed, authorised and established in the many textual productions and managerial practices enacted on Indigenous Australians over the past two hundred years. This circumscription has not only re-written Indigenous culture and Indigenous historical experience into this common space, it continues also to not recognise critical aspects of Indigenous experience. In this sense, we can expect from the outset that Indigenous men will have difficulty in finding the language to articulate tension, confusion, contradiction, and ambiguity which manifest in their experience of anger. Seen from this point, extant interpretative frameworks for understanding an Indigenous man's account of himself and his anger are severely insufficient, if limited to understanding individual behaviour in the limited terms of individual psychology, or singularly as the result of colonisation.

Although the results of this research have been reasonably widely disseminated (and reported elsewhere (see Day et al. 2006), their impact on practice has undoubtedly been limited by our decision to employ a qualitative research methodology. This initial project had only solved half of our dilemma. We were still aware of the pressure to generalise, so that policy makers and programme designers might take our research seriously and effect real change. Indeed, the imperative for this research to have concrete outcomes for the Indigenous community demanded something more. The issue of generalisability was addressed through an extension of the project into NSW, with Koori men in the general community. We were keen to access further stories from other Indigenous men which might allow themes to be explored further with the potential for patterns within the analysis to be identified and confirmed.

We were also aware of the pressure to justify why the themes we identified were specific to Aboriginal offenders. Despite our belief in the appropriateness of the methodology we had developed, it became apparent that if this line of research was to influence policy decisions about offender programming, that we would need to demonstrate that the needs of Indigenous offenders were substantially different from those of their non-Indigenous counterparts. This led us, rather reluctantly it must be said, to conduct a cultural comparison study using quantitative research methodology, with the findings pointing to differences in anger, trauma, and perceptions of discrimination between Indigenous and non-Indigenous prisoners (see Day et al. in press).

We knew that such measures would demonstrate the cultural importance and specificity of the findings and thus potentially provide a rationale for devising anger management programmes specifically for Indigenous prisoners. It became evident that once the qualitative work had been carried out and the trust of the community established, this type of research was now possible. To our surprise, the Indigenous community was not against "quantitative methods" as such, but was keen to ensure that we would position our findings against a background of more nuanced understanding. However, our conclusion from this research was one that was acceptable to members of the Indigenous community who oversaw the research: that Indigenous offenders have specific and unique needs that are characterised by culture and that programmes for this group should be based on a framework for assessing cultural factors, including the cultural identity of the individual, cultural explanations of offending, cultural factors related to the psycho-social environment, cultural elements of the relationship between the service provider and offender (see Day 2003). Whilst this conclusion may appear somewhat obvious to our Indigenous colleagues, the research has an important role to play in legitimising the work of non-Indigenous professionals in correctional settings who seek to understand the problems faced by their Indigenous clients in relation to their current position in society. It gives permission to work from a cultural perspective. The research also provides support for Indigenous service providers, whose views are often too easily written off as anecdotal or unrepresentative. For example, the research offers direct support for the views of service providers in Western Australia into some of the predisposing and precipitant factors that are central to skills-based treatment and rehabilitation (Mals et al. 1999). These include both general issues of low self-esteem and attitudes towards violence, and specific antecedents of violence such as family feuds, sexual jealousy and alcohol use.

6.6 Conclusion

The initial exploratory study, focusing on a specific group of Indigenous prisoners in South Australia gave us an insight into some of the complexities of anger experience in these Indigenous prisoners. This provided a background against which any interpretation of the objective data could be made; it gave us an opportunity to contextualise the findings and provide a more nuanced interpretation of the quantitative data. Many of the issues and themes identified in this chapter will be familiar to those who conduct cross-cultural research (see Hoshmand 2005).We have tried to offer an account of the context in which these issues arose in our own research. Whilst we hope that the design that we adopted will reinforce the extent to which this research can deliver real benefits to the service offered by Indigenous men in prison, we remain aware of the danger of research such as this being used to entrench cultural stereotypes. However, as McCleod (2001: 256) has argued, "often the first steps in initiating change involve not direct action, but creating a framework for understanding what is happening and how things might be different".

What emerged from this research was an appreciation of the way in which the research methodologies that were available to us were inescapably representations of our own cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, the dilemma that we continually encountered in the practice of collaborative Indigenous research was the realisation that fundamental cultural inequity could never be countered by methodological efforts. The quest for effective and culturally acceptable research practice was not a question of mere methodology, but of being prepared to remain conscious of our responsibility as non-Indigenous researchers; a responsibility to remain conscious of the potential for our research to do harm. In conclusion, we were persuaded by Indigenous critiques of research methodologies, despite our good intentions and adherence to ethical research protocols.

Selby (2004) argues that the ideal of equity is a fantasy, and following Habermas (1970), that such situations can only ever be asymmetrical: we can only ever approximate true understanding. Indeed, the "fantasy of good politics" that Selby articulates, is our belief in our efforts to use methodology to raise our research practice above the level of oppression. The belief that all we need to do to conduct Indigenous research is to form a reference group, to employ an Indigenous research assistant or to do narrative research, maintains the fantasy and blinds us to the potency of the asymmetry. As non-Indigenous researchers, this methodology does not give us any grounds from which to claim expertise in this area. Indigenous research "experts" abound in academia, whose continued activities in the research field serve to ensure that their voices are heard (Hart and Whatman 1998). Despite this, however, our belief in the potential value of research to the advancement of the Indigenous community in Australia remains unshaken.

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Chapter 7
Researching Refugees: Methodological and Ethical Considerations

Robert Schweitzer and Zachary Steel

Abstract Research with refugees involves particular conceptual, ethical and methodological issues. In this chapter, we outline a number of approaches to refugee research. The merits and limitations of the dominant trauma approach are reviewed, noting the particular tendency of this approach to exclude indigenous forms of knowledge and understanding. We review the emergence of alternative or complementary approaches which strive to integrate qualitative and quantitative methodologies and emphasise a return to human experience and a deeper eco-social and cultural understanding of the refugee experience. One such methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis is described in greater detail. We then extend our chapter to examine some of the ethical issues which emerge in refugee-related research. This section locates the research enterprise within the broader socio-political context of engaged research.

Keywords Researching refugee, Ethical issue, Methodological issue, Cultural understanding, Interpretative Phenomenology, Socio-political context of research, Sudanese refugee, Mental health.

7.1 Introduction

The contemporary approach to human rights can be traced to the period following the end of the Second World War. Since this time, a comprehensive international framework of principles, laws and covenants has been progressively established that mandates the protection of human rights (Robertson 2006). The development

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of this framework has reflected an aggregation of centuries of thinking about the rights of the person, the community and the nation state. Despite this, almost all countries engage in practices that remain in breach of at least some of the obligations incumbent upon them as signatories to these agreements (Amnesty International 2007; Human Rights Watch 2007). Moreover, as evidenced by recent international developments, the preparedness of nation states to adhere to the full range of commitments to human rights becomes particularly problematic at times of heightened national threat and security, the very time when adherence to such principles is of utmost importance (MacDonald 2007). Indeed, following the 2001 September 11 attacks on the US and the subsequent "war on terror", the very moral authority of this international framework has come into doubt. Specifically, signatory countries of the West have increasingly demonstrated a disregard of their international obligations in adhering to procedures that protect the human rights of terrorist suspects and military and non-military combatants (Human Rights Watch 2007; MacDonald 2007).

Given the multiple fractures that run through the current geopolitical framework of human rights and international protection, it is perhaps not surprising that research into the mental health and well-being of refugee and post-conflict populations has emerged as an important field of study. The aim of this chapter is to outline some of the methodological and conceptual issues underpinning research with refugees. The pivotal role played by the articulation and evolution of the trauma model will be reviewed as well as its emerging limitations. In this chapter, we will also review the development of alternative and more comprehensive approaches to studying and understanding the refugee experience. Finally, we address the ethical issues involved in the relationship between the socio-political context of research and research methodology with an example drawn from one of the author's studies with detainees.

7.2 The Trauma Model

To date, the vast majority of mental health research amongst populations subject to political violence and forced migration has been influenced by a trauma-based psychiatric epidemiological perspective (Miller et al. 2006). This approach focuses primarily on assessing the prevalence of psychiatric symptomatology, specifically, PTSD and to a lesser extent, other mental health concerns, such as depression (Fazel et al. 2005).

The emergence of a distinctly psychiatric approach developed as an extension of the trauma model. This model was ushered in with the inclusion of PTSD in the DSM III (American Psychiatric Association 1980). It is particularly noteworthy that the impetus to include PTSD, was at least in part, a reflection of the experiences of the US Vietnam veterans and the high levels of mental health difficulties experienced upon their return to the US. Thus, from its inception the category fulfilled an important socio-political need to articulate, describe and account for the suffering experienced by the returning soldiers within a broadly hostile community (Scott 1990). While there had been descriptions of trauma-related psychiatric outcomes among previous veteran populations, this had largely remained at the periphery of psychiatry and had not taken the broader social imperative that was charged with their new diagnosis of PTSD (Adler 1945; Scott 1990).

The Vietnam conflict and its aftermath also saw the mass displacement of large numbers of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees which resulted in hundreds of thousands of Indochinese refugees being resettled in countries of the West (Robinson 1998). This new wave of refugees consequently formed the first displaced group to be investigated applying the new trauma paradigm. The dramatic change instigated by the introduction of DSM-III is well illustrated from the reports that emerged from the experience of the Oregon Indochinese Psychiatric Clinic. The first report published by this clinic in 1980 documented the clinical presentation of 50 patients (Kinzie et al. 1980). This report made general reference to the traumatic history of Vietnamese refugees but made no specific reference to post-traumatic psychiatric reactions. A decade later, staff re-interviewed patients to establish the prevalence of PTSD in this clinical population (Kinzie et al. 1990). The authors found high rates of PTSD amongst all Indochinese populations including the Vietnamese, taking into account even those mentioned in the earlier report. The authors also reported on the chronicity of symptoms of PTSD, with most patients (94%) diagnosed with PTSD still experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms warranting diagnosis some 15 years after the occurrence of the original traumatic event(s) (Kinzie et al. 1990).

The success experienced by researchers applying the trauma model to the experiences of Southeast Asian refugees created a template that has continued to dominate research on refugee and war affected populations. Specifically, more recent research has found that refugees experience emotional distress, symptoms of PTSD, anxiety and depression (Steel et al. 1999; de Jong et al. 2001, 2003; Fazel et al. 2005). Further, a robust dose–response relationship has been found between the number of traumatic events and the level of psychological stress reported among refugees (Mollica et al. 1998).

The adoption of a trauma-focused psychiatric epidemiological approach with its focus upon PTSD and other psychiatric disorders has the potential to fulfil a critical function of documenting the nature, extent and impact of human rights abuses (Steel et al. 2004a). The combined application of structured clinical assessment and epidemiological sampling approaches has enabled researchers to carefully document the abuse of human rights across multiple populations while also quantifying the impact of these human rights violations on the well-being of the people affected (Kirmayer et al. 2004). The trauma model also has the advantage of presenting victims as survivors who are in need of specialised care and support. Mental health advocacy based upon the trauma model has seen the development of multiple specialist treatment and rehabilitation centres for the care of victims of torture, organised violence, and war-related trauma across most developed countries in the last three decades (Cunningham and Silove 1993; Basoglu 2006).

7.3 Limitations of the Trauma Model

Despite the success of the trauma model with refugee groups, there are several limitations inherent in this approach. Firstly, a trauma-based epidemiological approach necessarily places a heavy reliance upon standardised instruments which rely on *a priori* assumptions about a range of relevant variables to be investigated. This may be appropriate if the range of problems faced by a community is well understood by the researchers through fieldwork, community consultation or long-term association. However, when relevant variables are not well understood, the dominant tendency to rely on psychiatric constructs developed in culturally distinct contexts may obscure indigenous conceptions and variations in the expression of psychological and community distress and in the broader sociocultural understanding of trauma (Bracken et al. 1995; Breslau 2004). The process of becoming a refugee is not in essence a psychological phenomenon, but rather results from socio-political circumstances that may have psychological implications. Papadopoulos (2007) points to the individual, family, community, social and cultural implications of the process which are necessarily lost in an individual approach. Such events may well result in what is termed societal trauma.

Miller and Rasco (2004) also note important limitations associated with a sole reliance on conventional quantitative methodologies in attempting to understand the range of cultural and political contexts associated with migration and exile-related stressors. The use of qualitative and ethnographic approaches may be important in order to adequately understand the "full richness and complexity" of the refugee experience (Hinchman and Hinchman 1997). It could be argued that there is a heightened imperative on researchers working with vulnerable populations to ensure that the methodologies used accurately capture the participants experiences (Liamputtong 2007), especially in those situations where research crosses the cultural divide. Moreover, by definition, narrative methods emphasise the temporal and sequential nature of human experience as well as the capacity of humans to reflect upon the meaning of their experience.

Another important issue in trauma research relates to the underlying assumptions which inform the research. While quantitative research represents the dominant paradigm within contemporary social sciences, the assumptions, based upon positivism, remain largely unexplored in the presentation of research findings. For instance, while much of the international refugee research undertaken to date has clearly been undertaken within the context of a broader human rights agenda (de Jong 2005; Steel and Silove 2004), this is rarely explicitly acknowledged or discussed. Qualitative researchers are arguably more cautious in explicating their assumptions, particularly as there are several approaches to such research, each with a different set of assumptions. For example, both Miller and Rasco (2004) and Bracken (2001) are explicit in outlining their methodological assumptions in their research on the refugee experience. The reader is directed to more in-depth discussions of some of the more common approaches to qualitative research which has salience to research with refugees such as narrative analysis, consensual qualitative research (Patton 2002; Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005) and grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Charmaz 2006) for a further appreciation of the assumptions and features of each of these approaches.

7.4 A Complementary Approach to the Trauma Model

In acknowledging the limitations of the trauma model, a number of researchers and theorists have begun to utilise alternative approaches to examining the experience of people with refugee backgrounds (Miller et al. 2006; Silove et al. 2006; Papadopoulos 2007). Such research has gone beyond the quantitative–qualitative divide to develop models which attempt to represent the multiple challenges that face refugees. These models cover different levels: the person, the family, the community and the broader socio-political context of people exposed to political violence and forced migration. Once it has been established that becoming and being a refugee is not in itself a psychological issue that can be conceptualised within a biomedical paradigm, it follows that we need to explore methodologies responsive to research questions aimed at explicating salient experiences of refugees. These questions are largely explorative or inductive in nature.

In this chapter, we will focus on one methodology, known as interpretative phenomenological analysis as one approach to explicating the experiences of refugees. We argue that this approach has several features which contribute to its suitability in working with refugee groups and addressing research questions which explore human experience across multiple domains.

7.4.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was developed by Smith, Jarman and Osborne (1999). It is a rigorous methodology based upon phenomenological principles characterised by three qualities: idiographic, inductive and interrogative (Smith 2004). The methodology has particular salience in relation to refugee studies for several reasons: the assumptions underpinning the methodology emphasise openness to human experience and the unique features of such experience which may be outside the experience of the researcher, *a priori* assumptions are necessarily set aside in undertaking such a study and consequently, the methodology has the capacity to privilege indigenous knowledge and experience. By drawing upon phenomenology, IPA proposes that the world of meaning as experienced is constituted by acts of interpretation. These acts apply equally to the researcher and the participant (or co-researcher). The description of the methodology will be supported by a case study which will demonstrate the application of IPA to the area of refugee studies. Lessons learned from this study will be discussed.

From a phenomenological framework, the researcher seeking to better understand the experience of persons from a refugee background utilises their own as well as others' experience of the phenomenon under investigation in order to bring clarity to the researcher's own preconceptions of the experience of people from refugee backgrounds. A derivative of this approach is its access to meaning which the phenomenologist considers to be the essence of phenomena. Meaning is derived from the data of experience, which is not considered as epiphenomenal, and therefore, not something to be reduced to formal categories such as diagnostic categories. By explicating meaning, the significance and relevance of an experience becomes intelligible.

The notion of hermeneutic analysis, developed as a systematic approach to the analysis and exegesis of textual meaning has particular salience in relation to the process of identifying meaning within IPA. Hermeneutic theory suggests that in order to understand a particular action requires an understanding of the context within which the action takes place which, in turn, requires an understanding of the particular actions. It requires a circular process, necessitating a constant movement between parts and whole in which there is no absolute ending point. Hermeneutic theory has been used to inform IPA (Smith 2004), which provides a set of guidelines for conducting qualitative research. The IPA approach aims to explore in detail the experiences of how people make sense of their personal experience and can thus address research questions seeking an understanding of personal experience, values and meanings and can then be extended from an idiographic approach to a nomothetic approach leading to the possibility for group generalisations. The approach is idiographic in that it starts with the detailed explication of one case until the explication is exhausted, and than moves to a new case and in this way, it is incremental in its approach. Material is later combined but the methodology maintains a focus upon small samples. Delving deeper into the particular takes the researcher closer to the universal in terms of what is shared and also what is unique about the experience (Smith 2004). The inductive nature of the approach allows the researcher to explore questions where the answer is not anticipated, but rather emerges during the analysis. This approach allows the investigator to pose questions which would not be feasible using more traditional deductive approaches to the investigation of complex psycho-social phenomena.

IPA involves a series of discrete steps or stages (Smith et al. 1999). The process begins with an interview which is transcribed verbatim. The first stage in the analysis of the data involves the identification of themes which are considered to be expressions of the salient experiences and concerns of the respondent. This process involves two steps. The first step involves open coding where interview transcripts are read holistically and key issues mentioned by respondents are noted. The second step involves selective coding where key phrases, statements and comments are labelled and categorised according to their content. The second stage involves treating the data nomothetically and identifying connections between the codes identified in the first stage. The aim of the second stage is to identify emergent (or superordinate) themes. Emergent themes are identified by noting similarities and differences in the content of the statements that are categorised through the coding process. The researcher may also search for patterns in the codes by examining the frequency of codes across participants. The second stage of the analysis provides the basis for the explication of the data, which involves translating the emergent themes into a narrative account of the experiences of the participants. The structure of the findings is then confirmed by means of rereading the original narratives and modifying the codes accordingly. A second investigator and an independent researcher may than check each phase of the explication in order to ensure that the emergent themes can be traced to the original data.

7.4.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Research with Sudanese Refugees

The value of integrating IPA into a research programme is illustrated by research we undertook with the Sudanese community in Queensland, Australia. In a first study, we examined the relationship between pre-migration experiences, trauma and post-migration living difficulties on the mental health of Sudanese refugees using a range of existing measures (Schweitzer et al. 2006). As with a number of other studies in this area, the research demonstrated the usual relationship between pre-migration trauma, post-migration stressors and mental states, but also identified that only a minority suffered from mental health concerns. The research was unable to adequately explain the nature of the stressors being experienced by the participants nor did we understand some of the potential mechanisms adopted by the group which resulted in a relatively high level of well-being at that time for three quarters of the sample. To address this question, we undertook a second qualitative study utilising an IPA methodology to examine the salient themes of Sudanese refugees in the same community (Schweitzer et al. 2007). The aim of the study was to identify and examine the significance of major coping strategies employed by Sudanese refugees resettled in Australia. Thirteen Sudanese refugees were asked to describe the strategies that assisted their coping over the course of their migration. Responses were transcribed and subjected to IPA. The findings described three chief strategies that assisted participants' coping across all periods, namely religious beliefs, social support and personal qualities. A fourth, less salient strategy, in comparison with others, also emerged in the post-migration context. As an example, participants stated that they discussed their problems related to adaptation to life in Australia with other members of their community, who were particularly encouraging with regard to education and employment as they understood the difficulties faced by newly arrived refugees in these areas.

The conclusions of the study were that participants in the study did not respond passively to events, but were able to engage with others in an active and problem-solving way. The study argued that it was important to focus on the individuals' capacity to make meaning based upon their experiences rather than limiting the findings to a potentially narrow mental health focus which is sometimes associated with a more traditional biomedical perspective. A psycho-social approach that takes into account the beliefs, perspectives and values of individuals, was seen as a basis for rebuilding and reinforcing an adaptive orientation in people from refugee backgrounds.

While the study demonstrated the feasibility of the IPA methodology, it also provided us with some important lessons for undertaking qualitative research with refugees, especially where English is not the first language of the participants. We would propose the following guidelines for collecting data for an IPA study. Like all research, it is absolutely essential to establish a trusting relationship with the participants. This is especially important when working with refugees who have often experienced a significant abuse of trust and are thus particularly sensitive to issues around trust. Trust involves a relationship and successful research thus involves a capacity for and a willingness to enter into a relationship with one's participants or "co-researchers". To enhance the richness of the data, it is often more useful to have repeat conversations with the informants rather than increasing the number of informants. It is important too to realise that the relationship is also important for the participants and the "research interview" may well be accompanied by hospitality. We also learnt over the course of our research that the instrumental relationships which often characterise relationships in Western research may be viewed quite differently in other cultures with the perfectly reasonable expectation that relationships are reciprocal. We suggest that entering into such relationships needs to be undertaken with an awareness that such relationships are important and that researchers are willing to respond to the needs of their participants (see also Liamputtong 2007).

7.5 Ethics and the Socio-Political Context of Refugee Research

Research and clinical practice involving refugees and vulnerable populations in general pose particular moral and ethical challenges (Liamputtong 2007). A number of writers have previously described some of the challenges faced by researchers working with refugees. These include the ethical considerations in the development of participatory research designs (Ellis et al. 2007), the relationship between research, practice and policy (Gifford et al. 2007) and issues around informed consent, responding to refugees' capacity for autonomy and the notion of reciprocation in refugee research (Mackenzie et al. 2007; Miller 2006; Liamputtong 2007).

In the final section of this chapter, we examine the important and yet often unexplored issue of the broader relationship between the researcher and the socio-political context in which the researcher is working and how this impacts on the research context. This is particularly pertinent for researchers working with refugees and asylum seekers given the increasingly hostile political environment in which the rights and needs of refugees are often misrepresented and devalued. The relationship between the researcher(s) and the social context emerged as particularly important within the context of research undertaken by our group amongst families held in immigration detention (Steel et al. 2004b). This study illustrates some of the significant challenges confronting researchers engaging in refugee-related research.

The impetus for research in this field emerged within the context of Australia being the only Western country to have adopted a policy of indefinite non-reviewable mandatory detention of unauthorised arrivals including asylum seekers. All entrants without proper documentation or who had their documentation cancelled upon arrival in Australia were subject to immigration detention, often for many years, including families with children, and unaccompanied minors. The majority of detainees were held in detention facilities located in isolated regions of Australia with little direct access to services or community support. The detention centres were closed facilities and their operation and management was based on a custodial prison model. From the outset, mental health professionals raised concerns about the mental health consequences of this policy on an already vulnerable population (Becker and Silove 1993). These concerns were supported by the comments of repeated commissions of inquiry that raised particular concern about the mental state of detainees (HREOC 1998; Commonwealth Ombudsman 2001; JSCFADT 2001). Notwithstanding these findings, immigration authorities and their representatives refused to allow mental health researchers access to detained populations (Minas 2004) while simultaneously using confidentiality clauses to prevent health professionals working in detention from discussing their concerns in public forums (Professional Alliance for the Health of Asylum Seekers and their Children 2002).

The opportunity to investigate the mental state of detainees developed out of a request from legal workers to provide psychiatric evaluations for a group of families in one of the remote detention centres. The investigators sought and received written legal advice indicating that there was no administrative restriction on communicating directly with detainees for the purpose of research, clinical intervention, or report writing. Assessments were undertaken, over the phone, by same-language psychologists with experience working with refugees from this community. For each family, detailed forensic reports were provided to the legal representatives as well as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC 2004) which has the power to investigate individual complaints. The ongoing well-being of detainees was monitored via the legal advisers and where necessary referrals were made to the health practitioners within the detention facility. Written consent was also sought from participants to allow de-identified data to be collated from the forensic assessments for the purposes of research. In the case of children, written informed consent was provided by their parent or guardian. It was decided that the Department of Immigration and the private company running the facility would not be informed about the research arm of the study. The researchers argued that there was sufficient scientific, moral and humanitarian merit for this decision as repeated "previous attempts to engage the department on issues of research in detention centres had been met with delays and inconclusive outcomes" (Steel et al. 2004b:

26). Institutional ethics approval for this methodology was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New South Wales.

The resulting study documented the lifetime and point-prevalence of psychiatric disorders amongst ten families (14 adults and 20 children). All participants had been held in the detention facility in excess of 2 years. All families described traumatic experiences in detention including witnessing riots, witnessing detainees committing acts of self-harm and witnessing suicide attempts. There were also cases of children being separated from primary caregivers and assaults on minors. In terms of psychiatric symptomatology, all adults and children met the diagnostic criteria for at least one current psychiatric disorder with 26 disorders identified among 14 adults and 52 disorders being identified among 20 children. Retrospective comparisons indicated a threefold increase of disorders for adults and a tenfold increase in psychiatric disorders for children. The findings indicated that specific trauma-related symptoms were common in both children and adults. The majority of parents reported that they were no longer able to care for, control or support their children.

The authors concluded that detention appeared to have significant and deleterious consequences for the mental health of the detainees. They argued that the level of exposure to violence and the high level of mental illness identified among detained families was a warning to policy makers that the policies being enacted had a potential for significant and prolonged deleterious impact upon detainees' mental health. They further argued that more broadly, the manner in which Western countries implemented policies to address the issue of people seeking asylum, many of whom had been victims of war and organised violence, could well exacerbate the risks confronting an already fragile and vulnerable population.

The primary findings of the research were presented at the 2003 annual congress of Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (Steel 2003) and received widespread national media coverage and commentary. The Minister responsible for the management of the detention policy stated in response to the adverse findings that:

> The Study of Asylum Seekers in Remote Detention Centres by University of New South Wales researchers has received wide yet unquestioning media coverage, but it is seriously flawed. It is apparent that it is based on preconceived ideas of the researchers who have been advocates of the dismantling of mandatory detention and who followed a particular line of questioning and reasoning to ensure a result satisfactory to themselves (Ruddock 2003: 1).

In considering the merits of the research as part of a national inquiry into children in immigration detention, HREOC (2004: 392) stated that:

> The reliability of this study has been criticised by both the Department and ACM [the private company responsible for running the detention centers in Australia at that time]. The study itself recognises its strengths and weaknesses in coming to its findings and the Inquiry has taken these into account in assessing it. The Inquiry notes, however, that the findings of the study are consistent with the findings and observations of a range of other experts about the impact of detention on asylum seekers.

The impact of the research on public and professional opinion was substantial. The integrity and findings of the research was defended by heads of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry and National Association of

Practicing Psychiatrists (Wroe 2005). Ongoing commentary from prominent mental health professionals about the weight of evidence about the harmful mental health consequences of the detention policy led senior Ministerial officers to privately commission a review of existing research on detainees from a consultant psychiatrist. Contemporaneously, the consultant made formal claims of scientific misconduct against the research team and initiated Freedom of Information proceedings to obtain access to all papers and correspondence related to the conduct of the detention centre research. Both actions ultimately proved ineffective with the relevant university finding that there was no *prima facie* case of research misconduct in relation to any of the allegations made by the consultant and the clinical material being requested was protected by privacy legislation. The critical review at the basis of the complaints that was commissioned by the Department of Immigration was never published or made public by the Department despite the consultant receiving a $30,000 payment for the commission (Wroe 2005).

The findings of the detention centre study was subsequently published in a prominent Australian peer reviewed journal of public health (Steel et al. 2004b) alongside a second independent study with families held in immigration detention reaching similar findings of high rates of detention-related mental disturbance (Mares and Jureidini 2004). After a series of highly damaging cases of gross mismanagement and abuse of mentally ill persons in immigration detention, the Australian government acknowledged the level of mental harm associated with the practice and in 2006 instituted a major reform process including the release of all families and children from detention and the introduction of review mechanisms for long-term detainees.

A range of critical issues emerge from the conduct of this research and the events surrounding subsequent responses, namely: Is research value-free? Can one separate research from political action? Is it appropriate for government to undertake an investigation into the conduct of research where the motivation may well be to discredit scientists examining mental illness in detention and was the conduct of the research team in breach of ethical guidelines?

Although the original study did not involve deception, but rather a failure to inform custodial authorities about the use of assessments for the purposes of research, the Monash Bioethics Review devoted an issue to the ethical implications of deception of authorities in research practice. Respondents were asked to consider if there is legitimacy for a researcher to engage in "deceptive actions" in order to obtain access to detention facilities in order to undertake research where there is an overwhelming humanitarian imperative and such research is proscribed. Without referring to the political context specifically, Minas (2004) acknowledges the need for research to be undertaken within detention facilities to gain a better understanding of the impact of the national detention policy, and suggests a number of significant research questions such as: the incidence, nature and severity of mental health problems among detainees, the effectiveness of detention health service resources in addressing problems arising out of detention when they occur and the features of the detention environment so as to minimise harm. Each of these questions arises within the political context of a refugee detention policy. Minas also raises the important question of the impact of current practices on the long-term psycho-social adjustment of those who are employed to enforce such policies such as guards and departmental officials.

Clearly, the research illustrates that research in such contexts cannot be value-free. Researchers have a strategic role in highlighting the predicament of refugee detainees by lending their authority and analytic skills to documenting the personal cost and impact of current practices on detainees (Kirmayer et al. 2004). Researchers, as Kirmayer and colleagues (2004: 85–86) suggest, have the same moral responsibilities as any other citizen "to address actions of violence or neglect, perpetrated by the state on their behalf that bring suffering and hardship to others". This reflects what they argue is a fundamental ethical responsibility to uphold basic issues of human rights by documenting the needs, causes and consequences of health problems among detainees which in turn may lead to a change in such policies and practices. Such research is not without its problems and raises important issues particularly with regard to accurately determining informed consent in a highly charged political environment and ensuring the safety of participants. Kirymayer and colleagues (2004) contend that researchers must respect that the detainees themselves have the capacity to judge the potential costs of participating in research and the implicit challenge that their participation may pose to the authorities who in turn have and are able to exercise enormous power over the fate of detainees. These are issues which must be faced by researchers both in Western democracies and in other regimes.

Where there is a conflict of interest between a government position and the normal social contract between mental health researchers and those responsible for detention, Steel and Silove (2004: 93) argue from a socio-political perspective that there is "a legitimate moral imperative in such situations for clinical researchers to breach the walls of enforced silence and give a voice to these who are afflicted". The authors canvass several concerns in relation to research and the importance of weighing up the risks of undertaking such research against the potential harm to participants, the risks in not undertaking such research and the potential benefits of the research which may secure positive outcomes.

The issue of government funding an investigation into the conduct of research is more equivocal. Government funds research and certainly has a role to play through agencies in ensuring that research conducted is ethical and also rigorous. It is after all, imperative that the general community has trust in the research community. However, where the motives of such an investigation are political in the sense of censoring research, it may be argued that such action simply serves to undermine the research enterprise and provides a dangerous precedent in terms of controlling knowledge. There was certainly a perception in the above case that the motivation underpinning the actions of the government of the day was questionable. In response to the concerns previously raised in relation to the study, an independent investigation was undertaken by the university which had initially approved the research. The results of this investigation were to exonerate the researchers and thus lend weight to the argument that refugee-related research, while politically sensitive, needs to be conceived within a socio-political context and undertaken in a fearless and if necessary, politically engaged manner which might not always be in harmony with the dominant narratives of the day (McNeill 2003; Farmer 2004).

7.6 Conclusions

Research involving refugees involves particular conceptual, methodological and ethical issues. In this chapter, we have outlined research applying the trauma model to refugee research. The strengths and limitations of this approach were then outlined. In relation to refugee-related research, we have argued for the use of alternative methodologies to complement quantitative approaches. The approaches advocated requires a return to human experience as a basis for understanding meanings associated with the experiences resulting from people being forced to leave their homes and seeking refuge. One such methodology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, was described in greater detail. We have then extended our chapter to examine some of the ethical issues which emerge in refugee-related research with a view to locating the research enterprise within the broader socio-political context of engaged research.

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Chapter 8
The Ethics and Politics of Researching HIV/AIDS Within the School Context in South Africa

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Abstract This chapter presents the author's experience and thoughts on ethical and political issues associated with researching HIV/AIDS in South Africa. These thoughts and experiences have been derived from the author's engagement in research activities, supervision of postgraduate students' research work and project work. The chapter presents a contextual landscape of the issues emerging from researching HIV/AIDS within South Africa. This contextual landscape then raises issues of ethics and politics associated with the pandemic leading to a conception of data as agency as a theoretical tool to understanding the complexity and competing agendas for researching HIV/AIDS within South Africa.

Keywords Ethical issue, Political issue, HIV/AIDS research, South Africa, Data as agency, Researcher as activist, Researcher as agency, Researcher as mediator, Critical discourse analysis.

8.1 Introduction

My experience as a researcher and a supervisor of research within the context of HIV and AIDS in schools in South Africa presented a range of concerns around ethical and political considerations. Does initial informed consent make a difference in revealing the life stories of individuals infected and affected by HIV and AIDS? What does a researcher do when certain information given by individuals cannot be revealed, or that one cannot pursue a line of thought or that the individual withdraws from further participation in the research project? Can one theorise an incomplete story, draw insights and conclusions based on partial information, or continue with a project after withdrawal of participation even though initial consent has been obtained? How would we break the bond created with the HIV/AIDS affected individual, when that individual has built a trust in you and hopes for some comfort from

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you when all that you can do as a researcher is to tell the story of that individual? These are the cold-face realities of situational ethics researchers find themselves woven into when researching individuals infected and affected by HIV and AIDS in poor countries like South Africa.

Complicated further is the politics behind researching HIV/AIDS. In the face of secrecy around the pandemic, one can question how we come to know of its prevalence rates. Are the statistics exaggerated to promote a particular agenda? Which variables are privileged in coming to know and understand the extent of the impact of HIV/AIDS on our society and systems?

This chapter, therefore, explores the politics and ethics of researching HIV/AIDS within schools in South Africa by drawing on several researchers' experience as they engage with their research projects. The chapter begins with contextual complexities in understanding HIV/AIDS research in South Africa. It then explores the ethical and political issues around researching HIV/AIDS generally and specifically within schools drawing on the experiences of researchers in this field of research.

The four issues that this chapter illuminates are:

- Data as agency – where data are used as agency to advance one's positionality or stance
- Researcher as activist – transferring the individual voice into a collective voice
- Researcher as agency – as a means of empowering researchers to do something for HIV positive individuals
- Researcher as mediator – who mediates what gets told through a storyline constructed by the researcher

These issues will be explored through different research projects that I engaged with, reviewed or supervised.

8.2 Theorising Data as Agency

The concept of data as agency takes on special significance in contexts where data are used in different ways to promote the ideological positionalities (or purposes) of particular individuals or organisations. That is, data take on the form of agency when researchers interpret and use data in ways that serve to further their ideological and political agendas. In this instance, I argue that HIV researchers manipulated and portrayed data in ways that strengthened the images they wished to project to support their call for action on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Data as agency can be theoretically located within an emerging framework of critical discourse analysis as it begins to explore the relationship between a particular discursive event, the situation, institution, social and historical context and the embedded power relations that frame it (Fairclough 1989; Janks 1997; Toolan 1997). Although the field of critical discourse analysis (herein after referred to as CDA) is considered an emerging field, extensive seminal work has been initiated by researchers (Fairclough 1989; Fairclough and Wodak 1997; Janks 1997;

Toolan 1997) and a range of work done in the Australian continent identified by Kamler (2000). CDA espouses a critical sociological reading of the data that is consistent with the multiplicity view. Acknowledging that CDA stems from critical engagement of the taken-for-granted social practices, it is the questions pertaining to the interests that relate discourse to relations of power. How is discourse positioned? Whose interest is being served by this positioning? What are the consequences of this positioning? These questions seek to understand how discourses are implicated in relations of power when we begin to interrogate data on HIV and AIDS. Discourse analysis provides the tools to unpack this evidence, presenting a multiplicity of views and arguments that can be made using the same data. CDA goes further than just unpacking the multiplicity of arguments, in that it exposes the power relations embedded in the various interpretations associated with how the data are used.

8.3 Reading the Educational Context: The HIV/AIDS Pandemic Within South Africa

Specific studies predicting the transfer of HIV/AIDS analysis and projections into the sector of teachers and school education have attempted to map the terrain dealing with issues like supply and demand for teachers and the impact on the education system (Coombe 2000; Badcock-Walters 2001; Kinghorn 2001; Crouch 2003). Many of these studies have presented a broad understanding of the systemic impact anticipated at the national level. For example, Crouch (2003) presented an estimate in 2001 that South Africa would need as many as 55,000 teachers per annum to meet the demand for teachers due to attrition and HIV/AIDS impact. However, three years later, Crouch and Perry (2003) had estimated that South Africa would need between 11,000 to 18,000 teachers per annum based on a modelling which factors low and high incidence of HIV/AIDS, teacher mortality, attrition and learner enrolment. The variation in projections, in itself, raises skepticism about projecting analysis and what variables are privileged in the modelling. In the first projection, analysis HIV/AIDS impact was privileged based on an understanding of the impact of HIV/AIDS national demographics as promoted by the release of several reports on impact analysis by key researchers within South Africa (e.g., Coombe 2000; Kinghorn 2001). In the second analysis, learner enrolment and teacher mortality were privileged as the discourse on learner enrolment and teacher attrition patterns began to influence teacher supply-and-demand analysis (e.g., Badcock-Walters 2001; Ramrathan 2002). The variations in the projections are phenomenal and call into question how data are used.

While there is acknowledgement generally that HIV/AIDS will have a major impact on the nation, the veil of secrecy that shrouds the pandemic presents a sense of skepticism about the knowledge we have of the extent to which this disease will impact on the nation as a whole. Repercussion as a consequence of declaring oneself as HIV positive is phenomenal. According to Ramrathan (2002), declaring oneself as HIV positive has sociological, psychological, cultural and moral impact. Psychologically, it is traumatic to deal with the knowledge that one is HIV positive and will die within a short period of time. The sociological repercussions within a community are great. There are reported cases in the media where individuals, who were thought to be HIV positive, had been assaulted by members of the communities they had came from. For a community that holds respect for maintaining virginity, the declaration of being HIV positive is a violation of the cultural norm. Fear of the social, psychological, cultural and moral repercussions of declaring oneself as being HIV positive leads to this veil of secrecy around the disease.

The HIV/AIDS context is also influenced by the debates (around mid-2000) on President Thabo Mbeki's initial stance on the relationship between HIV and AIDS, donor agency and funding on HIV/AIDS (within the years 2002/3) and the roll-out plans for administration of the anti-retroviral drugs within South Africa (most prevalent within the years 2003/4). President Mbeki's views on HIV/AIDS stem from the problems and contradictions inherent in trying to understand AIDS in Africa. Being influenced by strong dissidents like Peter Duesburg, a California-based scientist, President Mbeki's questions were simply about the methods used in the public health system to test HIV status, the definition used to classify a person as having AIDS and the disease identified as having caused the death of AIDS victims (Maclennan 2000). These questions stem from trying to understand why diseases that generations of Africans have been suffering long before HIV/AIDS are now being arbitrarily redefined as AIDS. His intentions, arguably, would be to shift the debates about HIV/AIDS from purely a medical/biological analysis to developing a social, political and cultural understanding of health-related issues. However, this stance of President Mbeki was shot down simply because people (medical science researchers, politicians, HIV/AIDS interest groups and the public) were saying that there is a causal relationship between HIV and AIDS.

While the dominant view is that HIV causes AIDS, an argument which he (President Mbeki) problematises, the voices of the dissidents were partially reinforced by President Mbeki's initial stance when he indicated that HIV is not the sole cause of AIDS. It is purported that there is a variety of factors influencing how people acquire immune deficiency (Mamaila and Brand 2000). What followed thereafter was a public outcry through, what Govender (2001) calls *mass hysteria* promoted by the media in its reporting hitting back at President Mbeki and the government for their stance. In this context, the shifting of the focus from a biomedical analysis of HIV/AIDS to a socio-political and economic focus was only possible because of the power the president has. He used his agency in shifting this debate about the disease and its impact on society. One can question his motives for this. Could it be politically motivated to promote an African way of knowing, or could it be financially motivated?

Kelly (2003) indicates that the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS disease is in Sub-Saharan Africa and there are fears being expressed that this epicentre of the disease will shift to more populous countries like India, China and Russia. This concern can be seen within the context of donor aid being dedicated largely to Sub-Saharan countries in the form of support for the provision of anti-retroviral drug therapy, prevention of further transmission, and management and leadership to make a difference to the pandemic.

As researchers, we must all resist the impulse to rush to closure, because this invariably means an end to enquiry. It is within this context that the rest of this chapter will focus, re-examining how HIV/AIDS research and reporting has been done, what happens to the findings and how they (findings) take on a unique form of illumination and influence.

It is important to note here that the intention of this chapter is not to discount the severity of HIV/AIDS on our society and systems. It is acknowledged that HIV/AIDS are real phenomena and pandemic in nature. That we need to address it and act upon it before it could lead to a disaster is accepted.

8.4 Interrogating HIV/AIDS Research: How the Surveillance of the HIV Pandemic in South Africa Is Designed?

This section of the chapter presents the commonly used methods of tracking the HIV prevalence rates within South Africa. For each of the methods used, a critique is presented to highlight the concerns about how we get to know the HIV prevalence rates within South Africa. This section also provides the evidence to promote data as agency, as a theoretical construct to explain the varying interpretations on HIV prevalence rates.

8.4.1 Knowing Through Antenatal Surveys

Antenatal survey is the most widely used strategy in obtaining information about HIV prevalence rate. The Department of Health, in partnership with the Medical Research Council within South Africa, has developed extensive protocols in antenatal surveys used annually. These surveys are conducted amongst women attending antenatal clinics of the public health facilities in South Africa (Department of Health 1999). In reporting on the result of the cross-sectional surveys, a limitation of this design noted was that sampling from the public sector was found to under-represent race groups other than black African women, because the number of white and Indian women using these public facilities is typically small (Department of Health 1999: 3). This was also acknowledged by Smith (2001) in his address to teachers at an advocacy conference on HIV/AIDS, adding that in cases where there were participants from other race groups, the data were excluded from the analysis process. It is also recognised as a limitation that the findings do not truly provide direct information of HIV infection in men and infants (Department of Health 1999: 6). The surveillance of HIV within South Africa is being challenged in this chapter for its restricted sampling process which tends to exaggerate the pandemic by selecting certain sectors of the population into their sampling. However, the logic behind this sampling comes from contextualising the disease within South Africa by linking it to sociocultural and socio-economic dynamics like poverty, migrant labour, income inequalities, financial insecurities and gender relations

(Marias 2000; Human Science Research Council 2005). These sociocultural and socio-economic dynamics are largely prevalent in rural communities where economic constraints encourage labour migrations, leaving the women to bear the consequences of movement patterns of the householder, who usually are the men. The Human Science Research Council's (HSRC) (2005) study of the Health of Educators in South Africa supports such assertions by correlating the higher incidence of HIV amongst teachers who tend to travel often away from their homes. In addition, attending antenatal clinics are usually attended by mothers who value Western medicine. Hence, antenatal surveys tend to exclude women who value traditional medicine and who may not attend antenatal clinics.

The exclusion of particular groups of people tends to distort estimates. This assertion can be substantiated in two known studies on HIV prevalence rates where, for example, race difference mattered. In the HSRC (2005) study on HIV prevalence on teachers, the study found that 12.7% of teachers were HIV positive. Further analysis in this study showed that approximately 18% of African teachers were HIV positive compared to teachers of other race groups whose rates were under 1% for the white, coloured and Indian teachers. In an earlier study at the former University of Durban-Westville that looked at HIV prevalence rates amongst university students (see Ramrathan 2002), race groups other than African students were excluded from the analysis process. This was done because the researchers did not want to distort the results of the study.

In all of the studies quoted above, the analysis of the data was compromised by selecting certain segments of the population under investigation and this tends to exaggerate the findings on HIV prevalence rates. By selecting how to use particular data, variations in interpretation can emerge. For example, in the study on HIV prevalence rates amongst university students, one could say that approximately 22% of university students in general are HIV positive (see Ramrathan 2002) or one could say, more specifically, that there is a cause for concern that a high percentage of African university students are HIV positive.

8.4.2 Knowing Through Modelling

Other commonly used HIV/AIDS surveillance is by modelling. The projections of HIV prevalence and impact analysis in South Africa is based largely on the Doyle model developed by the Metropolitan Life Group (a company whose business interests are in life assurance) while other Life Assurance companies have other modelling strategies to forecast, for example, annual death rates. The estimate of demographic impacts of HIV/AIDS produced by the Doyle model is derived from a combination of macro-simulations and micro-simulations.

A macro-simulation is calibrated in terms of inputs at a macro level, such as reported HIV prevalence level at a national or regional level obtained through, for example, incidence studies at antenatal clinics. Closer scrutiny of the primary data gathering and research methodology is not factored into the Doyle model which uncritically accepts the validity of the data sources driving a secondary data analysis strategy.

Micro-simulation is built on more comprehensive, scientifically defensible input parameters which consider, amongst others, risk behaviour of individuals and stratification within a given population and aggregate their effects to produce projections of HIV/AIDS for whole groups or populations through complex iterative calculations. For example, a risk input parameter would consider four risk groups defined in the model: commercial sex workers and frequent clients; other people with high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases; people at risk of infection; and people not at risk of infection. This risk group input parameter would influence the aggregate effects of HIV/AIDS prevalence within a group or population, ultimately influencing projections through the modelling. These input parameters are more fine-grained, but equally little reliable information can be found.

By combining the features of a macro-simulation model and a micro-simulation model, the Doyle model is considered by its proponents to be robust and better able to produce reliable medium- and longer-term projections at a macro-level without losing sensitivity to underlying micro-parameters which may be relevant to a particular group or population. This model also relies largely on input parameters that have reliability and validity limitations. For example, teachers are almost always considered a homogeneous occupational category and that all types of teachers will be affected identically by the epidemic (Bennell et al. 2002). The reality is that teachers are not a homogeneous occupational category. A substantial proportion of teachers are unqualified or under-qualified and this has economic implication in terms of socio-economic status. Hence, the macro inputs across socio-economic status in this model may pose a reliability limitation. Furthermore, a micro-simulation input parameter may consider teacher mobility (migrant worker) as a risk factor. In reality, to what extent are teachers mobile within South Africa? How valid would migrant worker as a risk factor micro-simulation input be in the model? This means that the Doyle model is using data that may not be reliable or defensible, yet it claims to produce projections that are reliable for the medium- and longer-term analysis.

8.4.3 Direct Testing as a Way of Knowing

Direct testing study is another way of attempting to ascertain prevalence rates of HIV to a reasonable degree of certainty. Through a case study of direct testing using saliva samples of students at a higher education institution, Ramrathan (2002) highlights the methodological flaws relating to sampling as well as paradigmatically where the intentions of the study was located within a positivist paradigm, but the process of the study violated several paradigmatic protocols.

On reflecting on the above process of investigating the prevalence of HIV amongst the student population at this institution, the following concerns emerged in the research design, analysis and reporting.

While accurate data on HIV prevalence rate is essential, the reality of obtaining this accuracy is compromised outside of an experimental setting within an empiricist paradigm. Therefore, in the absence of a laboratory setting (where nuisance variables can be controlled) for the investigation, other methodological means of getting to know the HIV prevalence rates are necessary. In this case, the saliva test was deemed to be the most suitable means of obtaining the data required from a statistically recommended sample size and this could be done outside of laboratory conditions in experimental research. In addition, the use of the saliva test as an indicator of HIV infection was empirically deemed to be 92% accurate by medical researchers on HIV/AIDS.

While empirically based research traditions through direct testing of participants are appropriate in establishing HIV prevalence rates, being HIV positive is a very sensitive issue to the individual participants, personally as well as ethically. The profound effects on participants found to be HIV positive through the research process may be very traumatic without the necessary support to help them to cope with this knowledge. This means that the direct testing research approach must be extended to include necessary support structures to help these individuals to cope with the results of such testing. Equally, declaring the HIV status of the participants of the research may have implications beyond that envisaged in the research design phase. This kind of testing raises questions about ethical considerations throughout the research process in order to protect the research participants during and after the research process. Hence, one begins to question the reasons for individual volunteers to participate in such research endeavours.

The reliability, therefore, of this kind of empirical research study is likely to be influenced by the participants. Participants engaging in this research programme may volunteer for individual reasons and these reasons may not be considered in the final analysis. For example, participants who may have compromised their state of health by having unprotected sex may want to use this opportunity to establish whether they have contracted the virus. Hence, the sample used may be those that are at risk and this could influence the results substantially if known. This empirical research did not allow for such enquiry from its participants and therefore the sample volunteered in this research process may not be representative of the university population. It may be possible that only HIV high-risk individuals may have participated in the research.

Random sampling was intended, but mostly black African students volunteered. This sample was not representative of the demographics of the institution’s student population (approximately 60% black African and 40% Indian population).

The non-random selection of the participants for this exploration of HIV prevalence rate amongst the student population compromises the generalisability of the findings of this survey. The probability that in every 100 students, approximately 23 are HIV positive is a misrepresentation given the diversity of its population.

8.4.4 Secondary Data Source as a Way of Knowing

In July 2000, Carol Coombe published her commissioned (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa – UNECA) national report on the impact of

HIV/AIDS on the education sector of South Africa. The report is based largely on secondary data sources, like surveys of women attending public antenatal clinics; UNAIDS statistics; commissioned reports prepared for specific organisations, for example, the SA National Council for Child Welfare; and so on. While secondary data sources are, in themselves, acceptable and useful in research, one needs to understand and take cognisance of how the personal agendas and biases of the various organisations are amplified and pushed through these reports. Also when secondary data are presented, the methodology used in obtaining the original data in the primary source is not presented, and it is taken for granted that the methodology employed is within the rigour of scientific research. The direct testing study presented in the preceding section (prevalence of HIV amongst university students) alludes to the violations of scientific rigour in its sampling process and research design. Yet, the data established from that study were used by the institution as a basis to indicate its institutional HIV prevalence rate amongst its students as being below the national norm for higher education institutional prevalence rate. These data will then be considered as secondary data and could take on a life form of their own. Questions are raised on the incestuous inter-reliance on previous studies that seem to characterise the landscape of HIV/AIDS research worldwide. While Coombe has chosen to analyse an accumulation of research already conducted to provide a synthetic record of past studies, she does not problematise the validity and reliability of these studies. However, she chooses one set of strategies to collect data and does not problematise them, yet she uses these data to project the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system. Her intentions would, thus, seem to be to bring to attention the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system in the hope of getting donor agencies, bureaucracy and other influential individuals and agents to act on this impact analysis.

8.5 Ethical Issues in Researching HIV/AIDS in Schools

Through observations as a researcher, autonomy, identifying and preventing any potential harm and contributing to social benefits are perhaps the cornerstones of ethical considerations in researching HIV/AIDS. Changing names and places, obtaining the necessary consents from respective individuals and organisations and protection from harm are the most common thing to do to protect people involved. What are other things that we can do as researchers? Let us explore some research on HIV/AIDS that I have supervised and participated in.

8.5.1 Researchers as Agents

Nasaree (2005) explored, through a case study, the personal and school life of a HIV positive secondary school learner as she negotiates her daily activities around herself. In this study, much attention was given to situational ethics as the research unfolded. The dilemmas experienced in this study plagued the study and what was revealed is the best information that could be revealed under the constraints imposed and through the techniques used.

The case study of this young HIV positive learner presented enormous difficulties. Firstly, the ability to get a HIV positive learner to consent to such a study, coupled with the approval of individuals closely associated with the learner has proved to be extremely difficult. The study was finally completed after two failed attempts. The first learner, who was eager to engage in this study, decided midway through the study not to participate due to pressure from her boyfriend. The second learner disappeared soon after the commencement of the data collection. It was later discovered that she had died. The third was quite intimidated, at times threatening not to continue for various reasons along the research process.

With the establishment of the School's peer counseling service at school, Angel (not her real name) was introduced as a research participant via a peer counselor, Precious (not her real name). Precious and Angel were very close friends and they attended the same church and lived in the same area. Precious was also assisting Angel by counseling her. Angel admitted, with medical proof, that she was HIV positive and that she was a learner at a neighbouring school. After informing her of the researcher's concern and intention to assist HIV positive learners in schools, she had agreed to be a part of the research study (social benefits beyond the individual). Thus, Angel, being 16 years old at the time, had agreed to participate under the following conditions:

- That she remains anonymous
- That the interviews be confidential and conducted at the researcher's school and not at hers (HIV positive learner), early in the morning or after school hours or in public meeting places of a social nature
- That the interviews be conducted with her mother take place in the presence of Precious or by Precious herself
- That the observation of her in school be done by her subject educator whom she would identify

The case study involved various data collection methods. These included observations for a week in the school and semi-structured interviews with Angel, her mother and her subject educator.

This research study created the opportunity for the observation of Angel in her school setting for a period of one week. General information on the agreed upon criteria had to be noted by the educator observing her. The criteria agreed upon were as follows:

- The number of days Angel attended school in that week
- Her interaction with her friends and peers during the first and second break
- Her participation in any lunchtime activities
- Her general demeanour during the breaks and lesson time

Such observations were not intensive or overt because of the sensitive nature of the research and the fact that she did not disclose her positive status to anyone at her school except her subject educator who indirectly knew of her problem. Further, the agreement reached with her that no attention would be drawn to her within her school environment was binding. In this instance, superficial observation as opposed to directed, detailed observation may have had implications for analysis (superficial analysis). Can we rely on these data?

Due to the personal and emotional nature of the interview, Angel preferred that her responses were to be noted rather than be recorded by a tape recorder. Interviews were conducted in the presence of her peer counselor, Precious. Precious was Angel's crutch when issues were emotionally charged. Immediately after the interview was over, the researcher had to expand on the note-taking. How much details of the interviews may be omitted because of difficulty in recording the responses while establishing and maintaining rapport with the individual (interviewee)?

Interviews were also conducted with her mother and her subject educator. The interview with her subject educator was based on his general observation of her as she did not disclose her status to him formally, but she believed that he knew what was wrong with her as she often told him that she was sick, and that he knew what kind of sickness she was suffering from. The interview with Angel's mother was conducted by Precious in the informal settlement that she resides in. Precious is both a trusted friend and counselor to Angel and Precious often assists Angel's mother in the process. Therefore, Precious was trusted by Angel's mother as she believed that Precious would only help them. Precious is a trained peer counselor, who received her training from the Psychological and Guidance Services of the Department of Education. Precious has been interviewing and counseling learners for the past three years at the researcher's school. What agenda does the agent bring into the interview process – is her recording of the interview nuanced and filtered through this agent? Precious was briefed on what information was required from the interview before it took place. Further training on refining Precious's interviewing skills was provided by enacting a mock interview with her. The secrecy of this research and the agreements reached initially resulted in Precious being the only means to secure the interview with Angel's mother.

Using Precious as a data collection agent has its advantages and disadvantages, as is evident in most data collection processes involving field agents. However, in this case, Precious was more than just a field agent collecting field data. Personal trust by the respondent on Precious was the key to vital information within the sensitive context of the nature of the study.

The researcher role in this study was severely hampered by the constraints imposed by society on the HIV/AIDS sufferer. Non-disclosure by Angel to authorities within the school environment severely hampered the ability of the researcher to enter her school environment. The researcher's role in the research process was restricted even further as agreements were reached prior to the actual conducting of the research. The agreements were binding because of the fear of Angel being caught out by anyone that she was HIV positive. The sensitive nature of The HIV problem forced the researcher to often ask the question, how does one conduct research on such a sensitive and life-threatening issue? The first two attempts in conducting a research of this nature failed because the participants revealed an unnatural terror at being HIV positive and feared for the safety of their lives. After initial formal consent to engage in the research, and after months of research the withdrawal of consent to publish the findings (in one case) and the disappearance of the other case resulted in the un-usability of the data and hence an abortion of this aspect of the research. The third attempt through the third case study could have gone the same route had the researcher not agreed to the conditions. Angel provided the researcher with a response in one of their meetings when she answered that "*being HIV positive is a death sentence through slow torture and it only magnifies the terror of being found out that you are the carrier of a deadly virus – your life is doomed and you are sentenced to a life of ridicule and condemnation by the rest of those around you*", which is in keeping with the issues of the veil of secrecy surrounding the HIV/AIDS pandemic as explored more fully in Ramrathan (2002). Armed with a determination to make a difference in the lives of HIV positive learners at school, the researcher pursued this study with caution not to renege on any of the agreed conditions for engagement.

Because of the personal nature of the information that was required, the researcher's relationship with Angel was one based on mutual respect and a deep commitment on the researcher's part to listen and to understand her experiences. Often, the researcher's own identity as a researcher had to be diluted at times as the situation called for offering advice from a variety of perspectives. At times, the researcher had to assume the role of a mother, educator, counselor, friend and confidante offering emotional and mental support. Therefore, it was impossible at times not to become emotionally involved in the research especially if you are an adult listening to a young child.

Through this study, much of the data was produced through agency. Precious, the peer counselor acted as a conduit or access to information. The voice of the participants (Angel and Angel's mother) were filtered through, and perhaps amplified, by the experienced voice of the agent (Precious). The collective experience of three central persons in advancing positions, illuminating issues and suggesting demands by HIV positive learners and parents of HIV positive learners on schools provide a compelling storyline that emulates a version of the truth. Furthermore, the failed previous attempts to tell the story of a HIV positive learner provided experience needed in managing a case study of such a sensitive issue, although their partial stories could not be told. The study illuminated demands made on schools by the HIV positive learner, the parents of the HIV positive learner and the educators themselves.

8.5.2 Researchers as Activists

Should we as researchers take on a participatory stance or an activist stance? In this line of action, the voice of the individual is transferred to the collective – "the people". The activism stance is fast gaining momentum as a way of knowing, through organisations like Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa campaigning for action politically, medically and socially to support HIV positive people. Here, the ethical issues of revealing and expectations are camouflaged under the name of activism. But, this is also limited in its scope and geography. Collectivism tends to marginalise the individual. Hence, whose agendas are being mainstreamed in collective activism?

Appalsamy's (2007) research in progress explores the personal and professional lives of HIV positive teachers. During her data collection, she experienced several difficulties associated with the fear of disclosure. One of her participants was terrified of disclosure to the extent that all data collection was done in a public place over coffee or lunch. She was not allowed at the participant's home or school. The community from where the participant came was quite hostile to HIV positive people to the extent of physically harming individuals and destroying their property. A family was driven out of that community by physical harm and burning of their home because one individual was suspected of being HIV positive. The level of fear pervaded the entire community and the data collection was done at a place where suspicion was perceived to be non-existent. Unfortunately, the teacher was hospitalised and died before the project was over. The researcher was not allowed by the family to visit the teacher in hospital or to come to the funeral for fear of drawing suspicion to the family, that the teacher's status would become known, and that the family would have had to deal with the aftermath by the community.

Appalsamy nevertheless, wrote the story of this teacher as she wanted to reveal through her voice the personal and professional live of this HIV positive teacher immersed in a fear of disclosure. She took on an activist stance.

8.5.3 Researchers as Mediators

Mudaly's (2006) research on sexual identity construction amongst learners in schools focusing on learners' knowledge, awareness and risky behaviour reveals an interesting slant to how we produce data from learners, whose story is told and how do we know that these stories are authentic. She trained learners as co-researchers so that they could interact with their peers in the language and style of communication that make sense to them (paying attention to power relations in researching young learners by adults) and in this process produce the data needed for her study. Some of her methods of data collection included the use of photovoice, interview and personal diaries. Finally, the stories were written by Mudaly interpreting the information gleaned through her learner co-researchers. The question is whose story is being told. Is it the learners' stories of their construction of sexual identities? Is it the co-researchers interpretation of the learners' stories? Or, is it the researcher's story of her understanding through the data? Each of these storylines could reveal very different things. Do learner co-researchers mediate data collection?

Maharajh (2006) in her study on teachers teaching the HIV and AIDS through the Life Orientation compulsory subject in primary schools found that much of what is taught is mediated through the teacher's culture, experience and knowledge.

Some teachers find it against their culture to teach about sex and sexuality. Some know very little about the content and teaching methods in teaching this topic and are expected to teach with very little training thereby losing the subtleties expressed by learners as well as that of the subject content matter. Through her study, what is privileged depends upon the teachers' culture, knowledge and experience, and therefore, learning about HIV and AIDS is mediated.

8.6 Conclusion

Through the critical analysis of research project and reports on HIV/AIDS, I have illuminated issues of how we come to know about HIV/AIDS within South Africa and activism, agency, mediation and politics that pervade HIV/AIDS research in schools. Skepticisms had been demonstrated in what we know through the normative ways in which we come to know about the disease. In addition, it has been demonstrated how data are used to promote a particular position depending upon who want to say what. The burning question is: How do we obtain credibility in what is known about the disease? Through this analysis, the idea of data as agency is put forward as a possible explanation to understand the varying information that is available to us. This phenomenon was also evident in Matthew's (1998) essay on "Flukes and Flaws" where he cites several examples of studies done on the link between illness and an environmental factor only to be challenged by another study. This kind of statistical manipulation is now used as a mechanism of agency by advocacy and activist groups frustrated with the government's reticence in addressing the AIDS crisis based on what has come to be characterised as a denial syndrome.

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Chapter 9
Exploring Ethical Issues When Using Visual Tools in Educational Research

Doria Daniels

Abstract In the visual as well as word-orientated world that the qualitative researcher increasingly finds herself in, a critical stance about ethics and its relation to qualitative data-gathering methods is long overdue. The growing popularity of technology and the user-friendliness of cameras and videos have led to an increase in the use of visual-oriented tools. Consequentially, critical reflection by the researcher about what is ethical, and what is right in the behaviour of researchers when collecting and using visual images in educational research, is needed. Due to qualitative research not being associated with physical manipulation or intrusive measures, an assumption could be perpetuated that its processes pose no or minimal risks to participants. However, witnessing how identifiable visuals of vulnerable populations are being shown during dissemination of findings in the public domain, has led me to question the ethics of such practices. In a world of litigation, defamation of character and misrepresentation, educational researchers have to be knowledgeable about ethical concerns that are raised about trust within the research relationship and the rights of those who are depicted in the photographs. This chapter provides an overview of the merits of visual-oriented tools in research contexts where the researcher has to cross into an unfamiliar culture, ethnicity and language. It follows with the ethics concerns that should guide the decisions of using visual data methods in research. Lastly, the author reflects on the ethical challenges that researchers face when analysing visual data.

Keywords Ethical issue and practice, Visual research method, Educational research, Critical reflection, Risk to participant, Right of participant, Informed consent, Participatory photography.

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P. Liamputtong (ed.) *Doing Cross-Cultural Research*,

9.1 Introduction

Researchers are entrusted by participants to represent them in a truthful and responsible manner. However, the context of educational research can become an exploitative one when researchers ignore the potential for harm to vulnerable participants in their zest to colour in their word-oriented data with visuals. The showing of identifiable visuals of such vulnerable populations during the dissemination of research findings in the public domain raises ethical concerns about informed consent, trust within the research relationship and the rights of those who are depicted in such visuals. As such, a critical stance about ethics and its relation to visual data-gathering methods is required. This chapter asks how the educational researcher could become critically reflective about that which is ethical, and makes suggestions on how to engage in ethically appropriate ways when deciding to use the visual as method and as data.

In this chapter, I start with an overview of the merits of visual-oriented tools in research contexts where the researcher has to cross into an unfamiliar culture, ethnicity and language. I reflect on the ethical challenges that researchers face when analysing visual data. Finally, I discuss the ethics concerns that should guide the decisions of using visual data methods in research.

9.2 Research as an Academic Professional Practice

The academic as researcher is entrusted by her/his institution and society to engage in research that is ethically defensible. In university-based educational research, research populations often include children and adults. The contexts that shape educational research in the developing world more and more intersects with issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, abuse and non-literacy. The poor, sickly, abused and non-literate are particularly vulnerable as research populations, requiring that ethical sensitivity become an implicit part of the researcher's decisions about conduct (see Liamputtong 2007). Ethical sensitivity as a behavioural concept is discussed by Weaver (2007: 142) as "a caring response, skill in identifying the ethical dimension of care, intuition regarding others' comfort and well-being, and a component of moral care". So too, Fowler and Fry (1988) define ethics as a systematic and thoughtful investigation which has its origin in moral philosophy. When applied to research, ethics refers to the development of a critical and reflective morality that guides decisions and actions. As such, ethical research should be predicated on the expectation that research communities suffer no harm during the process or as a result of its outcomes. In the South African higher education realm, where research is becoming even more valued than teaching, it is ironic that researchers' conduct in research environments and with research communities is so seldom reflected on.

Ethics as it relates to visual-oriented tools in educational research is seriously neglected in the higher education discussion. There is a need, with the increasing use of visual-oriented tools in educational research, for researchers to become concerned about (1) what is ethical; (2) what are the decisions to make concerning the methodology and processing of visual data in educational research; and (3) how these decisions impact on the research participants. The borrowing of visual-oriented tools from disciplines such as social anthropology and sociology is sometimes done without grappling with the full ethical implications of its application for a particular discipline, as also argued by Pauwels (2000). A growing concern for me as an education researcher who often uses visual-oriented tools are the grey areas that exist within ethical codes of conduct, and the vagueness of the research guidelines on how to use visuals in an ethically defensible way in research. Maybe due to the reasonable "newness" of visual-oriented methods in educational research, the differing ethical challenges from word-orientated tools are not yet being realised. However, this lack of clarity creates the potential for the misuse of the method, misrepresentation of those whom the visuals depict, and even the misuse of visuals in research dissemination. With the growing popularity of technology and the use of cameras and videos in educational research, questions can be posed about the ethical use of visual images in research. To begin this discussion, I will first provide an overview of visuals' use in educational research.

9.3 Visuals in Educational Research

Visual-oriented researchers (Gauntlett 2004; Finley 2005; Daniels 2006a) are proponents of the method as a way of strengthening the reliability of a study and the validity of findings based exclusively on language-based methods of qualitative inquiry. As argued by Guantlett (2004), verbal, word-based methods are unlikely to generate the in-depth, carefully considered responses that visually based methods do. In educational research, the method's value is especially felt when researchers work in multilingual communities where word-orientated tools create barriers to communication, and when meanings become lost through translation (Daniels 2006a). As visuals are not associated with a particular language, it has potential to be used widely in cross-cultural contexts. Similar to Preskill (1995), I have found that visual research can lead to a more holistic understanding of the problem under investigation. The visual as data has the potential to become a passageway into unfamiliar, unanticipated environments (Collier and Collier 1986).

Visual-oriented methods, such as photography and drawing, are gaining ground in social science research, a process that has been facilitated by the increased inclination by researchers to borrow techniques and ideas from anthropology and sociology to develop their own work (Pink 2003; Liamputtong 2007; see also Chapters 12, 13 and 14 in this volume). Visual-oriented methods in educational research demonstrate its traditional association with ethnography and social anthropology. In early anthropological research, it was common for photographs to be used during fieldwork (Peacock 2001; Taylor 2002). Ethnographers would photograph people, places and events; thus establishing cultural inventories of communities (Bogdan and Bilken 1982; Prosser 1992). Through a process known as photo-elicitation (Liamputtong 2007), anthropologists used their photographs as stimuli to get informants to talk about their community's cultural activities. In such cases, the researchers would take ethnographic photographs of community life that they present to research subjects to encourage discussion within these community contexts (Schwartz 1989; Liamputtong 2007). Instead of asking a question, the researcher would present a set of photographs to the participants, and elicit explanations from them (Daniels 2003; Harper 2000; Liamputtong 2007). Similarly, in educational research many applications of visuals as tools within research are recorded.

The pedagogical value of the visual as both stimulus and data is widely recorded across disciplines (Bogdan and Bilken 1992; Prosser 1992; Harper 2000; Brems 2002). In psychology, visual artwork has been used as a medium to gain insights into problems that traumatised children might have (Klopper 2007). So, for example, drawings have been used extensively with traumatised children in war-torn nations such as Burundi, Rwanda and Palestine, as a means of getting them to express their fears and innermost thoughts (Knafo 2004). Therapists increasingly use artwork created by children (Case and Dalley 1990; Brems 2002) to gain insights into the worlds of children who might be misunderstood due to limited vocabulary and an inability to communicate effectively. Though non-verbal and symbolic, this medium is used as an additional language through which feelings, wishes, fears and innermost experiences of the individual are expressed.

The photograph – also drawings – specifically as a reflexive tool has been used successfully in cross-cultural research in both the USA (Ziller 1990; Wang and Burris 1994; Douglas 1998) and South Africa (Daniels 2003) to gain better insights into sensitive community issues. These studies differ from the previous research in that the participants collected the photographic data themselves. Furthermore, opportunities are created for the participants to elaborate on the photographs they took, through storytelling. In both the Ziller (1990) and Douglas (1998) studies, the participants' photographs were used in follow-up interviews where they reflected on these visual impressions. In a similar approach, known as the photo novella or "photovoice", Wang and Burris (1994) used the participants-produced photographs to encourage them to talk about their daily lives. See also Chapters 13 and 14 in this volume.

As a research tool, visual images can provide the researcher with valuable insights into community dynamics. Through my usage of visual research methods (Daniels 2003), I found that visuals penetrate worlds in a ways that observations and interviews cannot. When photographs, drawings and videotapes are used with the necessary permission and collaboration of participants, they can provide researchers with access to very private domains, without the researcher physically being present. The personal photographs that participants take are excellent tools in getting them to tell their stories and share their experiences with other participants. Lykes (1997), in her research, used participatory photography with Mayan women from Guatemala to help local Mayan communities tell their stories about internal war, and its debilitating effects on their community. Similarly, I (Daniels 2003) used participatory photography as pedagogy to stimulate discussion and reflection amongst informal settlement women to tell of their experiences as women who are community builders in a patriarchal community. Their own photographs helped them to reflect on how individual and community development is negatively impacted by a gendered leadership. They used their photographs to build knowledge and understanding of how women's lives intersect to inform a community interaction that is built on tolerance and respect.

Visual data such as photographs can also be used very effectively to gain knowledge about conflict situations in communities. In a workshop for informal settlement women who were ethnically and politically divided about community collaboration (Daniels 2003), photographs were used to initiate discussion about violence at the local community level, and its impact on their lives. The facilitator used the non-threatening photographs on community life to get the warring factions within the group to start talking to one another and so gain insight into the others' worlds. As a pedagogical tool, the photos initiated many discussions on life in the settlement, specifically women's role in keeping the community functional.

9.4 Ethical Research Procedures Within Higher Education

Contentious educational research continues to put at jeopardy the trust relationships between research subjects and researchers, institutions and society. This has led professional communities such as universities to publish ethical rules and guidelines to assist their researchers to perform ethically within the research environment. An informal survey that I conducted of South African institutions of higher learning's research guides shows that there is an abundance of ethical rules and guidelines to direct their researchers in their decisions about interaction with research participants. Such guides, in the form of ethics clearance committees and consent forms, also make mention of the processes of data production and dissemination. However, the issues of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and "truth" that underpin ethical conduct when collecting and using visual data are not necessarily clearly set out in these consent forms. Could this be because university researchers comply with it as a requirement of funding or academic programmes? Or could it be that research processes have not been sufficiently thought through by prospective researchers during the ethical clearance stage? Ethical codes of conduct provided by South African higher education institutions tend to emphasise permission and access. This has led to educational researchers responding by collecting signed permission letters from authorities and presenting consent forms to ethics committees as proof that there is compliance with the ethical codes of conduct for research. Berg (2004) and others (Bogdan and Bilken 1992; Ellis and Earley 2006) have pointed out how the relationship between researcher and participants of qualitative research is an ongoing and evolving one. The risks, and so also the benefits, are thus hard to identify beforehand. So too, Piquemal (2001) who conducted research with indigenous communities, has argued that existing consent protocols might not conform with the ethical beliefs of the researched.

When there is an overemphasis on meeting university-approved criteria the attention shifts away from the ethical practices of qualitative research and the ethical concerns about unmasking the research processes that violate the rights of vulnerable participants of educational research. As such, the rights of the participants, the audibility of the participant's voice and the validity of the knowledge collected in vulnerable research communities are not given the attention that is required. Fowler and Fry (1988) refer to ethics as a systematic and thoughtful investigation which has its origin in moral philosophy. Not surprising then, its goal is the development of a critical and reflective morality. It stands to reason that ethics should be part of the principles that guide the educational researcher in her interaction with participants and the data that she produces. However, Kitchener, as discussed in Banning (1987), points out that one of the reasons why universities find it difficult to strengthen an ethical culture is because they have historically focused on ethical decisions residing at the level of the individual decision-maker. Thus, when decisions are complex and involve conflicts among the codes, those individuals call upon only those ethical principles that justify the decisions they make. Furthermore, when ethical principles are in conflict, a discussion of ethical theories provides a way of proceeding with the research. What this could suggest is that an unscrupulous researcher could use ethical theories that are suited to other disciplines, to justify the actions taken for his specific research. Ethical clearance is given based on what the researcher states s/he plans to do, and this is usually in compliance with the university's code of conduct. Once clearance is given, there is no assurance that researchers will conduct themselves accordingly.

9.5 Becoming Informed About the Consent Form

Informed consent represents the foundation of ethically acceptable educational research. Informed consent refers to participants being fully informed about the research and their expected role in it. The researcher typically provides a description of the purpose, value, methods and effects of the research in a consent form. She also sets out the potential benefits and/or risks to participation for the participant, and the right to refuse to participate. At this time, researchers discuss the voluntary nature of such participation, and the participant's right to refuse to participate. When a member of the research population agrees to participate in the study, such an individual, or a guardian in the case of a minor signs a consent form (Babbie and Mouton 2001; Piquemal 2001; see also Chapter 1 in this volume).

Being informed implies cognition, readiness, intention and understanding. In my research with non-literate to semi-literate adults over the last decade (Daniels 2003), I cannot truthfully state that these adults fully understood what the research was about, even though I arranged for sessions beforehand where I explained to all potential participants what the research was about and the value that their participation would have for the research. I spoke about informed consent and their rights as participants, where after I asked them to become participants. When people put their signatures on paper as agreement to participate, should we assume that they made an informed decision to participate in the research? In vulnerable research communities such as the illiterate, or participants whose languages differ from the researchers', there are no guarantees that these potential participants fully understand what they are consenting to. One could argue that some vulnerable people participate in research simply because they do not know that they have the right to refuse to participate.

The more I know about informed consent, the more I wonder about the level of understanding that potential participants have to have prior to them signing these forms. If I am to judge by the discourse and choice of language and terms that researchers use in such consent forms, I become more concerned. Many consent forms relating to research with vulnerable populations, teens and semi-literate adults particularly, that I have reviewed over the past two years as both supervisor and member of a university's ethics committee reflect disregard for the levels of comprehension of the potentially semi-literate participant because they are written in an academic language and include terms that are too complicated to understand by anyone other than the researcher.

Many participants are not familiar with, nor do they have an informed understanding of what the different data collection methods will record and convey about their lives. Informed consent forms often list the methods but do not provide an explanation of what the process is and what the product will be. In preparation for this chapter, I informally reviewed student consent forms that I had access to as part of my university. Most of these consent forms made no mention of, or included information about the visual methods of photography and videography, or made fleeting reference to it as part of observation. This was despite them having taken photographs and videos whilst in the setting. Those consent forms that stated that the research involved visual methods of collecting data only mentioned the method in passing and did not explain how the visual data were to be collected, how these visuals were to be analysed and how the visuals would be used in the public domain during dissemination of findings. The lack of information on the consent form about how visual data will be used leaves the field wide open for misuse of visuals and the individuals depicted in it or linked to it.

The privacy concerns for word-oriented data and visual-oriented data differ. Although there are similarities in ethical concerns about anonymity and confidentiality and protecting the identity of participants (Babbie and Mouton 2001) for written and visual data, there are also differences. The allocation of pseudonyms in text to shield a participant's identity still leaves the content of the text unaffected. Visual data cannot hide as easily as written data can, and are much more vulnerable to scrutiny. Scrambling the visual data or blackening out the faces to shield the participants' identities can accomplish anonymity for the people depicted in photographs. However, this could be considered tampering with the data, as these visuals are in effect changed. Thus, should you blacken out the identities of people on visual data, it has wider repercussions for validity, interpretation and analysis, as the data have been changed. However, blackening a face does not mean that all identifiable information about a participant depicted in a photograph or video, is removed.

Respect for participant autonomy is a central ethical principle of research (Israel and Hay 2006; Liamputtong 2007). When participants sign a consent form, they grant limited access to themselves during the research process. However, they do not relinquish control over the information that was obtained, nor how it is to be used. It is not uncommon to see presentations that include photographs of participants as part of a researcher's dissemination of their research findings. Though participants are anonymised in the text, they often are identifiable in the individual visual or two shown by the researcher to contextualise the study during such presentations. Such visuals I refer to as snapshots of the participants, because they are seldom part of the formally collected data, nor are they subjected to a formalised process of analysis. According to Pink (2006), when the visual is used in this way, the visual becomes sensationalising advertising discourse for word-oriented research findings. Of ethical concern to me is that the anonymity of the participants is compromised when researchers include identifiable photographs of participants to colour in their research. Firstly, it is unethical of the researcher to present such visuals as data, where in fact they were nothing more than snapshots taken of research participants. Secondly, such photographs are included without research permission having been sought from the participants to be used in the public domain. Thirdly, such usage most often happens without consideration of whether it could compromise the anonymity of the word-based data. Could it be that some educational researchers interpret the informed consent that the participant granted as them also relinquishing their control over information?

9.6 Ethical Dilemmas with Visuals that Depict the Vulnerable

There are certain research situations that occur that require the researcher to be much more reflective about decisions about ethics. Research situations that involve vulnerable populations such as children, the marginalised and the destitute could lead to ethical dilemmas for the researcher (Daniels 2003; Liamputtong 2007). One such dilemma relates to respect for the privacy and wishes of the participant. As already stated, a participant's privacy is easier to violate in visual data, than with word-oriented data. Respect for privacy as an ethical responsibility should weigh even heavier when the research population is vulnerable. Vulnerability could be due to age, as in the case of minors, or because of the economic status, class, gender and ethnicity in adult participants (Liamputtong 2007). Respect has two related implications for the use of visual: the first to do with consent, the second with confidentiality. Though participants or their guardians might have given consent for photographs to be taken of them, they still have the right to refuse to give permission to researchers to use such photographs in the public domain. Similar to ethical conduct in a doctor–patient relationship (Hood et al. 1998), a researcher should normally have the participant's consent before showing images that were taken of the participant, to others beyond the research team, particularly if the participant might be identifiable from the visual images. Central to the argument lies the matter of privacy, and sensitivity. If the divulging of the data could lead to harm to the participant, then that data should be withheld.

In a world of litigation, defamation of character and misrepresentation, all ethical concerns need to be carefully considered in the researcher's decision on whether to include or omit a visual as data in text or during a presentation. The educational researcher's ethical concerns should centre on the rights of those who are depicted in the visuals, together with the potential for harm that such data could bring to a participant. The prevailing convention is for ethicists to anonymise raw data in recognition of the importance of confidentiality. However, this decision cannot be taken without input from the participants involved. In research I did with destitute women, they overrode my decision. As the researcher working with this vulnerable population, I thought that the ethical, the right decision would be for me to shield their identities with pseudonyms. After I had explained to them what the purpose was of using pseudonyms, they rejected the option of anonymity. Instead, the women insisted that their own names accompany any written or visual text that is published about their thoughts and ideas. Their decision was based on prior experience of others stealing their ideas and presenting them as their own. In this situation, had I removed their identities from their contributions I would have made an unethical decision given the knowledge I had of the women's experience with "idea hijacking".

A related dilemma for the researcher is about ownership of data. Who makes the decisions about how visual data will be used when participant-researchers are co-owners of the data? In community-based research, participants sometimes create visuals or are featured in visual data that are afterwards used as stimuli for further data gathering or for discussion in workshops. The decisions that participants as owners of the images make as to what images to include and how to use these visuals could harm others in their community. Workshops are public domain areas, and the process of ensuring anonymity of visual data subjects is not always possible. When participants are members of the community, they are likely to identify other community members who were captured in the visuals that are being used. In highly sensitive research on, for example, community unrest, it could becomes potentially problematic, and in some cases, dangerous to use visuals that depict community members. Visual data could potentially serve as evidence to place people at the scene of politically sensitive events that occurred, and could be used to harm such individuals.

Another decision dilemma could occur when children or minors are featured in the visuals that adults have approved for inclusion. The use of photographs that depict children raises difficult ethical and moral concerns about whether the photograph's use could contribute to the child's exploitation, especially if the photograph is to be used in an open forum or to initiate discussions of a sensitive nature. In a presentation of my research to a group of graduate students a few years back, a male student took exception to a photograph of a woman bathing a naked boy. This photograph was selected by the woman who appeared in the photograph. She was a participant co-researcher in a workshop on community leadership and used the photo to talk about mothering as an aspect of community leadership. The child that she was bathing, she had found abandoned in the informal settlement, and so she used the photograph to talk about her concern about child abandonment. During the workshop, none of the women participants focused on the child's naked state, or on whether she had the legal right to make a decision on behalf of the child. During the presentation, however, this mixed group of graduate students, that included students from the legal profession, pointed out the ramifications for both the researcher and the minor, where the use of this photograph was deemed unethical under new South African legislation on the rights of children.* What I learnt from

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*I thank the 2004 SANPAD RCI group for their insightful comments during the 9 June 2004 Cape Town workshop.

this experience is that when visuals feature minors, even when they are not the focus for discussion, it is wise to gain permission from an adult who is either a parent or legal guardian to the child. This permission has to also be supported by the researcher's underlying discretionary decision to ensure that the consenting adult or guardian exercise that right responsibly. Due to the knowledge that an under-age child is not in a position to exercise the right to choose and give consent to participation in research, the ethical responsibility on the part of the researcher is heightened.

9.7 Speaking to the Visual as an Ethical Practice

Visuals are discursive constructions. Schwartz (1989) states that before we can use visuals as data or produce data, we need to know how viewers treat and understand visual images, and "whether those viewers are informants or researchers" (Schwartz 1989: 119). It is so, that when a researcher is in an unfamiliar research setting, the theoretical framework for her study will exert significant influence on what is being seen or observed. That theoretical framework as such becomes the lens that the researcher looks through and influences what is being seen. Embedded in all this is the researcher's interpretation of that which is being seen or observed.

Generally, within educational research, emphasis is placed on rigour. In word-orientated fieldwork, rigour relates to transcriptions and field notes precisely reflecting every remark, silence, and action made during the interview or observation. According to Arvay (1998), this precision within transcripts is important when the structure of language is analysed. And as language is perceived to be transparent, the structure of the transcript should communicate the intended meaning to the researcher. What every study aims for is data from which valid conclusions can be drawn. Though the visual dominates 21st-century communication, in the domain of research it meets with concerns that in traditional research are taken for granted (Lynn and Lea 2005). As visual data are often labelled as being multi-stranded, or as stated by Goodwin (2002), as too "multivocal", the process of analysis becomes problematic. But, this problem is not unique to visual images, as the renowned linguist, Noam Chomsky (1969) in his analysis of everyday talk has shown. Being proponents of a broader social constructionist epistemology, as researchers of visual methods usually are, they aim to make sense of people's worlds; not to ascribe to a positivist epistemology of a truth.

9.8 Audibility of the Participant's Voice in Interpretation

How does the participant's voice become audible in the visual analysis? This question is posed because, despite efforts in a world influenced by the postmodern condition to critically engage with reflexivity, positionality and power issues, more accountability is required about visual data collecting as method. The potential still exists to misrepresent those who created the visual as well as those who are depicted in such visuals.

An advantage that the visual has over the word in multilingual research, is that its meanings are not lost through translation (Daniels 2006b). Visuals are not associated with a particular spoken language, and as data, they potentially create passageways into unfamiliar, unanticipated environments (Collier and Collier 1986). However, this does not mean that analysis is easier. Visuals, similar to observations, are inherently ambiguous, with their meanings negotiated by the viewer. So, for example, the viewer's perception of what is seen is influenced by various contexts, such as a historical context, or a sociocultural context. According to critics such as Beyers (1964) and Sekula (1975), viewers, in this case researchers, approach photographs or drawings as either art or as records of a scene or subject. In both these perspectives, meaning is conceptualised as being contained within the image itself. Schwartz (1989) argues that these perspectives fail to consider the spectator in the process of constructing meaning. I want to add that it also fails to consider the creator of the visual, especially when that creator is a vulnerable participant such as a child or underprivileged adult. Meaning making is an interpretative practice, underscored by one's theoretical and epistemological assumptions (Riessmann 1993). Thus, the assumptions of the researcher about what is seen are influenced by her reality, not that of the participant who took the picture or who drew the sketch.

This brings me back to the dilemma of audibility and the ethical concern of who speaks to the data. How does the participant's voice become audible in the visual analysis? To respond to this question, I draw on one of my earlier research projects with poor women from an informal community (Daniels 2003). The primary data for the study consisted of photographs that the participants took to provide insights into their worlds. As I worked with 15 community women as participant-researchers, I argued that the multiple voices of the analysts would strengthen validity rather than hamper it. Furthermore, it would have been unethical to exclude the co-researchers as analysts of their own data, especially when the potential exists that the community co-researchers' worlds could be misrepresented. Through making the decision to be the sole analyst of the data, qualitative researchers could potentially cut off a rich vein of community knowledge and data.

There are advantages to having community participants as co-analysts. One of these advantages is that the complexity and challenges of the visual text could be explored in their many different ways. As a cross-cultural researcher, I have found big differences

My initial meaning making and interpretation	**Participant-researcher's description**
Two boys, aged about 13–15 years. They wear fezzes and long white dresses over their other clothes. One is carrying a big plastic bag. Interpretation: They are Muslim. They are coming/going to madrassa.	These are my two sons in my photo. Here in the informal settlement there is nothing to keep boys busy. They get up to bad things. The children steal and do bad things. I want to protect my children from engaging in a life of crime. I encourage them to become active in the church activities – keeps them off the street. They are coming from a madressa session that is organised for the youth.

between my meaning making and analysis and that of the participant-researchers of the communities I have worked in. This is because meaning making is influenced by each role-player's respective realities and the contexts within which we play out our roles in society. The linkages between visual text and interethnic understanding can become complex and thus require careful analysis, as my example below will illustrate.

The left-hand box describes the steps in my initial interpretation and analysis of the photo, while the right-hand box describes that of the woman participant. When the two narratives on the photograph in Fig. 9.1 are compared, it becomes clear that they are different. The researcher-viewer provided a visual report of the photograph, with the meaning being contained in the image itself. Using a structural context, I identified structural features such as the people in the photograph, their gender, clothing and age. Then, I applied my interpretation of it. I used a situational context to explain why they are dressed in that manner. The participant's analysis on the other hand was influenced by her memory of a social activity and shaped by a historical context. More than just giving her interpretation, she also shared the situational context that led to the taking of the photograph, as well as the significance of the photograph. By articulating her own thoughts and interpretations, the participant-photographer made the contexts visible, and knowledge about the visual was validated.

Without the participant-photographer's analysis, potentially what could happen is that knowledge will be produced about the visual, based on the researcher's subjective knowledge, and the contexts with which she is familiar. One's reading of the world, in this instance the meaning that you make of visuals text, is contextualised by your experiences. Even when the researcher possesses a growing knowledge and familiarity with the research community's culture, through having spent

Fig. 9.1 Boys from madressa

extended periods in that community, your account can never replace the knowledge or her reason for taking the picture. For that the participant-photographer's narrative on the photograph is required. What the above example demonstrates is the dilemma of representation in visual data, which occurs when visuals are treated as objective evidence, or when the researcher as outsider speaks on behalf of the researched. I concur with Nagar (2002: 182), who states that what should lie at the heart of fieldwork within vulnerable communities is to produce knowledge across multiple divides "in ways that do not reflect or reinforce the interests, agendas and priorities of the more privileged groups".

9.9 Conclusion

Ethics is a vital component of doing research right. Embedded in the decision to use visually oriented tools should be respect for participant autonomy. Such respect implies that we seek consent from participants to photograph them and inform them as to why we are collecting visuals that feature them. Respect also implies confidentiality in how we use these visuals. When participants grant access to themselves by participating in research, they do not relinquish control over the information that was obtained during that research. In our research journey, we have to stop and reflect at each stage to problematise existing codes of conduct, and whether they are ethically defensible. The structure of research ought to be interrogated and the constraints and values that are embedded within ought to be mandatory for every educational researcher who works with vulnerable communities. Ethics is about being accountable to the people who participate in our research and whom we want to learn about. It is about promoting dialogue between the researcher and the vulnerable community participants, in order to make audible their stories. Finally, it is about presenting the knowledge that we gain from them in an ethically defensible way.

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Chapter 10
Decolonised Methodologies in Cross-Cultural Research

April Vannini and Coreen Gladue

Abstract This chapter examines in detail the process of performing interviews in life history, life story and narrative research. The authors focus on a set of collaborative life history interviews that the first author (April Vannini) conducted with the second author and storyteller (Coreen Gladue). April Vannini discusses how together they have reflected on the interviewing process in particular and the research process in general. She further reflects on the ways they were able to democratise the interview process by using 10 of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) decolonising projects together with indigenous ways of knowing – the talking circle (Graveline 1998), and reflexive dyadic interviewing (Ellis and Berger 2003). The ultimate goal of this chapter is to examine the process of "story sharing" as a way to democratise interviewing.

Keywords Decolonised methodology, Narrative research, Life story, Collaborative life-history interview, Storyteller, Indigenous way of knowing, Research ownership, Voice of participant, Ethical and moral responsibility, Reflexivity.

10.1 Introduction

Setting: April is thinking to herself as she leaves her home to go meet Coreen for their first interview.

"Darn it; it's getting late, I have got be at Coreen's house in one hour. Okay think, April, think. What is it that you want to do with these interviews? How should you conduct them, record them, write them, share them? Should I even be the one 'conducting'? No, I want Coreen to have control over the process. I want

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her to have ownership, power. Her voice has to mean something, everything. After all, it is *her* life. I'm nothing but an invited intruder. Maybe I should begin by giving her an idea of how I envision our research. I should tell her about my philosophy on ethical/moral research. That might help us to get each other's roles in the research process straight. I'll ask her to do the same. I want to hear her philosophy, her vision. Hmmm… maybe instead of me going first and explaining what I want to achieve, I will begin by asking her what she wants to achieve. Should her voice not be first? After all it is about her, not me.."

* * *

The scene shown above is a peek into the beginning phase of a one-year-long collaborative research project; a project that resulted in the completion of the first author's Master's thesis in cultural anthropology (Vannini 2006). We have begun this chapter with this scene because it sets the stage to the drama we have been asked to reflect upon for this book: the drama of performing cross-cultural research that is epistemologically, morally and ethically responsible. Our writing in what follows is first and foremost a reflection on the ways in which social science researchers can decolonise the life story interview, maintain an ethical commitment to all First Nation/Indigenous peoples, respect their voices and explore alternative ways of cross-cultural knowing. But, our writing is also a performance of our drama: a story of two people, a researcher and a co-researcher driven by a quest for mutual understanding, respect and moral integrity in research.

We have organised this chapter following a simultaneously reflexive and performative agenda. These goals are sometimes in conflict with one another in academic writing. Presenting and performing research is seen as an act abiding by criteria opposed to those of methodological reflection. Yet, separating the two constitutes somewhat of an exercise in self-alienation. Because we wish to both show *and* tell, we follow a non-linear, multi-perspectival approach to this writing. The first perspective is that of hindsight and reflection. By reflecting on the value and practice of our strategy, we hope to motivate and show how researchers can develop performative and creative ways to conduct research based on collaboration, dialogue, reflexivity and reciprocity. The second perspective is that of embodied performance. The performativity of the present writing intends to faithfully represent the character of our encounter. Much too often, academics read chapters like this with a one-track mind, focused on getting a lesson or a citable passage. In this quest for an academic sound bite, the informant's story falls in the cracks. By performing our life history research, rather than just reflecting on it, we then intend on teaching our audience the most important lesson, that listening is important, and indeed that the story is all that really matters.

We have broken down the next pages into three sections: backstage, front stage, and audience. The backstage shows and tells the "behind the scenes" of our life story research. This is where the research audiences are generally not present. The front stage is the site where life story research is presented to a public, as a text and performance. This is a performance which ideally takes stage with the informant playing the central role. This is a performance enacted, ideally, without any hint of colonisation of the informant's voice. The last section focuses on the audience and their listening. Constantly interrupting our reflections are our performances, our stories. Rather than intrusions or examples, these dramatic representations of a life history are meant to force the reader to pause and listen. Indeed, April began the interview process by asking Coreen what she wanted to get out of the research project. Coreen's objective, it turned out, was to have her story heard and listened to. Thus, even though this chapter is primarily focused on interviewing methodology, the content is centred around Coreen's story. In the end, her story is what matters. Cross-cultural life history research, no matter how it is told, ought to have storytelling as its focus and aim. No loftier goal for it should exist.

10.2 Backstage: Preparing for and Performing the Interview

As an undergraduate student, I[1] was often confronted with the typical ethical dilemmas of anthropological research. Students are particularly idealistic about research. Having never gotten their hands dirty with the compromises of research, contradictions in research methodology and ethics seem irreconcilable to most. I, for example, remember taking my first class on ethnographic methods and learning how to conduct ethical research by strictly following the protocols of ethical review boards. Issues of consent, confidentiality, possible risks and harms of research, deception, and compensation stood out in my young mind as ethical and moral imperatives not to be messed around with. I recall leaving this class every Tuesday and Thursday and running frantically across campus to my next class in First Nations Oral Histories in the department of First Nations Studies. And talk about contradictions. It seemed that every discussion in the latter class exposed the gravely unethical premises of all social scientific research, and their flying in the face of all Indigenous ways of knowing. The latter course indeed went beyond ethics and openly discussed morality in research and Indigenous ways of knowing.

The professor and many of the Indigenous students continuously criticised the fact that so many Indigenous storytellers of oral histories, narratives and life histories were never given ownership of their stories by their academic researchers. I remember leaving class puzzled. At one end of campus, I was being taught to follow the University's ethical protocol. At the other end, they were telling me that all that ethical protocol mumbo jumbo was, and I quote, "bullshit". Back then little did I know how much these two classes would shape my future research and commitment to ethical/moral research and decolonisation methodology. Then, during my graduate studies, I became increasingly interested in alternative ways of knowing and doing research. This led me, eventually, to my thesis topic and approach. And this leads me now to the first step in decolonising life story research.

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[1] Here and elsewhere "I" refers to April Vannini, the first author. Reflections on this necessity and limitation are offered in the conclusion.

10.2.1 The Heart of the Matter: Embodied Thinking

Planning honest, collaborative research begins with a unique mindset. You cannot move beyond the "thinking and planning stage" to the actual "doing stage" without reflecting on why you should engage in a decolonising approach to research. For me, this reflection consisted of looking into my own historical position as a white person, woman, mother of a First Nation son, and researcher living in Canada. As I reflected on my social position, I felt inspired to do research that my son would one day be proud of. I wanted this research process to be honest and full of integrity. And I felt that my integrity ought to come from recognising that my historical positionality (Cary 2004) is that of a coloniser. This acknowledgement came with the realisation that I am a white, privileged Canadian. I am privileged because I have had the opportunity to continue my education, to engage in intellectually rewarding work, to express my beliefs at international conferences and before such audiences as that of this chapter. Without recognising my own historical position as a privileged white woman, I would not have been able to recognise Coreen's position; a position, as a Cree/Métis woman living in Canada, radically different from mine. "Recognition" of one's own historical position is referred to by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) as one out of 25 projects we should use in decolonising research. The ability to recognise and reflect on one's own historical background and position as white coloniser begins the process of democratising, discovering, reframing, and claiming knowledge (Smith 1999: 142–162). Although Smith is referring to projects that Indigenous communities and scholars can undertake, researchers whose position is entrenched in a colonial past will find that these projects are well suited for them as well.

The process of research design needs to incorporate another objective: that of learning to feel one's research. By this notion, I suggest that in order to decolonise research, we need to begin to think beyond the goal of producing knowledge by aiming at producing moral research through methodologies that come from the heart (Pelias 2004) and not be afraid of becoming a vulnerable observer (Behar 1996). This requires that the researcher think beyond himself/herself in order to privilege "them" before "us". Pelias (2004: 163) soulfully states:

> The heart's method of pumping, loving, and forgiving encourages us to proceed with our heart's first. It asks that we remain engaged, encircling and what is before us, as we struggle to understand and accept the enigma of human life. It is an act of empathic embodiment. This feeling into another through the body calls upon the cognitive to guide where the heart might go.

In my case, I knew before beginning my research with Coreen that I wanted to do research that first listened to the voice of my heart before that of my mind. I valued this aspect of embodied research because it was an act that paid respect to my own values as a mother to a First Nation son. I knew that listening to my heart was all I could do to create authentically meaningful research for me, my family, for Coreen, and her family. And indeed after many interviews, copious amounts of coffee, warm embraces, emotional turmoil and struggles, mutual sobs of despair, kids' birthday parties, lunches, homemade breakfasts, and personal emails, I could not deny the role of the heart in any form of humanistic research. Every time Coreen and I met, she wore her heart on her sleeve and so did I. Soon we became friends. And our friendship became as important as our research, as it should be. Pelias (2004: 163) continues:

> It is not devoid of consideration. But insists that what matters most to people is how a "what" might feel. How an idea can turn the stomach, a claim can shut eyes, or a thought can make the head ache reminds us that the body knows how words feel when they speak. What matters is what the heart learns. And, perhaps not surprisingly, when we proceed with our hearts first, we discover that humans are at their best when they are pumping, loving, and forgiving.

Heart-ful thinking is a process that entails recognising your own emotions and moral obligations to yourself, others, and the value of respectful research. There is no step-by-step guide to conducting heart-ful thinking because it is different for every person and every situation. But, what should be obvious to all research projects that follow a decolonised epistemology is that there is no such thing as objective knowledge in humanistic research. Objective knowledge is the opiate of the careless, heartless researcher. This means that it is not unscientific to think with the heart, but rather that it is immoral to follow a science that refuses to respect inquiry's moral path and necessary relational reality (Christians 2005). Following a moral path entails we venture beyond an ethical checklist issued by research institutes' ethics boards. It entails we *feel* ethics. When we feel the ethical value of research in our heart, research ethics is authentically embodied and morally lived.

10.2.2 Collaborative Storytelling: Conducting the Interview

After the research is designed from the heart, an interviewer has to become familiar with the interviewing techniques and the philosophy behind these techniques that make morally honest cross-cultural research possible. A collaborative approach to interviewing focuses on the process of knowledge production, acquisition and production of the text (Lassiter 2005). By engaging in a full-blown collaborative approach to research, both researcher and informant can feel that they are co-constructing and negotiating a narrative that is full of care; care about how each as a co-intellectual or co-researcher (Castleden and Kurszewski 2000) values the final product. In our case, through our collaborative ethnographic approach, we reflected on Coreen's own narratives about her sense of self-identity. We employed the approach used by Clandinin and Connelly (1994), an approach that involves the informant becoming an insider to the research by critiquing any outsider's attempt at the interpretation of data (also see Bartunek and Louis 1996). In other words, by becoming an insider, the informant retains control over the interpretation of his/her story. But, this was not enough for me. I did not want Coreen to do all the giving and I did not want to do all the taking. Thus, what became the most significant part of decolonising research was the mutual sharing of stories.

The sharing of stories and perspectives unfolded through an ongoing co-interpretive dialogue. This is known as reflexive dyadic interviewing (Ellis and Berger 2003). Reflexive dyadic interviewing is a technique that allows the interviewer to share his/her own personal experiences and to reflect on the communicative process of the interview itself. In our research, we were able to use the reflexive dyadic interview as a way to build friendship and open up multiple interpretations of the stories being told, while at the same time, sharing emotional responses. This required that we conducted all of our separate interviews as if they were an uninterrupted dialogue: each new interview always began with a reflection on the previous interview. Coreen then would move forward the conversation in whatever direction she wished. I listened. When appropriate, I then returned her story-sharing with my own stories. This connected us together. Also, this demonstrated that I was indeed listening and that I was willing to share and open my world to her. It was a form of recognition and of giving value and meaning to her experience. For example, together we discussed openly our children's identity and what the Indian Act means to them, relationships with ex-partners, our children's school curriculum, "Indian" sense of humour, our own struggles with school, what it means to be a First Nation woman, and a white woman, as well as stories of discrimination that we both experienced and witnessed as mothers and women.

Reflexive dyadic interviewing worked well for us because the basic premise of such a technique resembles a traditional form of sharing stories known amongst Canadian First Nations as a "Talking Circle". Similarities between reflexive dyadic interviewing and talking circles include: the sharing of experiences, reciprocity, heartfelt speaking, respect, support, honouring, listening, mutual empowerment, compassion, and interconnectedness generated by open sharing. The reciprocity felt in reflexive dyadic interviewing and many of the values embodied by talking circles are liable to generate good rapport in all cross-cultural research settings. Indeed, according to Graveline (1998: 35), "the only way to really know, to really see and hear someone else, is to fully experience and own our emotions and thoughts. Through respectful listening we are better able to enter into another's experience through their words". In sum, by sharing stories, we were able to become better listeners and to create a life story interview around the value of sharing.

* * *

The listening eye (I)[2]

Shhhhhh! Are you listening?!

"Tick You're An Indian Now"

It was really interesting
living your life

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[2] The metaphor of the "listening eye" or the " eye that listens" has been taken from Nietzsche's and Levina's philosophical thoughts on ethics and subjectivity (Schroeder 2001).

as a non-status person.

Then-All-Of-A-Sudden
being “Statused”.

I was 25.
It was like having
a whole identity,
shift
I actually really did!
Have a whole identity,
shift.
When I took on that status. Something.
With that status
brought back this
native pride,
in me.
It was a societal stamp;
to say,
Tick, You’re An Indian”
now.
That’s how easy it was.
I mean that’s how easy
on paper it was.
But to actually
Shift.
From that identity to this identity.
Has been difficult for me.
That’s the process
I’m in now.
Because. When that came in effect
(Bill C-31).
Then we had the
opportunity to go
to school.
So, as soon as I became
STATUSED!
I had the opportunity to have
my education
paid for.

Letter

Indian Affairs.
Verified.
I was Indian.

No Shit!

Signed saying
Officially
First Nations
Under the Indian Act.
Number 6(2)
or something.
You see.
I lived with this colour.
But,
wasn’t an Indian.
I didn’t quite get the official stamp.
Laughing.
Letter of approval.
Laughing
Letter of recommendation
Coreen and April laughing at the symbolic
irony of the letter and what it means.
(In a mocking official voice)
“We would like to recommend
you
as an Indian
“Now!”
(Sarcastic tone)
Oh geez thanks.
Because everybody has been telling
Me for the last 27 years
that I was one.
I’m really glad you cleared
That up for me.
Both laughing hysterically at the mock
performance just enacted by Coreen.

10.3 Front Stage: Writing the Interview

> If the goal of ethnography is to retell ‘lived experience,’ to make another world accessible to the reader, then, I submit that the lyric poem, and particularly a sequence of lyric poems with an implied narrative, comes closer to achieving that goal than other forms of ethnographic writing. (Laurel Richardson 1997: 180)

One of the most difficult tasks of research, and the one most often taken for granted, is that of organising informants’ stories and thoughts (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). Responsible cross-cultural research cannot afford to take representation for granted, or to dismiss it as a peripheral stylistic concern. In our research, not only was it rhetorically difficult to achieve morally honest representation attempting to abide by the conventions and practices of the genre of academic writing, but doing so evoked a significant amount of moral anxiety. From the very start, I did not want to "categorise" Coreen's life. It just did not feel right. Nor did I want to reduce her unique experiences to "codes" or "themes" and in essence violate the uniqueness of her life story to sociological "ideal types".

Narratives, when told face to face, differ from those told through written texts. Ethical dilemmas around voice, authorship, representation and ownership (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Van Maanen 1988; Denzin 2003a) make writing the interview the most critical phase of the research process. Conventional academic visions of knowledge reproduction and writing tend to overpower informant voices and make collaboration useless.

In our case, after the interviews were finished and transcribed, I felt stuck. Much of the empirical research available in journals is formatted traditionally, by using indented quotes followed and preceded by academic analysis. Indented quotes stand out of a researcher's authoritative interpretation much like glass-encased exhibits do in a museum. It is as if they are there for a world of readers to see the same voyeuristic reality the researcher has seen. It is as if hours, days, weeks of rapport-building can be reduced to as many as six lines (seven at the most, but beyond that your quote is just too long) and a caption. I did not feel that in my heart. I did not know what to do and I tried frantically to find an acceptable format of presenting Coreen's story, tone of voice, rhythm of speech, personality and emotion. I did not know how I could still honour Coreen's story without colonising it through the written text. I remember openly discussing these matters with Coreen through emails hoping that I could find some comfort in her thoughts. I later found refuge in the work of Laurel Richardson (1991, 1992a, b, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2003a, b), Norman Denzin (1997, 1999a, b, c, 2003a, b, c) Carolyn Ellis (1995, 1996, 2004), Luke Lacassiter (2005) and Peter Cole (2006). I discuss these options in the next two sections.

10.3.1 Art/to/Graphy: Revisioning Presentation

> Renderings offer possibilities of engagement. To render, to give, to present, to perform, to become—offers for action, the opportunity for living inquiry. Research that breathes. Research that listens. Renderings are not methods. They are not lists of verbs initiated to create an arts-based or a/r/tographical study. Renderings are theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research. They may inform the doing of research, the final representation, and/or the ways in which viewers/readers understand and access an a/r/tographical text. For renderings also return and/or give back. (Springgay et al. 2005: 899)

Writing matters. Richardson (2003b: 499) puts it best:

> Although we usually think about writing as a mode of 'telling' about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of

> 'knowing'—a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable.

Alternative methods of social scientific writing – any alternative to the cookie-cutter approach – allows us to communicate to cultures other than that of academics. If there is any way to enable an audience to listen through the act of reading then we should try to do so. In our research, we did so by developing poems from the transcribed interviews. Poems are not the only alternative to distant, cold, traditional prose. Yet, they are a powerful alternative. As Richardson (2003a: 187) argues: "How we write has consequences for ourselves, our disciplines, and the publics we serve. How we are expected to write affects *what* we can write about; the form which we write shapes the content. Prose is the form in which social researchers are expected to represent interview material. Prose, however, is simply a literary technique, a convention, and not the sole legitimate carrier of knowledge." Citing Dennis Tedlock (1983: 198), Laurel Richardson (2003a: 189) asserts that speech or talk is closer to poetry than prose. In poetry, the pauses of speech are written in, the rhythms of speech are embraced, and emotions and epiphanies are ultimately revealed through the use of line breaks, spaces between lines and stanzas, repetition, metaphoric imagery, sounds, and the layout of the poem (Richardson 2003a: 189). Poetic representation not only allows one to convey a certain story or feeling more authentically, but it also fosters emancipation from the colonial hold the academy has on informants because many people (in most cases our informants) converse in non-academic voices (Cole 2006; Richardson 2003a: 190). For Richardson (2003a: 190), "poetic representation offers social researchers an opportunity to write about, or with, people in ways that honour their speech styles, words, rhythms, and syntax".

When I discussed the possibility of using poetic transcription with Coreen, we shared a sense of mutual excitement over the creative avenues this would open to us. We agreed that I would create the narrative poems from the transcribed interviews and that Coreen would edit the poems as she wished. Together, we also began to discuss other creative opportunities for presenting her life story to my thesis adviser and committee. Following the a/r/tographic agenda (Springgay et al. 2005), we decided that we would not only use poetry as a means of representing Coreen's everyday life and agreed that visual images, documents, and performance text would be used as well. We then decided that the poems ought not to be organised as instances of any particular theoretical structure. Together, we also decided what stories and thoughts would be best transcribed through poetic narrative. The topics of poems ranged from family and culture to relationships and life lessons, from racial inequality to career and future opportunities. By reading these poems, we found recurring episodes of agency, continuity, purpose, inequality, discrimination, prejudice, resistance, commitment, and meaning, all expressed in words drawn from her cultural repertoire. Coreen collected visual representations and documents that accompanied most poems. In doing this, she felt she would guide the audience on a journey through her life story.

10.3.2 How Do We Interpret the Story!?

Doing research across cultures requires that we, as researchers, juggle with the tools of two different cultures: that of our informants and our academic colleagues. By listening to our informants' stories, we put ourselves in their shoes, we take their roles, we embrace – as all cultural relativist ethnographers do – their culture. By interpreting their stories we, however, most often set aside the meanings they assign to their research and instead impose our own. While not all interpretation is an exercise in cultural appropriation, we must remember that theory is never neutral and never essentially universal in its validity. If we wish to respect the moral integrity of cross-cultural research, we need to collaborate with our informants even throughout the process of interpretation.

In our case, the realisation that theoretical generalisation and analysis was something that was inevitably expected of our research came one day that my husband, also an academic, while fully supportive of our approach, asked: "Ok, poems and visuals are great but what's your theory? How are you going to interpret Coreen's story for an academic audience?" As he asked that, I froze. It felt, all of a sudden, that storytelling was not enough. It felt like all that mattered was the conceptual sound bite. Not the particular story, but the theoretical point at the end of the day. Whether he was right or wrong, once again I felt stuck and incredibly frustrated because even though I rejected the principle behind what he was stating, what I had been taught is that we, as social scientists, need to have a mechanism for interpretation, a frame of analysis, or otherwise the absence of the "so what factor" becomes evident. In other words, a story becomes useless.

I contemplated this dilemma with Coreen. While understanding, she told me to do "what you need to do; I trust your judgement". Once again I found myself searching for a methodology that would come from the heart. I began searching for any solution that would allow me to not colonise Coreen's stories through theoretical and conceptual interpretation. I refused to bow before the idea that all that matters is the lesson, not the teacher. I refused to believe that Coreen and her story were an empirical means to a theoretical end. After a long reflection, I came to the realisation that the interpretation is in the reading of Coreen's story. With each reading there can be nothing but endless interpretations – one for each reader, one for each different social position. In feeling this, I found comfort in the words of Czarniawska (2004): "I do not think that there exists anything that must, should, or ought to 'be done' to narratives. Every reading is an interpretation, and every interpretation is an association: tying the text that is interpreted to other texts, other voices, other times and places. Much more important than a specific interpretative or analytical technique is the result: an interesting recontextualization."

In the end, Coreen and I once again favoured what felt good in our hearts. Our way of representing our cross-cultural research was a collaborative life story poetic account of one woman's lived experience. The thesis was divided into two parts. The first part was a methodological performance reflecting on the research process and the unfolding story of a collaborative research project with the goal of decolonising life story research. The second part was Coreen's story told through poetic transcription combined with my own reflections of our research relationship. For the most part, both Coreen and I were very happy with the end result of the written story. Coreen stated that she loved how our stories fit together and how we moved through the story together. She often jokingly commented after editing and restructuring the poems: "Did I say that? Hmmm, that sounds very smart." The most valuable reflection from Coreen after reading her story was this: "When I read the poems I actually hear my voice…now I guess the question is who will listen!" We discussed on numerous occasions about jointly performing her stories at conferences.

"There is this great conference in Australia this summer, wouldn't it be great to perform your poems while we discuss the decolonising life story research." "Australia! Really?! That would be exciting but I don't think I would be able to. You know the Indian life I live doesn't include conference trips to Australia." "Well, let's not cross it out…maybe I could find funding to pay for your ticket." "OK I will keep it on the back burner!"

My Heart thinks. I am an idealist.
My heart sinks. I stand and deliver her story
Without her
Everything we did together - without her.
But no one will hear her voice
Only me telling her story.
Colonised again!!! You BETCHA!
Perhaps someone will listen!
I wish you were here to speak.
And then I read:

> Not only are we a performative accomplishment of our research, just as are our participants, co-researchers, and subjects, but we continue to reiterate their and our problematic identifiers even as we struggle to resist the baggage those constructs carry… JTW: I struggle between feeling like a critical cultural scholar working to undermine the power of racism, and feeling like an opportunist banking on the latest academic fad. (Warren and Fassett 2002: 576–577)

My emotions come head on: Scepticism, cynicism, defeat!
I close my eyes.

* * *

The listening eye (I)
Shhhhhh! Are you listening?!

My Mother

Took on another identity.
Ashamed.
Of being First Nations.
Mission told her.
"You are what you are."
"We're going to teach you how to be civilized."

Basically!
It stripped my identity.
Mother.
Wanted me to be something.
Something other then
First Nations.
Take on.
A non-native identity.
Didn't want me.
To know my language.

Kids.
Would tease me.
She could just about do anything.
But, take away the colour of my
Skin.
Can I tell you that?—Really!

My Daughter

Talk about identity.
I.
Changed my daughter's
identity.
Having a child with a non-native
man.
Erased.
Native identity altogether.
See, my daughter.
Visually.
Not native.
That's what I mean!
Talk about identity
Ingrained inside me.
I didn't want my child.
Brown.
Gasping sigh
tears
tears
tears
Because.
It was just too tough.
I had a child with a non-native man.
She wouldn't have to endure everything I have.
Her
First Nations ethnicity

could actually be buried
Would you believe that!
I would—ACTUALLY —want—to bury—her NATIVE IDENTITY.

I know
She is just as confused
as I am.

But, the other way.
She, I'm,
is this native person. This non-native person.
Stuck. Stuck.
In this non-native body. In this native body.
That's what it feels like.

Part One: "Apple"

I wasn't even recognized by my own people.
When I would go back to the reserve,
they would call me,
"APPLE"
You know,
RED on the outside
and
WHITE on the inside.
It was hurtful – you know,
I never really ever fit in.
That brings us to my story.
At one point,
I had an identity crisis.
I tried to commit suicide – is what happened.
I felt like I had no place.
What's interesting,
is that it was right around the time I received my status.
I just didn't fit in.
I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere.
Even though my band had recognised that I was part of it,
I was still not a band member.
I did not have the fight to become a band member.
At that time, the band had control over their own membership
They were fighting, my band was fighting.
So they could control membership; not the government.
They could say who's an Indian and who wasn't.
So, that was difficult.
It caused me to do all kinds of weird things to myself.

That part was very very difficult.
I can see why a lot of us people get to that point and succeed.
In the end there really seems like there really is nothing;
They've taken away our identity.

What the hell are you supposed to do?
What are you supposed to be?
You know? What the books say?
No.
I refuse.
I REFUSE,
to listen to what the books say about me
OKAY?
I think I have a purpose in this life.
And
where I come from—my culture,
tells me I have a purpose in this life.
Even though, other people are telling me I don't.
I'm a stubborn Indian
laughs.
I think I've gotten like that because I tried to end my life.
When I almost died
and
when I woke-up;
I was still alive, Thank God.
And I cried,
"WHY
AM I
STILL
ALIVE?"
Tears falling down each cheek,
April begins to cry with Coreen.
A long pause.
A Conversational Pause: A Researcher's Reflections
What do I say?
Nothing.
All I can do,
is cry.
Cry with her.
A dispirited expression.
A pain.
I've never experienced
But,
I feel it now.

How can I get YOU,
to feel
What I'm feeling.
See.
Hear.
Witness.
What I'm hearing.
All I can do,
is cry.
Cry with her.

10.4 Audience: The Act of Listening to an Interview

The curtain has drawn and I now turn to the audience as actors in this performance. Time and time again, we write and theorise about ethical ways of doing interviews, moral research, research that makes people listen, how to conduct collaborative research, how to decolonise research for the people (and not the researcher and institutes in which they work). But, how do we listen? Do we listen actively, passively? Does your head nod in agreement as one speaks? Does listening to one's voice make an impact? Do emotions, thoughts expressed in research shape how you live your life? How much emotional noise and external noise affects your ability to listen to what someone is saying?

In our case, Coreen stated many times during our story sessions that "we need to walk a mile in someone else's moccasins" to even begin to understand what something is like. In other words, one needs to empathise in order to move from hearing to listening. Even though I have striven to do this, my voice has been the dominant one in this article. This is an accidental and irremediable reminder of my position as a coloniser: a coloniser who has the time to sit and write about the other, whereas Coreen does not. Yet, I have attempted to lend my writing as a medium for the Other's voice. I have tried to allow you to listen to Coreen through me. But, how have you listened?

Often, people hear me because of my positionality: my authority in light of my institutional role. My formal, academic writing embodies my positionality and it interpolates you as an audience. To subvert this, now I wish to speak from a different position, I wish to decentre myself. I want to do this in order to allow you, the audience, the opportunity to reflect on how we listen. My writing in what follows comes from my own listening of Indigenous scholars and many First Nations people who have engaged in explaining why and how the coloniser does not know how to listen. The formatting of the writing has been inspired by the work of Peter Cole (2006). I do not use proper punctuation or English grammar to guide you through these thoughts. I write following the rhythms of spoken speech in order to engage you in listening. The drawn-out spaces and the lack of grammar and punctuation are used to allow you to feel disconnected to the text, to create a sense of awkwardness, alarm, and to take notice of your role as listener.

i tell you my stories   time and time again   you explain to me the ethical protocol
i nod in agreement because it's what i am supposed   to do
you tell me to speak a bit louder so   the tape recorder will pick up my voice
i nod and you say with an endearing grin   "I don't want to miss any valuable insights"
i nod and return the grin   but i think   if you were listening why do you need to record it
i guess the explanation would simply be   "well we need to record it because we need to be precise"
I always thought why do you need to write it   for other people   if you write it they have an easy way out to forget it   disregard me   as if   i was never there
if it were me and you face to face someone would have to own it   but I guess that's just me
i ain't too sure about this written thing   i think there has been a lot written already   the policies haven't changed   or   maybe they have   maybe i am was the unfortunate one that got left behind
if the world were really listening   things wouldn't be the way they are for my people i really believe this
sure you brought in some legal looking people   created titles   maybe some positions here and there
but these people aren't that good at listening either   but again maybe that's just my cynical self speaking
You say many times   over and over   you are here to give my people a voice
this statement cuts me   i have never been a mute   i have always had a voice
but thanks again for giving me that privilege   actually   if you are looking for the truth the real truth
my voice becomes mute when what is said   falls on deaf ears
i am speaking but no one hears   or   i should be more precise   they pretend not to hear
maybe   and this is just a thought   your job is not to give us a voice   but to listen to our voice when we speak   hear what i am say ing yet?
maybe all you ed-u-ma-cated people   need to take a course on listening   do they have such a thing
ANTH 220 ethnography through listening   COMM 360 how to be an active listener   SOCI 130 how to listen to race in Canada   HIST how to listen to oral history without writing it ENG you me i we and listening PSYC the inner listener   THEA how to become a listening audience
when i speak   I don't just speak to researchers   I speak to all people governments board members policy makers and breakers education institutions   health care workers teachers lawyers judges doctors artists journalists carpenters secretaries mayors politicians activists this is to all of you listening for hearing sake first knowledge should come second.

do you understand what i am saying are you listening for com-pre-hen-sion or are you one of those who listens with their own agenda in mind

***

The listening eye (I)

Shhh Coreen is speaking now!
Indian Act Performance
Divided First Nation Peoples.
Who have control of membership.
Individual bands control.
                    Define.
                    Decide.
Who is an Indian.
I struggle with my Tribal Identity.
Cree grandmother says,
              "These are the people you are from."
Non-native side, my Métis side says,
              "No this is what defines you."
Along came policies.
Forgot about the old people.
              Their traditional ways.
Lineage looks to our mother's line.
Indian Act discriminates
              against women.
First Nations Women
              can't reclaim their identity.
It's written
      in a legal document.
I don't want to say,
I'm this or that.
I'm a fence-sitter.
But the policy,
makes me be one side
            or the other.
I'm always performing.
Life,
is a big performance.
    And I'm
    in the centre of it.
In all senses.
I had to perform
    Indian-ness at university
I wanted to be Indian
Nobody was going to tell me anything different.

I didn't want a non-native expert
tell me!
"This is what an Indian is."
I really stood up
That's! When I became an Indian.
It helped me become.
I fought for the Indian part of me.
Even when I go back to the Reserve.
I'm fighting
to show I'm Indian.
Not White.
This apple, they call me.
I want to walk around with this big apple thing on me.
And a big PEELER!
Laughing
Great Halloween costume.
April:
Coreen?
The Indian Act
is very confusing. I'm trying
to understand how my son's
status will reflect on my
grandchildren. How will my
grandchildren's identity be
legislated? It's just so
confusing!
I know!
Try living it!
Begins singing and mimicking a reel dance
"It's a do-si-do
from a 61A
to a 61B
You might be
Lucky
And be a
61D."
mocking the labelling system of the Indian Act
and the back and forthness of one's identity.
Indian Act.
Confuses your identity.
I became an Indian in 1989.
We need to learn to say,
"This is where I'm from."
"This is where our roots are from."

Who the hell are these people who define MY roots?!
Chief Sitting Bull?
Poundmaker?
Those are the people we come from
No acknowledgement of this.
Whatsoever!
They
Want to erase the identity.
That’s exactly what has been happening.
Keep erasing & erasing.
You know what?
We’re getting smart in saying,
“Excuse me, we are somebody,
we came from somewhere,
you can’t erase our identity.”
I also perform White.
I switch
Back & Forth.
Back & Forth.
That’s when you see me
unbalanced.
Moccasin on one; high heel on the other.
Difficult to walk that way
most of your life.
It’s now time to walk a different way.
This is why I went back to school.
I needed to know who I was.
Stand up for myself.
Say to the world,
“It’s okay for me to be First Nations.”
“I come from the Kakinoosit People.”
“I come from the First Nations Peoples of this Land!”
“It’s okay for me to be First Nations.”
You’re always fighting
within.
When you are with non-native people
Want to take on non-native roles.
To fit in.
Want them to understand.
Natives aren’t that bad.
It’s okay to flip
flop.
Rounds your identity.
It’s okay to be
native over here.
When it’s time to be native.

It's okay
To be non-native.
To be non-native.
Live non-native.
That's the role I'm in.
It's okay
        for me to jump
                Back & Forth.
And so what if I look like a clown!
It doesn't bother me.
        I found a way to survive
I'M NATIVE
        AND I'M PROUD TO BE NATIVE.
The Indian Act,
        made to eliminate Indians.
Not made for a "ticket to paradise".
There is no
        GOD DAMN
                ticket to paradise!

***

10.5 Coda

My page limit is nearing and with that said I am not going to provide a long-winded conclusion or reiterate what I have already stated. If you have been listening this is not needed after all. My role here has been to present methods of decolonising the life story research. However, upon taking a closer examination you surely have noticed that my job is to let Coreen's story live, breathe and be listened to. I end with a simple request, go back and read Coreen's words and listen to her voice. Cross-cultural life story research should be for the people we are writing about. Abstract and theoretical knowledge created through the sharing of stories should be a secondary priority. As researchers, we are not writing to give voice to theoretical ideas hidden in the cracks of "reality" or even to give voice to the marginalised. Rather, we are writing to allow their voice to be heard. With this in mind, cross-cultural research must begin with the people and end with the people and everything in between.

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Chapter 11
"Living on the Ground": Research Which Sustains *Living Culture*

Zohl dé Ishtar

Abstract Living on the Ground" is a research practice that positions non-Indigenous researchers as partners *with* Indigenous peoples as they themselves act to foster individual resilience and promote collective sustainability in their community. Based on Indigenous Self-Determination, Relationship and Phenomenological Presence, "Living on the Ground" is a process of inquiry which furthers the local peoples' *Living Culture*, an empowering cultural force which when potent enables culturally marginalised people to withstand seemingly insurmountable obstacles resulting from colonialism and cultural trauma. *Living Culture* is created when peoples live their lives according to their own cultural philosophies and practices. This methodology was developed while the author lived and worked with the women elders of the remote desert community of Balgo (in the south-eastern Kimberley region of Western Australia) to develop the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre, a dynamic intergenerational cultural knowledge transmission initiative aimed at recentralising the elders so that they can raise the community's children and youth with pride in their Indigenous identity.

Keywords Living on the ground methodology, Living culture, Indigenous women, Partnership, Indigenous Self-Determination, Empowerment, Cultural trauma, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Phenomenology.

11.1 *Living Culture* – the Cultural Imperative

The principles of "Living on the Ground" research position non-Indigenous researchers as partners *with* Indigenous communities as they themselves act to engender their *Living Culture*. *Living Culture* is a potent force which is created when people live their lives to the fullest expression of their own cultural philosophies

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and practices. When it flourishes, it enables a society to renew itself. It is most pertinent among the oppressed and demoralised (Freire 2003), for wherever it is present, it pours forth from the human heart and stirs people's enterprising imagination making them capable of transforming their world, when all would instruct them that to do so is impossible. It "gives rise to a courageous daring, a spirited determination, to persevere and to withstand the volley of obstacles" (dé Ishtar 2005a:194) which continually work to subjugate and marginalise peoples. As it unfolds, *Living Culture* impresses upon people's confidence that their aspiration to live their lives according to their own cultural philosophies and customs is not an unreasonable fiction, an unattainable goal. Rather, it is within *Living Culture* that the seeds of a peoples' survival are both planted and nurtured.

The women elders of Balgo (Wirrimanu), on the edge of Western Australia's Great Sandy Desert, know this. In 1999, they initiated a dynamic intergenerational cultural knowledge programme aimed at raising their grandchildren and great-grannies with strong self-esteem and pride in their Aboriginality. The Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre provided a full spectrum of cultural activities including ceremonies and culture classes for women and girls in their community, and aided the women elders to support their male counterparts in their own work with the post-pubescent boys and young men (dé Ishtar 2005). Through the successes of their initiative, the elders emphasised their belief that the fostering of *Living Culture* is the most important strategy for healing the pain in their community. Balgo was (and is) an environment rife with the tensions of cultural collision between Indigenous and Settler societies and this has imploded in Indigenous people's lives as violence and sexual abuse against women and children, alcoholism, petrol sniffing and drug abuse among youth, teenage pregnancies and youth suicides.

Balgo has the unenviable reputation of being one of Australia's most traumatised Aboriginal communities. In July 2007, Balgo community was one of three communities in the Kimberley headlining the media as the issue of child sexual assault shook the Australian public waking them, somewhat belatedly, to the ongoing problems in Aboriginal communities particularly in remote communities. The socio-economic and health situation facing Balgo's 388 residents is extremely raw and painful, and the impact on children and youth who make up 60% of its population is a major concern for the community. There are serious health problems in Balgo. Life expectancy for Indigenous people living in the Halls Creek region (where Balgo is the largest satellite community) is 52 years – that is, 28 years shorter than for non-Indigenous Australians (KDGP 2004: np) and approximately 8 years shorter than the average life expectancy of Aboriginal people nationally.

The health and social well-being statistics in Aboriginal communities are alarming, impacting on all age groups including children (NACCH and Oxfam Australia 2007; Wild and Anderson 2007). The Federal and Western Australian governments have expended significant funding towards Indigenous issues but the larger percentage of these funds have gone to pay salaries for non-Indigenous service personnel. In 2006, the governments spent ten times more on bureaucracy than on programmes for the communities they were attempting to service under the whole-of-government (COAG) programme (Schubert 2006).

In Balgo, most funds went to employing non-Aboriginal experts to "fix" the problems, were spent misguidedly, or became stalled by the corruption and mismanagement which plagued the community's administration. Despite ongoing requests for government assistance with their cultural projects, between 1986 and 2007 Balgo's women received funding for only 7 of 21 years. Even then the funding was inadequate or became caught up in the historical dysfunction of the White-dominated Balgo administration. For example, $8000 promised to Kapululangu for the fiscal year 2005–2006 was not received until October 2007 being delayed by upheaval within the local administration the government had positioned to auspice the funds. The local Aboriginal council had been sacked in 2003 by the government and replaced by a large accountancy firm based in Adelaide and then, upon review noting that this had resulted in mismanagement and neglect to the value of $700,000, the government merely ended that company's contract in November 2007 and appointed another accountancy firm, this time based in Perth. Similarly, $20,000 for the year 2006–2007 given to the same administration for women and children services (something it had never provided) which was to be relayed to the women's organisation was also delayed by this dysfunction, and finally rolled over to 2007–2008 after much lobbying by Kapululangu. By February 2008, none of these funds had been received. In summary, the government had consistently decided to fund a dysfunctional White-controlled administration rather than the only women's organisation in the Kutjungka (south-eastern Kimberley) region as the recipient of limited funds for women and children.

In this context, then, the Balgo women elders have consistently attempted to impress the urgency of reinstating places which foster *Living Culture* upon the resource-gatekeepers of White society. They have been marginalised by introduced structures (health, administration, education, religious) while well-meaning politicians and bureaucrats with little experience of Aboriginal life in remote desert regions rush to design and implement policies without true consultation with Balgo's Indigenous residents.

While a confused Australian public scratches its proverbial collective head and wonders why the social problems which burden Aboriginal communities continue unrestrained, the status quo has been actively maintained by government policies such as mainstreaming services, practical reconciliation, mutual obligations all of which extinguish Indigenous culture by attrition (Dodson 2007: 23) and use public sector monies to build economic and social dependency (Dodson 2007: 22). Aboriginal leaders such as Patrick Dodson have argued that

> investing in the reconstruction of Indigenous society through traditionally based governance structures, customary land ownership and internal reconciliation and healing are critical to ensuring social cohesion. … The recognition, respect and resourcing of Indigenous authority by the dominant society is fundamental to dealing with the scourge of grog and drugs that have caused such incomprehensible damage to Indigenous communities (Dodson 2007: 24)

Dodson's analysis is echoed by many non-Indigenous supporters including John Sanderson, the Special Adviser to the Western Australian Government on Indigenous Affairs, once Governor of that State (2000–2005). Referring to the historical assimiliationism, which has informed most Australian Indigenous policy, Sanderson insists that for Indigenous Australians "[l]and and culture are the source of … empowerment. A strategy that fails to reflect this fundamental fact can be expected to generate more of the alienation and passive resistance that is reflected in the appalling Indigenous prison and health statistics that we are increasingly familiar with" (Sanderson 2007: 35).

This same critical analysis underpins the notion of *Living Culture.* Charles David Kleymeyer who, researching with performance groups in Latin America and the Caribbean, identified "cultural energy" as a creative force which, generated by "common people through everyday cultural expression" makes "people feel inspired, affirmed, bonded to other members of their group, and [thus] capable of going to the edge of their dreams and beyond". It is "generated by the concerted effort of cultural activists who are part of grassroots initiatives … [who] consciously tap into this energy source and direct it towards social and economic goals" (Kleymeyer 1994c: 200; cf., Turner 1969: 125–139).

Living Culture builds individual and collective resilience because it arises from and sustains group action. *Living Culture* enables a culture to strengthen and reinstate itself. In Kleymeyer's observation, cultural energy is

> a primary basis for human motivation, cohesion, and persistence. … [It] is called forth by cultural expression and acts back upon that expression to reshape it and perpetuate it. … Cultural expression can energize participants and instil in them strong feelings of group pride, reaffirmation, optimism, collective strength, and vitality (Kleymeyer 1994b: 32).

As the cycle is perpetuated, a peoples' cultural heritage becomes "the foundation upon which equitable and sustainable development is built" and this inspires them "to confront problems, identify solutions, and participate in carrying them out" (Kleymeyer 1994a: 4). *Living Culture*, thus, plays a central role in empowering individuals, enhancing community, fostering creative citizenship and building sustainable governance in sociocultural environments of struggle and survival. It is vital to any project endeavouring to heal the deep scarring of cultural trauma (Atkinson 2002).

Loss of access to and enjoyment of *Living Culture's* potent force results in an identity crisis which afflicts both individuals and communities. When people are marginalised by/within a dominant society, they develop a negative self-image and a shared perception of inferiority. This shakes the individuals' sense of belongingness, alienating them and hurling them into cultural rootlessness, and, as their sense of group solidarity begins to break down, they become disheartened and, acquiescing to the negative status quo, they find it increasingly difficult to respond to the need to solve their own problems by engaging in constructive social change. In this context, "development" that is directed by the dominant group progressively threatens the very survival of the peoples it purports to benefit.

This destructive direction can, however, be counteracted by *Living Culture* for it is a force which is renewable and can thus be actively and intentionally generated. As Kleymeyer (1994c: 200–201, his emphasis) says:

> [Cultural energy] not only drives action, it is replenished and increased by action. As people expend cultural energy to achieve goals, they become aware of this source of power within themselves as individuals and as a group. Instead of being depleted, the stores of cultural energy therefore tend to increase with use, and people practicing this approach find themselves *energized through effort.*

In the foreign topography of the White-dominated structure which is Australia, there can be a no more important task facing non-Indigenous researchers than to assist Indigenous peoples in their projects to create spaces where their *Living Culture* can be actively provoked. In the endeavour to overcome the current and ongoing disjuncture which pervades the relationship between Australia's Settler and Indigenous societies, it is imperative that non-Indigenous researchers develop the means of engaging with our Indigenous hosts in ways which advance their aspirations to create sustainable lives through cultural initiatives. If we are to conduct research which is useful to Indigenous peoples, we must first learn to recognise *Living Culture* when we see it; and to know how to foster its restorative powers when it is weak or absent (see also Chapters 10, 12 and 13 in this volume).

This aspiration requires us to develop methodologies which touch on the lifeways of our hosts. "Living on the Ground" creatively embeds us, as researchers, within relationship with our hosts and forces us to pay attention to, and draw on all of our senses as, the sources of our data. Engaging deeply with our hosts on their terms we are begin to open to, and navigate, the space between two ways of knowing and of being-in-the-world (dé Ishtar 2005b, c, 2004). Only then can we begin to experience the vibrant power of our hosts' *Living Culture*. This attentiveness is a prerequisite before we can consciously contribute to their projects to build resilience and sustainability into their communities (dé Ishtar 2005a: 194–238).

11.2 The Kapululangu Elders and *Living Culture*

The potent force of *Living Culture* was created by the women elders Balgo as they went about the business of establishing a cultural revitalisation programme for their community. Believing that the social problems and increasing violence confronting their families was the result of trauma caused by their people "losing their culture", the elders wanted to use their cultural knowledge as the mechanism, the vital key, to their peoples' healing. They wanted to help their young kin by "growing them up straight" – "strong for Law, strong for Culture". Kapululangu's founding elder, Yintjurru Margaret Anjule Napurrula expresses this concern:

> Women are really strong. We worried for petrol sniffing and all the kids. We can take them bush and learn them. They got to know Country. They might get lost in their mind. It got to sit down really strong again, this place – Kapululangu.

The elders' project was successful beyond imaginings. Living together in a one-room tin shed on the local women's Law Ground for two years, they created a gynocentric space where they could enjoy their customary practices, teach their younger generations and increase their rituals celebrating *Yawulyu* – women's religious ceremony. Becoming the constant locale of ritual dancing and song, the Kapululangu *Tjilimi* (women's house) developed as the hub of the women's creative energy, attracting younger women and girls who were keen to learn from their elders and join in the fun. This in turn fostered the elders' confidence and pride in the knowledge they held, enabling them to fulfil their obligations and duties as teachers, guardians, healers, providers, protectors, chief mourners and Law women of their peoples.

In this animated environment, the elders' connectedness with the *Tjukurrpa* (the universal life force) increased, rejuvenating the full force of their *Living Culture*. As they made ritual part of their everyday lives – and the everyday part of their sacralised lives – the circle of life promulgated itself, enriching with each cycle. Restrengthening, through deep ceremony, their consciousness of the relatedness of life, the elders became once more assured of their ability to commune with and indeed to even manage the *Tjukurrpa* (the cosmic whole).

In this inspirational place of learning, the elders turned this generative force to the benefit of their families and communities. They developed and ran cultural classes for girls, culture camps for girls and pre-pubescent boys, and participation in hunting trips and ceremonies for young women. They formed a women's dance troupe and travelled as far as Hawaii and Canada to "share" culture with other Indigenous youth. They provided a safe refuge for women and girls, a night watch patrol to stop children from sniffing petrol, an aged care facility (all of our resident elders were widows aged over 60 years, three were their mothers, and they provided respite care to two women said to be aged over 100 years). The *Tjilimi* became a place of healing where the *tjartjurra* (women healers) performed curative rituals for women and men, young and old, who came seeking their skills. They encouraged and supported the male elders in their tutelage of young men and post-pubescent boys.

Through participating in this Indigenous-inspired and Indigenous-led project, the young granddaughters began to grow knowledgeable of their own cultural heritage. They learned to dance and to hunt, and to join in the ceremonies, and they came to sit and just be with their elders and to listen to their stories and memories and advice. Beyond the outskirts of the community, as ritual places tend to be, the *Tjilimi* became a place of a cultural revival which bridged the worlds between ancient past and contemporary present and made their peoples' cultural identity even more relevant for today's youth. Life took on meaning in a way that it had not done for a long time. The elders became inspired role-models for the young ones and they, in turn, became their eager apprentices. In an isolated corner of their community being rocketed by intense violence and other manifestations of cultural trauma, Kapululangu created a safe place where the balance of life was being restored. In this multi-dimensional effervescence of life, the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre flourished, fed by and feeding the elders as they actively created *Living Culture*.

11.3 Apprenticing "Living on the Ground"

When I started to live and work with the Balgo women elders to assist them in establishing their Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre, I found myself floundering in the abrasive internal terrain of my own cultural uncertainties.

At times, I became painfully aware that I had taken up residence on the raw edge of the cultural chaos caused by two civilisations colliding. In moving to live with the elders on the Balgo Women's Law Ground, I had traversed a threshold which bared me to the enlivening yet simultaneously strenuous lesson of living between two antithetic cultures – Indigenous and White societies as they are played out in Balgo.

In this stimulating environment, as I was forced to develop research strategies which responded to that place, to that time, to the elders, and to their aspirations and endeavours, I struggled to meld activist/advocate with researcher/academic. The tools and methods which academia had bequeathed to me simply did not work, and I spent fitful months wondering why I was so desperately inadequate as a researcher. I had arrived in the community toting tape recorder and notebook armed with the assumption that I would collect stories and, taking them away to calculate their importance, twist and turn them until they made good copy for a thesis (report) which could then be published – all just as academia required of me.

Realising that my efforts to offset academic expectations and accountabilities with what I was actually *doing* in Balgo were hindering me from engaging with the elders' lives and their Kapululangu project, I finally gave up my futile attempts to justify myself to an unwitting external world. Finally, understanding that what the elders were offering me was something much deeper than anything I had anticipated, I gave away the tape recorder (but kept the notebook), shelved my cultural assumptions and began to live simply – to simply live – with the elders.

As I gradually slowed down and allowed myself to be fashioned as their apprentice (their *tilitja* or "Culture Woman"), I found myself connecting ever more deeply to their philosophies, principles, customs and ways of being. Only when I began to attune to my new circumstances could I learn what the elders wanted to teach me – and to learn through the means by which they taught – at their pace, in their way.

11.4 The Practice of "Living on the Ground"

Opening to *Living Culture* requires the researcher to privilege relationship as the central core of their methodology. This methodology is called "Living on the Ground" because it requires the researcher to live on the ground, *with* the ground – within the full spectrum of relationships – with the self, the community, the land, the cosmos (*Tjukurrpa*). Thus, "Living on the Ground" research relies on three entwining praxes: Indigenous Self-Determination, Relationship and Phenomenological Presence.

Indigenous Self-Determination commits the researcher and research project to producing concrete tangible outcomes which immediately benefit the host community. The researcher engages with projects instigated by her hosts, and allows herself to be led and directed by them. She centralises them and their concerns and incorporates their ways of creating change. The researcher becomes a facilitator, and a conduit for resources and skills not yet available among her hosts, but the body of the work relies on the knowledge and skills of the project's originators. Thus, the elders were not only involved in the Kapululangu project – they were the project. Nothing that took place under the Kapululangu rubric could have been possible without their full participation. Everything Kapululangu initiated was orchestrated by them. They were determined, prepared, inspired, inspiring and resolved to instigate social changes and, as their *tilitja* ("Culture Woman"), and as a researcher, I became involved in their ambitions and could not, and would not, pretend neutrality.

My concept of "Indigenous Self-Determination" reflects on the autonomy and ownership principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR involves its hosts in all aspects of its development from conception through to outcome and relies on their "common sense", their peoples' knowledge, for they alone can "cherish and fight for their culture and their personality to the last … – [because] their lives depend on it" (Fals-Borda 1991: 149). This follows Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury's (2001) notion of action research as a verb, the intent of which is to heal the planet and its peoples through research based on engaging with the full re-sacralisation of the world, the valuing of creation for its own right as a living presence. This praxis fits with the Indigenous perception of the world as a sacred place through which the resonance of the *Tjukurrpa* as the universal life force permeates. In naming this praxis "Indigenous Self-Determination", I am reminded that this method is based on autonomy as exercised by the hosts themselves, with the researcher working in mutual interest with them, and operating within their cultural milieu. The decision to establish Kapululangu was the elders' – my role was to help them develop its infrastructure and obtain resources which they needed to achieve their goals.

Relationship is the second praxis of "Living on the Ground". Relationship lies at the core of all Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies – contemporary and traditional. Jiman and Bundjalung (Aboriginal) social justice scholar Judy Atkinson stresses that research should be characterised by recognising the individual relating within community through the prism of respect, reciprocity and responsibility, achieved through deep listening and aware watching which enables a connection between the logic of mind and the feelings of the heart (2001: 10, cited in Wilson 2003; see also Atkinson 2002). Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, similarly, stresses that research with Indigenous communities should be related to being Indigenous; connected to Indigenous philosophy and principles; based on the validity and legitimacy of Indigenous culture; and concerned with Indigenous peoples' struggle for autonomy over cultural well-being (Smith 1999: 185; see also Chapters 5 and 10 in this volume).

By inviting me to live with them in the *Tjilimi* the elders fitted me within their spectrum of interactions between self, kin, land and cosmology and, thereby, made me *walytja* (family). In living with the women elders, I slept with them, ate with them and cried with them. Kapululangu was the elders' and my task was to find my fit within it. For me, to be useful to the elders, I had not only to be committed to their Indigenous tenets, I had to be responsive to their needs – individual and collective, immediate and long-term. To be able to work with them to develop a project which drew on their realities, their ways of knowing, their pedagogies and their concepts of the meaningful, I had to find a pathway to a greater comprehension of their worldview. To achieve this goal, I needed to ensure that my presence resonated with their culture on a very personal level. This ambition could only be achieved to the extent that I would be able to construct a methodology which concomitantly converged with who I was, which reflected my own self and responded to my obligations and accountabilities to my own cultural influences. For, as we do, I took with me my own cultures – of which White, Irish-Australian, lesbian, feminist are only a few – and these too needed to be sustained. We cannot stand outside of ourselves; we cannot work with others to sustain their cultures if we do not first honour our own.

Living together with the elders in the *Tjilimi* positioned embeddedness as a central component of my methodology. Deeper than “immersion”, which carries with it the idea of submersion and hints at the risk of drowning in the imagined other, this is a preparedness to enter and stand waist high within the current of local cultural life while keeping our feet firmly planted in our own cultural paradigms. It is the ability to participate, to partake, to connect fully with another culture through relationship with its practitioners, its worlds (Abram 1996: 66–70). The academic command that researchers participate with local actors in local activities while maintaining an objective distance has flummoxed many for the struggle to attain the pretence of objectivity dislodges us from the sensibility required for comprehension.

Cultural embeddedness is an extremely difficult method, particularly since people engaging with societies other than their own inevitably suffer culture shock. Often manifesting in withdrawal and disempowerment within the researcher, culture shock compounds the cultural collision of civilisations which we seek to mitigate. Not least among my earliest culture shocks was the challenge of having to reconstitute my ideas of how one does research. I found that I could not read because it distanced me from the elders; nor keep notes because it placed the elders on display and distracted me from being attentive to the dynamics of daily life; nor conduct interviews because asking questions is considered impolite and made the elders feel awkward – besides my questions arose from cultural concepts which did not translate. And so, I learned to wait and to gather pieces of information as they came to me, thread them together incrementally until I began to comprehend what was happening around me and then wait again to have my understandings confirmed or restructured by the next episode which may come months later. Grateful to my mother who, as a true Irish bard, had raised me to listen to four stories told simultaneously, I called this process “patchwork learning”. She had taught me as a child that it is the learning pathway which is important, rather than the definitive answer. To gather information is one thing, but to fully comprehend one must synthesise knowledge.

The elders had their own ways of teaching me. By inviting me to live with them, I was constantly embedded in a learning relationship with them as my teachers. From the smallest gestures to extended ceremonies, from hunting trips and the processes of daily life, they taught me through osmosis – through my skin. They taught me *Yawulyu* (Women’s Law) by painting my breasts with red and yellow ochres and they placed their sacred *tarruku* (ritual items) in my hands or had me lie upon them so that I would absorb the energy/knowledge contained within the objects. They taught me songs in a language I did not know by sitting in front of me for hours urging me on and, when I became lost, they would tap the rhythm on my leg so as to lodge it inside my *kurrunpa* (spirit/soul), instead of in my head where I was attempting to capture it. This learning relies on all of the senses being honed and awakened so that, once alert, the apprentice can open to the sixth sense – the psychic sense – from which the *Tjukurrpa* can be accessed. It is no mere coincidence that the elders conduct most of their direct teaching of cultural knowledge in relationship with their land, and often in ceremonial contexts. It was in these moments of ceremonial instruction and connectedness that I caught glimpses of what it was the elders were attempting to protect with their organisation, and this reaffirmed my commitment to their vision for Kapululangu.

As Kapululangu's non-Indigenous *tilitja*, I sought to live as carefully as I could with the elders. Yet, I was at the same time also "the Missus". I was (and always would be) a practitioner of White Culture. While all cultures have their beauty, those of us who hold membership to White Culture have been inculcated into a historical realm of privilege, control and power vis-à-vis Indigenous cultures which constantly demands allegiance from its practitioners (Memmi 1991: 72–73). This culturally assumed positioning required me to be ever vigilant to ensuring that this dominant province which I inhabit by consequence of birth and upbringing would not get the upper hand and break out unleashed into the raw spaces between our worlds harming both. Turning this to my advantage, I learned to study the interaction I and my cultural cohorts (other Whites, both local agency staff and external bureaucrats in all their manifestation) had with the women elders and their community, and to survey the dimensions of its impacts. The experience was not always a pleasant one, but the task has to be done nonetheless for only here on the borders between worlds can the discoveries and changes be made. White Culture became the focus of my research to the extent that the women elders have sought to grow me up in their Law (philosophy/religion). I respect their stewardship by remaining silent about the deep knowledge of which they are, and remain, the custodians.

Finally, "Living on the Ground" research relies on and insists upon Phenomenological Presence, an awareness of the world which relies on all the senses being fully alert. Living with the elders made that possible. Experiencing the elders' world *with* them decreased the distance between my intellect and my body and I began to use my whole self as the tool for my learning. The body is the gateway which enables us to touch each others' lifeworlds through practical knowledge – Merleau-Ponty's concept of *praktognosia* (1962: 140–141, also 1964). Our consciousness, our being-in-the-world, arises from and draws upon our senses. Sense is primal. It is through and in our bodies that the communication with and between our worlds are relayed to us.

The phenomenological notion of the body-mind-spirit contrasts with the Cartesian model which teaches practitioners of White Culture to disembody our consciousness (Ani 2000: 498). White science has drawn our consciousness away from our body, the site of our being, and distorted our understanding of the body-mind-spirit, thereby crippling our ability to perceive ourselves and our world in the primacy of our body's experience. But, only as I came to use my body as the reflexive vehicle of my learning could I enter the elders’ lived-in-realm, and there I began to dream and to feel and to believe in the *Tjukurrpa*. There were moments when in deep ceremony with the elders I experienced the full depth of the intimacy between humans and between humans and the more-than-human world (Abram 1996). This is the realm of the metaphysical, which the elders access on a constant basis. They know this connectivity intimately. They remain today still capable of fathoming – and indeed managing – the generative force of metaphysical creation, the *Tjukurrpa*. For them, body is the base of that knowledge. This awareness is reflected in the importance given to relationships with self, kin, ancestors, place, land and the *Tjukurrpa*.

An attentive phenomenology provides a way to take researchers into that emotionality as a vital and respected locale of information. It insists on the primacy of our senses as the source and means of collecting data, it encourages us to pay more attention to the languages of the body, to the multiple ways that it engages with other bodies and, in communication, creates society. We learn to look for and read gestures – to listen to the unspoken. And so, by living with the elders, I learnt to look behind and between the words, to listen for tones and undercurrents filtering through conversations in languages I did not yet comprehend (Okely 1994: 61). And joining the elders as they meandered skilfully through their days, I watched the interactions between people, and between people and their world, and traced the patterns. This intimacy with the women fostered a mutual empathy which built a bridge between our worlds. By “empathy”, I mean the ability to open oneself and to relate to the other’s experience in ways that go beyond the intellectual-emotional to sensuously connect with another person. Through allowing myself to be passionately present with the elders, I was able to catch glimpses into a new way of understanding which is only possible when we can evade the boundaries of our divisive intellectual disposition.

11.5 Pathways to *Living Culture*

So, through “Living on the Ground”, I was able to embrace the creative dynamics of Indigenous-centred self-determination, drawing on my embedded relationship with the elders, and achieve this all through a phenomenological sensitivity which enabled me to be truly present and share the elders’ lifeways on a very intimate level. These processes are not linear. They constantly wove themselves in and out of each other – overlapping, melding, fading and foregrounding – creating new energies and knowledge in the messy liminality of the experience which was life in the *Tjilimi*.

I am not suggesting that non-Indigenous researchers march off into the desert to take up residence with Indigenous communities, nor am I rejecting the diversity of quantitative and qualitative methods. I do, however, regard “Living on the Ground” principles to be crucial for non-Indigenous researchers who wish to develop projects with Indigenous hosts in ways that reflect and uphold their *Living Culture*.

If we hope to conduct research which challenges the life-shattering status quo of the intercultural relationships currently being played out between the dominant Settler and Indigenous societies, then it is imperative that we lend ourselves to Indigenous initiatives to practice, develop and maintain their philosophical and customary heritage to its fullest dimension to the benefit of their peoples.

Unless and until non-Indigenous researchers can engage research praxes which enable us to open to and engage with the empowering force which is *Living Culture*, we will continue to undermine our usefulness to locally led projects aimed at healing the cultural trauma currently cutting a deep scar across Indigenous Australia. It is culturally imperative that non-Indigenous researchers re-fashion ourselves so that we may stand beside Indigenous peoples as partners in a world where the transformative power of *Living Culture* is recognised, celebrated and imaginatively incubated.

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Chapter 12
Researching with Aboriginal Men: A Desert Experience

Brian F. McCoy

Abstract While some research amongst Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is extensive, it is only in recent years that research has focused on Aboriginal men and what they understand about living healthy and well within a cultural and contemporary context. In this chapter, the author describes his long history of involvement with a group of Aboriginal people in the desert region of the south-east Kimberley of Western Australia. This history, as also relationships he had formed with other Aboriginal communities, led him in 2001 to return to the desert. Here, he sought to research with the men issues affecting their health. Using an ethnographic, grounded theory approach to research, as also an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, he describes the background of the research, how it developed, and how the results were later disseminated back to the men and their families. As a non-Aboriginal researcher, he also describes some of the particular problems he encountered when beginning the research process (not always from Aboriginal people), and how an ethical process developed to guide and monitor the research. The researcher used a number of different research methods to listen to the "voice" of these desert men and their families. Apart from holding individual and group interviews, he also explored with men their use of art. Some of the traditionalist healers,[1] and other men, offered paintings that described their health or the provision of healing to others. These came to form a significant part of the research. These paintings, as also the narrative style that many men adopted, revealed a fresh and new understanding of Indigenous health set within a very specific geographical, gendered and historical context.

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[1] I prefer the use of the term traditionalist to traditional, as this ancient practice has been influenced by contact with non-Aboriginal people as well as Western medical practice and practitioners.

P. Liamputtong (ed.) *Doing Cross-Cultural Research*,

Keywords Indigenous men, Desert experience, Ethical issue and process, Use of arts, Positionality of researcher, Visual mathodology, Indigenous health, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Kinship relationship.

12.1 Researching with Aboriginal Men: A Desert Experience

I first arrived in the Kimberley in 1973. I was a Jesuit seminarian at the time and had just completed an undergraduate degree at Melbourne University. The local bishop had invited me and another Jesuit colleague to work at Balgo Mission to administer the boys' dormitory. At that time, more than 40 boys, from 5 to 15 years of age, lived together in a corrugated iron building within the Mission. I spent one year in the community and then returned to Melbourne to continue my training. I revisited the region over the following years and accompanied some of the men to the "hand-over" of Uluru to *Anangu* in 1985.[2] As a researcher for the Western Australian component of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Dodson 1991), I conducted research with some of the men as part of that Commission. In 1992, I was asked to return to the region in a formal church capacity as parish priest. While much had changed since 1973, and the community had been handed over to community control in 1984, I followed a tradition of more than five decades of Catholic church involvement in this region. I arrived in the Kutjungka region in late 1992 and stayed there until April 2000.[3]

In the more than 7 years that I lived in the Kutjungka region in the 1990s, I found myself being drawn more into the culture of the people and issues around men's lives and health. Prison, court, petrol sniffing, music, football, and hunting formed an increasing part of the realities I had to deal with, and issues that most interested me. I discovered, as I had with other Aboriginal men, great friendship, energy and humour in being with them. Between 1992 and 2000, I shared in around 100 funerals, a number of them involving tragic and premature deaths. Learning to live more closely with the people of the region, and beginning to see more of life through their eyes and experiences, led to a significant moment when the older men took me into their ceremonies. These sacred and secret ceremonies are also referred to as "men's Law" or simply "the Law". This only occurred after some years of living in the region, and was principally influenced by several strong and trusting relationships I had formed with men during that time. One of my closest friends and advisers once commented about *kartiyas* who enter the Law, "you trust him more than you trust other *kartiya* because you know he's been there, he's seen it and he's

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[2] *Anangu* refers to Aboriginal people in some central desert languages. Where words from Aboriginal languages are used, they will be put in italics.

[3] Kutjungka is a Kukatja word. It means, literally, "in the one place" or "one people". It was first adopted as the name for an ATSIC regional council that was based in this desert region south of Halls Creek. It was later used as an inclusive term for the region. At the time of the research there were four communities: Wirrimanu (previously Balgo Mission), Malarn (aka Lake Gregory), Kururrungku (aka Billiluna) and Yaka Yaka. Malarn and Kururrungku were established in 1979, Yaka Yaka in 1991.

not telling anyone".[4] My experience of trust with desert men has formed an important part of the motivation, process and method of the health research I conducted with these men and their families between 2001and 2004.

Apart from the Kutjungka region, I have lived and worked with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, Western Australia, North Queensland and the Northern Territory since the late 1960s. However, when I was invited to take up a Ph.D. by a leading Indigenous health researcher in 2000, I decided to approach the people of the Kutjungka region for my research. Not only had I known them over a long period of time, but in those years we had shared much. The opportunities that arose from such a long and sustaining relationship offered the possibility of research that could be beneficial to them and, hopefully, other Aboriginal men. However, my own particular history raised a number of ethical issues around the appropriateness of my doing health research in this particular location.

12.2 Initiating the Research

I was a *kartiya*, male, and had been involved with *Puntu* in a church capacity.[5] Apart from my gender and cultural background, was it possible to put aside a church role and perform health research? Some *kartiyas* did not believe so. They maintained that it was not appropriate to change roles from being a priest to being a health researcher and, somewhat patronisingly, suggested that my return would cause "confusion" amongst the people. There was also a further ethical issue in relation to the regional health service, as I had worked as a volunteer St John Ambulance First Aid Instructor and Ambulance Officer during my years in the desert. I was asked whether, as a health researcher, I would be available to assist either the church or health agencies while I was doing this research. My initial response was to avoid carefully any blurring of roles.

I sought the advice of the *Palyalatju Maparnpa Aboriginal Corporation Health Committee* (PM), the regional Aboriginal health organisation. I also sought the advice of Aboriginal people outside the region who were involved in health and research. They pointed out to me that research could be done but only through the recognition of the context of contemporary desert life, and the particular relationships I had formed with desert people over the years. In the Kutjungka region, people had little choice over the services that were available to them, and I would need to work with some flexibility if church or health needs arose and local people sought my assistance. And this was finally agreed. Ironically, it proved to be the area of health and not church business that would claim attention while I was doing research. Twice, during my fieldwork, nurses absented themselves from Wirrimanu, and on one occasion from the region, and

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[4] *Kartiya* is used in many desert languages to refer to non-Aboriginal people (see also Chapter 11 in this volume).

[5] *Puntu* refers to local Aboriginal people, similar to the use of A<u>n</u>angu in Pitjantjatjara.

local people, particularly health workers, sought assistance from me during those times.[6]

The desert people appeared to be less concerned with my change of role than *kartiyas*, some of whom seemed more concerned about my new relationship with the people than the proposed research. As three of my field trips coincided with the summer and men's ceremony time, it was easier to move and identify with the men during those times. There were occasions when people acknowledged a difference in my role. On one occasion, a chairperson suggested that when visiting the community, I reside somewhere within the community and not use school accommodation, as I had done in the past. To him, it was important that I be seen as working with the whole community and not within the context of the school and its association with the Catholic church (all schools in the region are conducted by the Catholic Education Office). In another community, the chairperson advised me to use the accommodation that was close to the school but available to visitors. She also advised me to be based at Wirrimanu, as it was the largest of the communities and "had more problems" with its young people. A number of women were very supportive of my work. They often expressed concern for the well-being of their young men and were pleased that I was returning to work with them. The older men were particularly glad when I attended Law ceremonies, and the younger men were happy that I had a vehicle in which they could go hunting, or which could be used to take them to other communities for family visits, football or for ceremonial Law.

12.3 Positioning Myself Within the Research

As I performed the research, I took notice of how people addressed me. Sometimes, I was called the more traditional *mamangku*, "your father", as the English word "father" had become *kumunytjayi* some years previously.[7] More often, I found myself being called by my designated kinship name, *tjangala*, or the relationship *Puntu* had with those who were *tjangala*. Hence, I could be called *panytji* (brother-in-law), *kurta* (brother), *parnku* (cousin) and other relational names. The flexibility and creativity of people in relation to how they positioned themselves to me was well exemplified by a Nakamarra, one of my many kinship mothers-in-law. She was my *yumari*, a relationship that would usually invite avoidance, being her

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[6] On one occasion the nurse left after being assaulted and was not replaced for some weeks. On the other occasion a nurse was assaulted but all nurses left the region for Halls Creek. Health workers approached me because they knew of my previous involvement in emergency health issues. In these situations when the nurses left suddenly, there remained a minimal structure of support for the local people. Health workers would become anxious that they would be held responsible if someone became seriously ill or died.

[7] When someone dies the name of that person, or words that sound familiar, are replaced by *kumunytjayi*. This means they are not said aloud and *kumunytjayi*, other names, or kinship terms are used instead.

"son-in-law". After I had gone through men's Law, she came to me and said that, because I had become a *wati*, I deserved further respect.[8] When her father died some years before, a wise and knowledgeable old man whom I called *tjamu* (grandfather), the family actively drew me for the first time into the rituals around sorry business.[9] Now, through the Law, I had entered even more fully into her family and culture (her sister's son, my *panytji*, had looked after me when I first went into men's Law and was one of my key research informants). Her comments, that I deserved further respect, did not mean, as I was wondering, that we would have less contact or conversation. In fact, she maintained, this change in respect towards me ensured that we could continue to meet and talk. She had discussed this with the old men who had confirmed this, she reassured me. Such flexibility not only challenged my notions of "fixed" kinship behaviour, but reinforced the importance people placed on long-term relationships.

I had for some years encountered desert people when they were sick, their family was in the clinic, or they were awaiting evacuation to hospital by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). I had witnessed deaths within communities, ritual payback, and been part of the preparation and memorial of an earlier massacre (Purrkuji).[10] I had shared in sporting carnivals, hunting trips, marriages, birthday celebrations and many other occasions when people gathered and enjoyed each other's company. I had come to learn a lot about the people and they also had come to know a lot about me. They had significantly shaped our relationship. My ability to do research and move rather freely amongst men, but also amongst a number of women, had developed as a consequence of sharing many formal and informal occasions, significant and ordinary life experiences.

In the desert, a man does not generally socialise with a woman, especially if either of them is married or they share a more formal kinship relationship. However, because of the reasons mentioned previously, I have found myself able to move freely amongst a number of women. My kinship cousins (*parnku*), mothers (*yipi*), wife's sisters (*ngawitji*) and others have often sat with me, sometimes with other women, to talk about community or other issues. My sisters (*tjurtu*) have also been very supportive. While the relationship between sisters and brothers (*kurta*) becomes more formal as they become adults, a number of *tjurtu* have been both valuable friends and advisers. My involvement in the lives of the men has assisted in providing the trust and communication that a number of women have afforded me. While clearly remaining a *kartiya*, I have found that the relationships desert people have afforded me over the years have significantly shifted me from within my own culture to live and move far more easily within theirs.

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[8] *Wati* refers to an initiated adult man.

[9] These rituals involve men and women, often in separate gendered groups, expressing their grief through shared crying, embracing, and sometimes, self-wounding.

[10] A massacre in the region north of Wirrimanu became known as Purrkuji, after a reconciliation and healing process occurred within the region in 1999.

The freedom I have experienced to move around the Kutjungka communities, and share in ceremonies and other activities, did not preclude the fact that people had come to know me as a priest who exercised power within a particular church tradition. The Catholic church was amongst the first group of *kartiyas* who encountered the desert peoples of the south-east Kimberley in the 1930s leading to the formation of Balgo mission. The desert people's first encounter with me was through the dormitory system that was in a process of transition in 1973 and which I helped to administer. The effects of modernity upon desert people cannot be easily separated from a relatively recent mission history, or from particular aspects of it, such as the dormitory system. Nor can it be separated from the missionaries who held considerable power over the lives of people for more than four decades.

When I took up a role as health researcher, my power, compared with my role as parish priest, diminished significantly. My research depended on the availability of people, their disposition at a particular time, and the information they chose to give or not to give. Over the years, I had become more aware of the ways in which desert people, often very subtly and skilfully, indicated their desire to postpone, avoid or decline requests from *kartiya* people. In addition, my place of accommodation was always uncertain and required negotiation on each field trip. I needed to gather research within the parameters of sorry business, Law ceremonies and sporting carnivals, each of which focused individual and communal energies at particular times. Clearly, as a researcher, I was in a very different social position than I had been previously. I was dependent on whether men wanted to talk and in what context. Without denying that I continued to exercise power as a *kartiya* and as a researcher, the change in my social position was significant. Not only did it enable people to shape further the reciprocal nature of our relationship, but it also provided opportunities for them to share their concerns and beliefs about health and many other matters, when and as they preferred.

12.4 Beginning Research

I returned to the region in 2001 to begin research. I began by using an ethnographic, grounded theory framework (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). As I listened to people talk about men's health, I was able to induce theories from their stories that could be connected with extant social and cultural theories regarding desert culture and men's health. My four research trips varied from one to three months in duration and were spread over a twenty-seven month period. Staying in the region for only a few months at a time provided a balance between research and other demands that local people and *kartiyas* made of me during those times. This process enabled me to use an analytic inductive method by which data could be reviewed after each field trip and emerging questions clarified (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Kellehear 1993; Minichiello et al. 1995). It enabled key research questions to be focused and developed.

My desire to use a grounded theory approach arose from its particular strengths in this research situation (see Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007). Grounded theory supported an inductive method of inquiry to establish a theory about the phenomena related to men's health. While the men knew me, and were pleased I had returned to spend time with them, I needed a research process that enabled them to take the initiative in terms of the health issues they wanted to raise, and allow any differences, tensions and contradictions to emerge in their understandings (cf., Chapters 11 and 13 in this volume). In this region, there had been little health research that had focused on men and the meanings they apply to their experiences of health. Nor had there been social, health or other programmes involving only men and where their values and beliefs had been documented.

Grounded theory suited this desert context. It emphasised the importance of men's stories and experiences. It enabled theory to develop from those stories and experiences, and for that theory to be later tested and confirmed (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007). Grounded theory also respected change, that men were shaping their experience of health within a complex history of colonial and mission worlds. It valued those supporting and nurturing relationships that men shared with others. It also respected male behaviour that was conflicting and sometimes paradoxical, enabling such behaviour to be better described and understood. This theory privileged the experiences of desert men, offering the possibility that they might shed light on their health in new and important ways. It offered a process that health practitioners and researchers in Indigenous health might find informative and helpful.

The theory also suited my new role as researcher. In seeking to be more attentive to what men believed and experienced, I needed a flexible and open research method that enabled their voices to be heard (see also Liamputtong 2007). Hence, while interviews provided an initial and important source of data, the provision of paintings by men, as I will explain in more detail later in this chapter, provided an alternative and significant form of further information. Returning for a number of field trips also enabled men to revisit their earlier interviews and paintings and confirm, nuance or correct what they had earlier said or what I had previously understood.

The main methods of research I attempted to use were: individual interviews, group interviews, participant observation and participatory action research. These methods allowed for flexibility within the project and for people's preferences within different social settings (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005; Liamputtong 2007). While I speak and understand some Kukatja, my interviews were conducted mostly in English. Most of my informants chose to speak in English and only one chose to speak for the majority of their interview in Kukatja. The majority would speak in English interspersed with some Kukatja. As English has become the language of communication with *kartiyas*, both within the region and elsewhere, it has also become the language that is used with other *Puntu* who do not speak Kukatja. Obviously, speaking in English offered many advantages for me as a researcher, but it also offered an insight into how people understood English words and concepts when translating key Kukatja ideas. This proved particularly helpful when others repeated similar ideas in later interviews. Individual and group interviews allowed people to speak privately, as some wished, or in small groups. I lived and moved around the four communities. I attended football games and funerals. I accompanied the men to ceremonial Law and participated in the rituals around sorry business. I visited homes, camped and hunted. Sitting outside the store or community office, travelling between communities and camping at night were often the best times when men sat and talked. "Telling stories'" was the way in which many conversations were shared and hence a narrative approach became the basis for later writing.

In all, individual and group interviews involved more than 50 men, from teenagers to the very old, with some of these men being interviewed on more than one occasion. As boys can enter initiation in their early teenage years, some of these "men" were quite young. I also interviewed seven desert women, seven *kartiya* women and seven *kartiya* men. A wide range of data was generated within this study. Not only did people speak about the early contact history within the region (people came to old Balgo Mission from the four directions of the compass), but they also talked about their understanding of the English word "health" and their use of traditionalist healers (*maparn)*. Both men and women talked about football, prison, petrol sniffing and many other things that affected themselves, their families and the lives of the young men. Some of the information provided by the men was confidential and restricted to descriptions of secret ceremonial "business". None of this was published. Some of those who were engaged in petrol sniffing also talked about their experiences, as did some young men who had given up sniffing. As this data became evident, key themes started to emerge. *Puntu* had very clear ideas about the meaning of being healthy and *palya*; they also agreed on some key values and principles that lay at the heart of their desert lives.

I also needed to address how I might later refer to those who participated in this research. I could have created fictional names or used their kinship designations, but I chose to avoid, as much as possible, identifying anyone who was speaking. While the people were happy to speak and offer personal views, they generally did not see themselves as speaking with authority where others also had the right to speak. They would often emphasise that they were only speaking for themselves. They also did not like to be identified as the authors of criticism involving others. In a very recent past, the people of this region have often been depicted in very negative ways, especially by the media. They continue to be sensitive as to how they are perceived by others, *kartiya* and Indigenous.

12.5 Using Art as Research

While there is a long history of the use of visual arts and crafts within Australia by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there has been little use made of art within health research and as another valuable method for research in Australia. While arts and crafts have been described as "one of the cornerstones of Indigenous health and an important contributor to the total wellbeing of the Indigenous community"

(Australian Indigenous Health*InfoNet*2007), art has mostly been used as a support and means for health promotion (Davis et al. 2004). In such contexts, local forms and styles of art expression have been created to communicate a more culturally acceptable context for messages involving Western medical knowledge. The integration of art expression into a Western health context invites Indigenous people to become more involved in health promotion, while also acknowledging their own particular cultural expressions, use of language and symbols (Davis et al. 2004). In this way, and without any apparent deliberate intention, art has also provided a cultural backdrop that has highlighted a wide and rich Indigenous health world possessing its own history and beliefs. Rarely, however, has art been used to describe and explain some of the complexity of health beliefs, as might the written word of journal articles or the spoken word of conference papers.

Before discussing the ways in which desert art was used to provide research data, it is important to note that "art" has been used in a variety of "health" contexts within Western societies. It has been used as therapy within Western medical health care, where a health care professional uses the medium of art as a means of providing therapy to a patient. There is also "arts-in-health" which works outside any formal health care paradigm but where an artist will work with others "according to artistic goals and aims, not medical or therapeutic" (Clifford 1997: 36). It has also been used as part of community development where young people at risk might participate in a community art project. Hence, for example, the Artful Dodgers programme was organised as part of Jesuit Social Services (Melbourne).[11] None of these approaches guided the use of art in this research context.

What did guide the use of art was an understanding and appreciation that there remains a very broad context of the use of art within Indigenous history and experience. There is a very long and historical use of "art" through sand drawings and rock paintings. In addition, and in a closely related way, there has also been the use of art upon human bodies (Biddle 2007). In these cases, a very intimate connection between person, land and ancestral dreaming are expressed and embodied. While outside the scope of this chapter, the use of body art and visual expression by Indigenous people, particularly at times of ritual and ceremony, expresses a long, highly valued and spiritual connection by Indigenous people with the visual arts. It also reflects the use of art, at times, to embody deeply held cultural values as also to communicate, teach and inform others.

My interest was to explore the use of art as a research method, a method explored by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2001). Ceres Victora and Daniela Knauth (2001) have used art with men and women living in the shanty towns in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to explore how people understood the human reproductive system. Marilys Guillemin has also explored the use of the visual through drawings as part of her social research method (2004a, b). In researching with adult women around heart disease and postnatal depression, she noted that the use of drawings "as therapeutic tools and in social science research has largely been

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[11] See http://www.jss.org.au/programmes/artful.html.

limited to children" (2004a: 274). Recently, Michelle Morgan and colleagues (2008) have employed drawings as a method in their research with young Australian women living with chronic thrush. Their work confirms the benefit of using drawings as a research method that Guillemin (2004a, b) has proposed (see also Harrison 2002; Gonzalez-Rivera and Bauermeister 2007; Huss 2007; Liamputtong 2007; Knowles and Cole 2008 and Liamputtong and Rumbold 2008 for more research using visual images as a research methodology). In the light of a long association by desert people with different forms of visual expression, there seemed no reason why art could not provide its own form of ethnography, offering a distinctive narrative with rich, grounded data.

Painting on canvas has now been accepted as a medium of cultural expression and alternative source of income within this desert region. Paintings are offered for sale through Warlayirti Artists, the regional Art and Cultural Centre, but are also done in a variety of other ways. There are paintings on the walls of school buildings, on floors and around the store. They are created for church ceremonies, as banners for celebrations and as gifts for non-Aboriginal people. Those who do paint, mainly older people, appear to enjoy the quiet, reflective moments of engaging paint and canvas. Many paint their traditional "country", stories layered with meanings associated with ancestral spirits and cosmic forces that shaped the beginning of the land and of human life.

In suggesting to the men that some may want to paint, I avoided suggesting what they might paint, but requested they paint something about "health" or "*maparn* business".[12] Some took up the offer and others did not. Some appeared more comfortable with this medium of expression than others. Some painted privately, others painted with the assistance of their wives. I offered a small fee to reimburse the artist for their time and effort.

People would bring their paintings back to me when they were completed. Some brought them back by themselves, others with members of their families or with friends. Some would want me to note carefully what they wanted to say; others were comfortable with another member of their family telling the story. In these cases, it was clear that the artist had shared the story with other members of their family and perhaps even shared in the painting as well. We would then sit down and I would take notes as they described what had been painted. This was not a novel procedure, but one adopted by the local Warlayirti Arts Centre when people return their canvas boards to be photographed and registered for sale. People are used to providing a narrative around the paintings they provide (generally describing land or "country"). However, in this case, the paintings covered many topics: *ngurra* (land), *tjukurrpa* (dreaming), men "growing up" their sons, *maparn* (traditionalist healers) and young men describing aspects of their own lives. The works were new, distinctive and different from those that are painted for sale through Warlayirti

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[12] *Maparn* are healers who provide a range of healing services. They can also be referred to, in English, as medicine men, doctors or traditional healers. In some desert languages they are referred to a *ngangkaṟi* (Ngaanyatjarra 2003).

Artists. They evoked great interest. Other men often wanted to see them and this would generate further comments from the artist or caused the artist to comment at another time. Clearly, men were not repeating images from others, but were offering something that had meaning for themselves. This enabled them to find words to describe what they had painted, words often supported and endorsed by others. Again, like the interviews, men would move between the use of English and Kukatja and key words would tend to be repeated as they described what had been painted. Their art encouraged words, but without there being any pressure to say little or much. It also allowed further discussion at other times with the artist. This is less easy to do with interviews where any further or follow-up discussion is much more restricted to the skills of literacy and oral communication.

12.6 Four Paintings

While a number of paintings were used in this health research, four examples are included here. They reveal quite different "narratives" involving health. They also allow revealing particular perspectives and emphases by the artists, perspectives and emphases that would be more difficult to obtain through an interview. The art provided a rich communication by use of the visual with an accompanying invitation into new imaginations and understandings by me and others. Each painting opened up a deeper insight into the desert male experience of health.

12.6.1 Maparn

A number of men provided paintings around *maparn* practice. They ranged from general descriptions of healing to links with the land (*ngurra*) where people could receive special *maparn* powers. In this particular painting, a collaborative effort between a male healer and his wife, there is a striking image of a person's hand and also the paws of a dog (*kunyah*).

The healer's hand is an important element within healing practice, and its significance is often described by the healers themselves (Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Aboriginal Corporation (NPY) 2003). One Central Australian healer described the power that lay within his hands: "The *mapanpa* live inside parts of the *ngankgaṟi's* body, such as the palm of the hand. Sometimes our hands feel as if they have been speared by the power of the *mapanpa*" (NPY 2003: 34). *Maparn* practice often includes the healer utilising their healing powers by drawing from within their stomach (*tjurni*) their own *maparn* powers, and then removing the source of illness. All this is done by the use of the hand.

The painting by Flakie Stevens *Tjampitjin* privileged the importance of the healer's hand. Here, the hand is prominent with an old and experienced appearance (Fig. 12.1).

Fig. 12.1 Maparn (Flakie Stevens *Tjampitjin*)

It appears to possess ancient memories and powers. The painting also revealed a “familiar” or accompanying spirit that helped him in his healing work. As the painting showed, this is a dog (*kunyah*) spirit (possibly linked to the ancestral *Kinyu* who travelled the country around the Canning Stock Route of WA).

While the painting described a sick person coming with family or friends to be healed by the *maparn* (note the red *murtu* or ochre that has been put on the person), there is a strong emphasis on the healer’s hand. While healing can be effected by the use of bush medicines, in many cases it occurs by the healer coming into personal contact with the person who is ill. Here, healing is tactile, personal and spiritual. The painting offered an insight into a world of healing very different from that provided by Western medicine, machinery and medication.

12.6.2 Cross Roads

This painting was done by four young men during the time of the research, but not specifically commissioned for it (Fig. 12.2). They gave permission for it to be used, and for its story to be shared.

Their painting described the journey of young men into adulthood. As young men they travel along a “road” that lies between their communities on one side and the cemetery on the other. They come to a crossroad. As young men, they would take the road to the left, a road that is dangerous and full of risk. Here, they get into trouble with the police and can end up in prison. They might take up stealing, breaking and entering and petrol sniffing. Some die on this road as the result of car accidents, suicide and alcohol related violence. If they are fortunate to survive this road, they can return to the “Cross Roads” and move along the road to the right. This is a more settled journey, offering less risk and danger, with the promise of living with a wife and children. However, as they commented, moving from one road to the other

Fig. 12.2 Cross Roads (George Lee *Tjungurrayi*, Ricky Woggagia *Tjapaltjarri*, Trevor Mudji *Tjampitjin* & Harold Gill *Tjapangarti*)

can prove difficult. They need older men to lead them from that road of danger and risk to the one where they can settle into the promise of establishing a family.

What is particularly striking about this painting is the image of the cemetery. As young people move along the road to the "Cross Roads" they pass between their community of families on one side and the community of those who have died on the other. The significance of those who have died is clearly apparent and striking. The space of the dead contrasts strongly against the space of the living.

While current research around risk behaviour often examines "harm minimisation", for example, with the use of alcohol, here the artists have brought to the painting the deaths of their friends and family. They reveal the dangers that continue to be encountered by young desert men and the costs of such dangers. They are clearly aware that a number of their contemporaries have already died. The path between death and life is starkly portrayed by the painting and reveals, not just their awareness of the risks they face, but the particular vulnerabilities they encounter in finding a safe pathway into adulthood.

12.6.3 Petrol Sniffing

This painting was done by four young men, ex-petrol sniffers, who had been invited to join another community and put aside their petrol sniffing behaviour (Fig. 12.3). In a very simple and uncomplicated painting, they described two very different "worlds"

Fig. 12.3 Petrol Sniffing (Four young men)

that had engaged them. When they had been petrol sniffing (the upper left of the painting), their time had often been spent listening to music, spending time with girlfriends (also sniffers), fighting and stealing petrol in order to sniff. When they were invited to come to another community where there was no petrol (lower right), they spent their days picking up rubbish in the community vehicle, camping out and hunting.

As they described two very different worlds of social activity, the painting managed to capture a stark difference. One world is guided by the moon, the other by the sun. The fighting, stealing and sniffing during the night is contrasted by the hunting, camping and activity of the day. These are also very separate worlds in relation to their families and their communities. At night-time, there is no contact with families or community activities. Petrol sniffing behaviour keeps the sniffers together. When they move away from petrol sniffing, they enter back into the world of family relationships and community activities. They engage with the land and a range of social activities involving others.

What can be described as a liminal human experience – a separate night-time world where young people sniff petrol away from their relations and in the company of other sniffers – is well captured by this painting. As they are encouraged to move away from this night-time world, they enter another social world with different boundaries, activities and kinship demands. Helping young people move into less risky behaviour away from petrol sniffing, can be strengthened by understanding the different meanings they find in these contrasting night-time and daytime worlds.

12.6.4 My Book: Growing Up as a Young Man

This painting was offered by a young man in his early twenties who described it as his “book”. This was his first painting, telling the story of his life, captured in three distinct panels (Fig. 12.4).

Fig. 12.4 My Story: Growing Up as a Young Man (Brendan Ross *Tjangala*)

The first panel described the time when he was a young teenager, often getting into trouble with the police due to stealing and petrol sniffing. As he goes with a friend to get into trouble, his companion leaves him but another joins him. The second panel described how his life changed. He painted himself being challenged by two older men, one a local man and one a *kartiya* (note the black and white footprints), to put aside his teenager ways of life and become more adult and responsible. He turns around and follows them. In the third panel, he has described what he called his "future". He is walking with a wife and child into the next part of his adult life.

What was refreshing about this painting was that the young artist considered very carefully what he wanted to describe. I did not advise him nor offer any suggestions. His approach was novel, but also very illuminating. He could see three key aspects of his life as he grew up from being a teenager to becoming a husband and father. He noted how companionship was important for him at all times in his life. He got into trouble with others but it was significant others to whom he listened when he was ready to change. His final ambition was to have a family with a wife and child. Here, the panel shows three footprints heading into the future. The future remains open but with promise.

12.7 Conclusion

Since this research has been completed, and the paintings have been publicly shown, what has become evident has been their ability to powerfully communicate and disclose important aspects of Indigenous men's health. Many Indigenous people, and others, have commented how they have found the paintings striking and engaging. They open up new insights into desert people's health. They invite viewers to engage their own imaginations and experiences. They raise questions about effective health policy and practice. They propose ways to further explore and value the health beliefs and cultural strengths that underpin the lives of Indigenous people.

In all of the paintings, the men provided very different ways of approaching issues that affected their "health". No two paintings were the same. There was no simple duplication of any Western health messages, nor was there a sense that the artist painted in order to promote health or to reflect an aspect of health that I was hoping to hear. People described what they saw as happening across a range of human experiences. Not only did the use of art prove a helpful means for understanding their health beliefs, but it also enabled those beliefs to be revisited and discussed at further times, and with other men. One artist, a *maparn*, has often come back to me, asking for copy of what he communicated to me at the time of his painting. A short, written summary describing his painting remains an endorsement of his healing work. It has also provided a way to communicate meanings around his work to others and in a way that reinforces the value of what he does. Ultimately, that would seem the lasting test of this research. Art has the ability to communicate what Indigenous believe lies at the heart of being "healthy". It also offers a research method that confirms and strengthens these understandings while, at the same time, opening up new pathways, insights and possibilities for better health.

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Chapter 13
Creating Collaborative Visions with Aboriginal Women: A Photovoice Project

Carolyn Brooks, Jennifer Poudrier, and Roanne Thomas-MacLean

Abstract This chapter provides a critical appraisal of cross-cultural research, using the photovoice method with Aboriginal women. Photovoice is defined as a participatory action research method, as well as a process towards health promotion. Participants take pictures to document their realities and engage in critical reflection individually and in a group process, using images and stories to advocate community and policy changes. This chapter focuses on some of the methodological challenges and accomplishments associated with photovoice and our project entitled *Visualizing Breast Cancer*. Our participants were 12 Aboriginal survivors of Breast Cancer from Saskatchewan, Canada. We discuss our collective successes as well as some of the responsibilities and risks of conducting research with Aboriginal women, including recruitment, participation, retention, community-building, advocacy and ethics. Interpretive boundaries and the "truths" of qualitative research (relative to the research setting) add a further appraisal of the complexities of this type of qualitative research and the powerful lessons of research and unplanned happenings.

Keywords Photovoice methodology, Aboriginal women, Participatory Action Research (PAR), Critical reflection, Survivor of breast cancer, Advocacy, Community building, Empowerment, Decolonising research methodology.

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13.1 Introduction

The First Nations Cancer Care workshop (Ottawa, Ontario, 2004) reports that cancer rates among Aboriginal people, while historically low, are increasing dramatically for some cancers in some regions. Breast cancer shows similar trends. Canadian women have a one in eight chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer, and for Aboriginal women the number is higher (Status of Women Canada 2005). Survival rates from cancer and breast cancer are also lower in Aboriginal populations compared to non-Aboriginal populations (Marrett et al. 2004). This is especially evident in breast cancer in Saskatchewan, Canada.

Issues connected to cancer survivorship have only recently emerged as an issue of concern to breast cancer researchers (Tomich and Helgeson 2002), and there is a lack of attention to survivorship within the domain of ethnicity (Gotay et al. 2002; Ashinget et al. 2003). A recent review of the literature specifically attests that it is not known what resources are available for Aboriginal breast cancer survivors, nor has the meaning of breast cancer been explored from the perspective of Aboriginal women. Those that have been done reveal cultural silences around speaking about cancer: "Speaking about cancer brings negativity"…"I am not sure, if, its not the breast I don't think it's the breast thing, I think it is a culture thing, we don't want to hear it…my sister Ni, she could not even say the word cancer, she would only say the c word, the c word, and she would whisper eh, she could not bring herself to say cancer and yet she died from it" (Mitchell et al. 2005). Our research project entitled: Visualizing Breast Cancer: Exploring Aboriginal Women's Experiences (VBC) aims to explore the social context of cancer experiences from the perspectives of Aboriginal women.

While interviews and focus group discussions have become prevalent means of collecting data, the potential of visual methods (such as photovoice) has only recently been realised. Current research (see, e.g., Wang 2003) suggests that photography may be a creative and empowering way to better understand the experiences of populations that have been marginalised, such as Aboriginal women. However, to the best of our knowledge, photography has not been used in connection with Aboriginal women's experiences with breast cancer, nor have visual methods been used within the social sciences to explore the meaning of breast cancer more generally.

The two main objectives of our project were, firstly, to develop an understanding of the meaning of breast cancer for Aboriginal women and the resources available to them in Saskatchewan, and secondly, to evaluate the use of a new qualitative research method (Photovoice, i.e., photography) in connection with more established methods of qualitative data gathering (i.e., interviews and focus groups). This chapter is the story of the latter – our success and challenges with this new methodology for research with Aboriginal women survivors. This is a discussion of the research process, the method of photovoice and the reflexive engagement between the phenomenal participants, the university researchers (ourselves) and the invested community members. We begin with a brief description of the context of this research and some discussion of photovoice as a technique, culminating in the unexpected happenings, the successes, relationships developed and lessons, for research related to Aboriginal women's health.

13.2 Background

Two specific domains are directly connected to our research method and this chapter: decolonising methodologies and Aboriginal women's health, and visual methods. These domains provide the theoretical and methodological context for our work.

13.2.1 Decolonising Methodologies, OCAP and Aboriginal Health

The history of colonisation is important in the gathering of health data and has led people to be "deeply suspicious" as to how data about health is used (Marrett et al. 2004: 13). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005: 87) writes: "[T]he history of research from many indigenous perspectives is so deeply embedded in colonization that it has been regarded as a tool only of colonization and not as a potential tool for self-determination and development." There are many problems with the historical vulnerability of native peoples to scientific research which wants "to know and define the Other". Visual images and pictures have also been co-opted or taken by outsiders, reproducing status quo and stereotypical interpretations.

Indigenous and decolonising research transforms the research agendas and deconstructs taken-for-granted ways of doing research – from the choice of research methods to research dissemination. Decolonising research is connected to emancipation – and cannot be divorced from the history of racism. Rigney (1999) defines three principles of Indigenist research – privileging Indigenous voices, political integrity and resistance. Redefining research is also about rebuilding governance, restoring culture and enhancing community (see also Chapters 5, 10, 11 and 12 in this volume). Research in the area of Aboriginal women's health is increasing and is geared towards improving health and contributing to the ongoing goal of self-determination within Aboriginal communities (Assembly of First Nations 2005).

Identifying and documenting Aboriginal women's perspectives surrounding wellness is essential to develop practices, programmes and policies. Research and programmes geared towards empowering marginalised groups are effective in improving health and communities, particularly when centred on women (Wallerstein 2006). Providing opportunities for Aboriginal women to identify and document their perspectives is essential to improve knowledge about Aboriginal women's wellness and to ensure a decolonising approach (see also Chapter 10 in this volume).

13.2.2 Visual Methods

Qualitative research is extremely useful as an exploratory approach when little is known about a topic and when it is important to draw upon participants' personal experiences (Creswell 1998; Berg 2004; Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). Within the field of qualitative research, visual methods are emerging as an innovative approach to understanding health experiences (Liamputtong 2007). Photovoice, which has connections with feminist epistemology and literatures in visual knowledge and power, is a research tool which empowers research participants to tell their stories and to assess their own needs visually (Harrison 2002; Liamputtong 2007; see also Chapters 9, 12 and 14 in this volume). Photovoice was successfully developed by Wang and Burris (1997) to enable Chinese village women to photograph their health experiences and transform their health outcomes. Currently, photovoice is used to empower people to "1) to record and reflect their personal and community strengths and concerns, 2) to promote critique dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs, and 3) to reach policy makers" (Wang 1999:185). While photovoice has been used in ways congruent with our research, its use for understanding the meaning of breast cancer and issues associated with survivorship and Aboriginal health has not been explored in prior research. Our project, with its roots in Aboriginal and decolonising health research, breast cancer survivorship and ethnicity; and visual methodologies begins to address some of the identified gaps in the literature.

13.3 Method

13.3.1 The Setting

In 1996, 55,800 women in Saskatchewan reported their identity as Aboriginal (positive responses to Census question that used the descriptors North American Indian, Métis or Inuit). It is estimated that 610 Saskatchewan women were newly diagnosed with breast cancer in Saskatchewan in 2004 (Canadian Cancer Society 2005). Researchers state that Aboriginal women have higher rates of breast cancer than do non-Aboriginal women (Status of Women Canada 2005). These statistics indicate that breast cancer is a condition experienced by a significant number of Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan.

There are two major urban areas in this western province – Regina and Saskatoon. These urban centres are similar in size, with populations of approximately 225,000 people. Eight participants in our study lived in urban areas, while the remaining participants lived within a 300 km range of the two major urban centres.

13.3.2 Recruitment

Participants were informed of the study in a number of ways. Articles about the study appeared in a Saskatoon newspaper as well as a First Nations newspaper. Breast cancer support groups in Saskatoon and Regina also distributed information sheets about the study to their members. Recruitment criteria were: (1) 19 years of age or older, (2) completed active breast cancer treatment at least six months prior to our study, (3) be able to provide informed consent, (4) reside in the province of Saskatchewan, and (5) identify as Aboriginal.

13.3.3 Design

At the first meeting, participants were asked to share their story of having had cancer and these discussions were audio taped, using a digital recorder. Participants then borrowed the digital cameras for several weeks. During the second interview, photos were transferred to a laptop computer for viewing by both Brooks and the participant. Together, Brooks and the participant discussed the photos and the woman's cancer experiences. The women were then asked to select several photos that they felt were particularly meaningful for this in-depth discussion. This second interview was also digitally recorded and the photos were saved on the laptop computer. Each of the interviews was transcribed verbatim.

Fourteen women initially enrolled in this study, but two withdrew due to time constraints. Overall, the data for this study consisted of 24 interview transcripts and over 200 photographs.

13.4 The Research Process: Exploring Aboriginal Women's Experiences Through Photovoice

13.4.1 Taking Pictures

Picture taking involved time, reflection, emotion, motivation, relationship building, risk, uncertainty and enjoyment. The depth of the thoughtfulness and creativity in their photographs was astonishing.

We expected that the participants would have the camera on average for one month and purchased four cameras. We realised immediately that taking pictures of an experience as personal as breast cancer takes time and that time is a very subjective concept. Care was, therefore, taken to ensure that the participants had the time they felt they needed, which meant that the research participants had the cameras between two and six months (rather than the one month, as initially intended). Some women said that the "right mood" needed to be there. Other women shared very difficult life situations, including death of a beloved family member, separation, fire and family member's very difficult diagnosis and requested more time. As researchers, we agreed that there was no way that this process could be rushed. Brooks would check in to see how the photographs were coming and serendipitously learn about people's lives, ideas, concerns and insights about their pictures and cancer survivorship. Data collection was continuous; relationship building was an unexpected privilege.

We were concerned over the initial reaction from the women when they were instructed to use the cameras to capture their experience visually. They expressed uncertainty about what was expected from them – often asking what the other women had taken pictures of and wanting more specific instructions. One woman said: "I wasn't sure what I was going to take pictures of…how to capture life". Another participant expressed: "I pictured right away that it [the pictures] would help others". All of the participants reflected on how much they enjoyed the experience afterwards: This was a wonderful, wonderful exercise…

> …it was a powerful exercise, I really liked it. It sort of helped me set some priorities, you know…what is important to me.
> …I want to bring these pictures back to my community to show other Aboriginal women that they do not have to be as afraid of cancer.

The participants also expressed that taking pictures enhanced relationships. Families became involved as they helped create visual images and posed for pictures that were either symbolic as is seen in Sandra's picture below of "wearing hats and hiding", or taken as a reflection about the importance of their relationships, symbolised in the pictures of grandchildren and family.

Shelly said the study helped her to reflect on people and support in her life:

> I really liked this exercise…I think for me it was looking over my life…it helped me to… remember what is positive in my life, where my support systems are and what my roles are… and you know…what I could have lost or what I could lose still…those kind of things.

Mary and her granddaughter worked on the pictures together for the study. Her granddaughter took all of the pictures for her and they looked forward to spending this time together. Mary said: "she just loved it…she would phone me and ask if she should come over and take more pictures". She had a picture taken with her granddaughter below:

13.4.2 Second In-Depth Interview

The second scheduled meeting with the researcher was a semi-structured individual interview to discuss the pictures and experiences of breast cancer and survivorship. The women shared freely about their pictures and discussed information within the pictures as well as "behind the images" – about social and cultural relationships which shaped their interpretation and meaning. Interviews revealed cultural protocols, relationships, creative expressions, personal stories, social analysis and limitations.

Conversations about the pictures were directed by the women. Our only specific questions were: (a) which pictures were the most important (especially because some of the women took more than 60 pictures, rather than the 10 or 12 which we initially expected); (b) why the picture was taken and how this relates to their lives; (c) which pictures tell the most about their experience as a breast cancer survivor; (d) which photos they would most like to share with other Aboriginal women and why; and (e) what pictures were they unable to take, but wished they could.

Responses to the final question were interesting methodologically – demonstrating limitations because of time constraints and cultural protocols. A number of women shared that you could not take pictures of natural medicines, Sweat Lodges,[1] Sun Dance[2] or other ceremonies,[3] because they are sacred. Dorothy, for example, talked about wanting to take pictures of the medicine that she used to heal. She said she could not take these pictures because then the medicine would no longer work – its healing qualities would be given away:

> There is one [picture] that I wanted to take but I couldn't. I wanted to take a picture of my medicine…our traditional way of healing…my Indian medicine…[but]…elders don't like if you take pictures…you are giving it away…that is how elders feel when you take pictures, like they don't want pictures taken of ceremonies….I think because they are so sacred they don't. [The Medicine]—if you take a picture it is like giving it away…it is not going to help me…if I took a picture it is not going to help me.

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[1] A Sweat Lodge is a part of many Aboriginal religious communities and is defined as ritual purification and ceremony, involving prayer and songs, spiritually connecting to the creator and the earth. The ceremony is done in a wooden framed structure designed from tree branches, using hot rocks placed inside a pit in the centre, periodically pouring water over heated rocks to create steam for purging toxins from the physical body.

[2] A Sun Dance is a way to celebrate harmony between nature and people which involves months of dedication and mental preparation. Sun Dance ceremonies may give rise to the Powwows.

[3] For many First Nations peoples ceremonies are a primary way to express spirituality that is innate and all-present. Ceremonies take many forms including Sweat Lodge ceremonies, Sun Dance ceremonies, Sacred Pipe Ceremonies, fasting, feasting, smudging, quests or visions and more.

A number of participants wanted to take pictures of the Sweat Lodge or Sundance ceremonies but also felt that they could not. Dorothy and her sister explained:

> I wanted to take a picture of sweat lodge that is where I pray…but I can't take that picture…and the sundance for instance…if you are taking pictures and other things other than praying or doing what you are supposed to…if you take pictures then you might spoil it…the spirits won't be there…they won't listen or help.

Taking pictures at certain times of the year was also limited because of time constraints. Sandra shared:

> It would have been nice to take pictures of the leaves changing…to be here for another season…when you ask somebody how old they are, you're asking how many moons or how many winters they have seen.…I think I'm just happy to see another winter.…It's supposed to snow today and I'm excited!

Some of the women shared that certain images were impossible to capture. For example, Sandra asked how do you capture "life"?

> Just doing, just being, just living…you know we stop playing because, because we're adults…the playing is such a big part of our lives and that's what keeps us young, that's what makes us feel good…laughter, simple laughter, laughter from children, it's amazing. If I could take a picture of that, you know? What does cancer mean to you? Cancer to me means life. It means enjoying everything now.

Importantly, all of the women also creatively captured emotions through their photographs – demonstrating another unique strength of the photovoice methodology. Marion, for example, captured a feeling of being blessed, represented by her picture of an eagle:

> [Because of] my cultural background and my spirituality…I always see Eagles and…like in the, Native culture, where the Eagle is a really sacred bird, sort of thing.…I always feel blessed when I see an eagle, and I always like, know that, that um, I'm gonna be here for a while…I'm, I'm gonna, be all right. I don't have nothing to be afraid of.

She also expressed "fear" through a symbolic picture of "big black ravens":

> Before I was diagnosed with cancer they [ravens] were always on our barn all the time. They would always be by our house and, well now I'm scared of them because, I think they represent a bad sign. Before I even knew about my cancer they used to always be around our house…and I always used to ask, why are these birds always there? They used to sit on the barn, three of them…for just about a whole year. They were always around and, and…now I'm afraid of them. That's another fear for me…because I think they represent, bad. Soon after I was diagnosed with cancer, and when I was on chemo all of a sudden like they weren't around anymore. They stopped being on the barn, like, they just fade away.

Cheryl captured another emotional experience, that of "anger" through a picture of crumpled paper and Sandra captured her feelings of invisibility and being exposed, using pictures of masks, hats and of herself in a tipi, as described and shown below.

Cheryl explained:

> For anger, I squished up paper…and that's the only way I could describe anger, because I was angry at, at the government bodies for the way that they handled their programs…I was angry at that, I was angry that I got cancer. I was never angry that I was diagnosed with it. I just thought I can't be angry; I got it now lets just deal with it…I think my children were more angry than I was and I told them that I wasn't angry, I said I have it, let's deal with it.

Sandra shares:

> This one here is a tipi where I'm standing inside of it. It's a skeleton. The skins are missing, so I'm exposed is what I'm saying. You see the past and the present, with the new university…I'm trying to hide, but I'm not hiding…you can very much see that I'm an Indian.

About the masks, Sandra said:

> There were days when I felt like I could be all crazy, messed up, but you know, there were just masks that I used to make other people feel comfortable.

Although the women directed the discussion, we encouraged the conversation to move from specific happenings and personal stories to include social analysis and steps towards possible social and policy changes. Most of our participants moved to the social analysis without any direction. For example, Sandra talked about her experiences with a group of women who had breast cancer wherein her economic realities did not allow her to follow the same course of self-care as those who were financially more stable. She suggested themes which related to a social, not an individual problem:

> They were talking about going on holidays like taking time off work and taking their family to Hawaii when they were diagnosed and I was like…I can only dream of that. I can't even afford the bra. Like I need a bra and I can't afford it. And at the end of it, [a woman said], "well I'll buy you a bra." And I said, "well thank you, but you're not really getting my message here…You're gonna buy us all bras?!"

Marjorie and Margaret captured a historical and intergenerational analysis when they discussed some Aboriginal women's fear of opening up:

> Marjorie: With us there has been so much intergenerational damage…everything is very hush hush.…We need to tell [each other] it is ok to take your shirt off and bra off—so what if you are lop sided, you are alive…but we have been hushed…that's how I view myself—the package is a little scuffed up…but I am here…I am alive.

> Margaret: I've been an urban Indian for thirty five years in Saskatoon. I have [known]…people with masters, with PhD's and yet, they have lost their identity…and parents have lost their parenting skills and ours go back to years ago from uh, [being] residential school survivors. And this I, call it a…generational impact…like in my age, between fifty and sixty, we have lost our parenting skills, and that intergenerational impact, that has on all walks of people, especially for Aboriginal people.

With photographs, the participants prepared for the interview in more depth and thoughtfulness than they would have in an interview with no visual preparation. Photographs allowed the women to direct the discussions and brought in ideas that they had thought about over the months while they were taking the pictures.

A bit astonishingly (but not surprisingly), the majority (all to date) of the participants for this study did not wish their pictures or their transcripts to remain anonymous and preferred to be credited openly for their contributions – especially because they felt this would be more effective in helping other women survivors and other Aboriginal women experiencing cancer. They wanted to be identified, using their real names and the pictures of themselves and their families, who have also provided written consent. The initial ethics submission ensured confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data – to recognise the participant's entitlement to privacy and their rights to anonymity. However, as researchers, we recognised the participants' rights to be identified if they wished – especially because of the participatory and participant directed nature of this research. As such, we amended our ethics and this was approved. More importantly, we attest that this speaks volumes to the participant's engagement with this methodology as well as their willingness to share their lives to assist others!

The photovoice methodology of our research allowed definitions of ethical and respectful action to be located within the social settings with the women, rather than by outsiders and the institution. Ethical principles of negotiation and mutual understanding and respect won over institutional top down decision-making. This meant that deadlines were pushed back in favour of understanding the importance of "time", ethics were amended, and women were provided a tool which seems to allow a more creative, complex picture of experience. As researchers, we also learned to listen more creatively, empathically and deeply.

13.4.3 Sharing Circle/Community Workshop

The sharing circle and workshop were held at Tamara's House.[4] The day was a mixture of emotions and happenings – unexpected, serendipitous and expected. The successes were many – including building relationships, sharing amongst the participants and with community partners, and discovering future possibilities for

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[4] Tamara's House is a non-profit organisation that provides services for sexual abuse survivors. Tamara's House was chosen because the location is in a quiet residential area, the staff is warm and welcoming, many of the women had been there for a prior interview and the room they offered had large comfortable armchairs, arranged in a circle.

dissemination and continued work. There were also challenges. While our aim was for the sharing circle and workshop to be directed by the participants, there were limitations to collaboration.

The sharing circle was facilitated by the researchers, but was directed by the women. We had numerous discussions initially with the participants about what they would like to happen at the sharing circle. Mary, for example, said:

> You should have a sharing circle with the women…and you should bring in an Elder to say a prayer. With the sharing circle you could smudge everybody that wants to be smudged. We can talk about our experiences before we start looking at the pictures …that would be the suggestion I would make…just have a day where we can spend, with an Elder somewhere…somewhere nice and peaceful and quiet and you can share, and just, spend the whole day together.

Most importantly, they wanted the sharing circle to be an opportunity to meet each other, share photographs, stories and create connections. Many participants expressed the importance of having support from other Aboriginal women who have experienced breast cancer – yet most of the participants had not had this opportunity. Tina, for example, told us that:

> I would have loved to see another brown face in there, not that I'm racist or anything like that, I just needed to see another.

Our research team prepared numerous gifts for the women, in addition to an honorarium. We purchased photo albums and filled these with pictures. The album's contained all of the participant's photographs as well as five pictures from each of the other participants. Poudrier prepared a DVD (photo story) with a slide show to music, displaying the women's photographs. We felt uncertainty here, hoping very much that all of the women would enjoy the DVD, album's chosen and display of their pictures.

We began the day with a Morning Prayer. Each woman had about 10 or 15 minutes to share their stories and photographs with the other women in the sharing circle. This was followed by a free flowing discussion of shared experiences, shared concerns and shared ideas about how to continue to support each other as a group and how to use their experiences, photographs and lives to assist other women newly diagnosed and other survivors of breast cancer. The general tone of the sharing circle was one of warmth and sharing. The women all expressed how happy they were to meet each other and to have an opportunity to share each other's stories and lives.

Interestingly, the sharing circle was the last step of the funded research by the research team, but the first step of the coming together of women who had now been offered an opportunity to take what had been established, further. It is for these reasons also that the second part of the day of the sharing circle was for a community workshop where invested community members were invited.

To ensure that participants in our project were offered an opportunity to meet with relevant policy makers, connections were made (by the researchers) with the Saskatoon Health Region, Breast Health Center in Saskatoon (BHC), Breast Cancer Action Saskatchewan (BCAS), Breast Cancer Community of Stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples Health Research Center (IPHRC). All of these agencies have expressed an interest in the findings of this research and in services that may better meet the needs of the Aboriginal women breast cancer survivors. These advocates were chosen by the university researchers, not by the women themselves. We chose the advocates for a number of reasons. First, we did not have the privilege of consulting as a group before the sharing circle. Second, identifying community advocates early meant increased support from the community throughout the initial data collection stages.

Three outcomes of the initial community event are evident. First, relationships were established between Aboriginal breast cancer survivors in Saskatchewan and between the interested community members – with hopes to extend this list. Second, findings were shared with interested stakeholders and the community groups which had built capacity in the area of Aboriginal women's experiences with breast cancer. And third, the findings were disseminated to the community members which helped to raise awareness of Aboriginal breast cancer survivors' experiences. Established in the workshop and sharing circle were a number of very ambitious directives, including fund-raising initiatives, photo exhibits and ways to keep this group of women together and growing, to support other newly diagnosed Aboriginal women with breast cancer and breast cancer survivors. A photo exhibit of the participant's photographs will be created (in collaboration with the community advocates and participants) to be disseminated in a way appropriate for the participants and will travel to each of their communities. Despite some awareness that the needs of Aboriginal breast cancer survivors may be unique and the women may be underserved, there have been few opportunities for Aboriginal survivors in Saskatchewan to come together as a collective. The community partners were very interested in learning about Aboriginal women's experiences, and have not had a great deal of opportunity in the past to do so.

Importantly, the project has resulted in a number of other initiatives. The education coordinator for the breast cancer screening programme in Saskatchewan is in the process of meeting the researcher and participants to discuss ways to more appropriately represent Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan. The coordinator will also discuss ways to work with Aboriginal women in more remote Saskatchewan communities, and is interested in using some of the visual images created by VBC participants (for media and educational materials). Most recently, The Canadian Cancer Society has approved a grant, submitted by the Breast Cancer Community of Stakeholders (by Peg Schmidt, who attended the community focus group), which will bring the women together again, facilitate an Aboriginal women's breast cancer advisory committee for Saskatchewan. One of the participants, Dorothy, will use her own pictures as a fund-raising initiative, to provide educational awareness about the problem of cancer in her community.

> I want to make magnet little things [with two of my pictures] I am going to put these in a clock, and put Island Lake Band welcomes you and use the money for the project…
> I want to make that money to be with the ladies that are surviving from cancer…I counted eight women there with different kinds of cancer—two with breast cancer…and there are those that don't want anyone to know about their illness.

> [I want them] to feel that they are not alone…they are always with their families…other people that care about their illness—I want to pass this along to them.…Alone there at home we get, we don't' get travel dollars, money to pay our bills…the everyday money is not there..

13.5 Discussion

Our findings suggest that photovoice methodology is an empowering method suitable to completing health research with Aboriginal peoples – especially considering deep concerns about the historical link between colonisation and researching a population whereby many have said on numerous occasions: "We've been researched to death" (Schnarch 2004: 3). Identifying Aboriginal women's quality of life and breast cancer survivorship concerns from their perspectives (privileging their voices and visual images) we feel has contributed to knowledge about Aboriginal healing and health in a way, which privileges Indigenous voice, respects diversity, benefits the women individually and enhances community's strength.

Our findings suggest that photovoice is culturally appropriate and suitable to health research with Aboriginal women for a number of reasons. First, through photovoice, participants express that they benefit individually, relationally, socially and politically. Second, data collection was done in consultation with the survivors. Third, to ensure proper analysis of the data, we continue to see ourselves as learners, not "experts". Smith (2006: 98) defines this as a "community-up" approach for researchers.

13.5.1 Individual, Relational and Political Benefit of Photovoice

The photovoice process is informed by the participant's own stories and pictures, ensuring empowerment to groups whose voices and pictures have been co-opted in mainstream research. Previous photovoice research agrees that participants benefit personally and relationally. In the Language of Light photovoice project (Wang 2003), for example, both women and men noted that participation enhanced self-esteem, quality of life and status with peers. Their participants spoke of enjoying the creative process and the attention they received from policy makers, researchers and the media.[5] A sixty-year-old woman held up her camera and said "This is history!" (Wang 2003: 187). Relationships also develop through the participants both working on their photographs together, as well as through the group sessions that occur. Wang (2003: 190) said about their research:

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[5] One fifty-year-old man stated that "many shelter users were intelligent people seeking to be engaged and stimulated by training such as that provided by the language of light photovoice project" (Wang 2003: 187). Had he not participated, he said he would have been "just lying around watching television" (2003: 187).

> Participating in this project itself enabled participants to get to know one another, build ties and friendships, and therefore bond as a peer support group for problem solving and teamwork…this enabled homeless people to speak from their experience and talk about what mattered to them so that they could help one another survive.

In the VBC project, all of the women enjoyed the process – the personal and social reflection, the creative component, the relationship building and especially the potential of the photographs to assist other women who may experience breast cancer. As noted, Shelly said: "This was a wonderful, wonderful exercise." Dorothy expressed: "I pictured right away that it [the pictures] would help others."

Finding solutions together is a theme of photovoice. Ellen Lopez, Eugenia Eng, Elizabeth Randall-David and Naomi Robinson (2005a: 113) describe one woman's response to another photovoice project: "It was beautiful. We learned we can learn from each other and we can work together. From this, we can do anything."[6] In our VBC research, the women often enjoyed working closely with their families as they took the pictures. The workshop and sharing circle was the initial step towards the VBC participants working together and developing solutions – since this was the first time they had the opportunity to meet. The women together established very ambitious directives, including a photoexhibit, creation of a new DVD or video, fund-raising and establishing further support for other survivors and themselves.

A goal of photovoice, and a key component of researching Aboriginal peoples, is that participants also benefit from their involvement socially and politically. Participants are empowered to represent and also enhance their communities through the documentation of their life experience through photography (Wang and Burris 1997).

Moffit and Robinson Vollman (2004: 2) say this clearly:

> With this technique, people capture images of their everyday life experiences in their communities through the use of a camera. By telling the story behind a photograph, they describe life in their communities ad thus convey to others the context of their lives form the personal points of view.

Community members are thereby offered an opportunity to assist in the development of relevant policies. In the VBC project, the women met with relevant policy makers and had the opportunity to use their pictures towards increasing community health.

It is important to discuss that the policy makers in the VBC project were chosen by the researchers, without consultation by the participants. Lopez and colleagues (2005) suggest that advocates should be identified through consultation with the women – especially because of the inductive nature of the photovoice method. They explain:

> [I]f advocates had been identified at the outset of the project one obvious choice would have been to recruit a representative from the local cancer support agency. Yet nobody from

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[6] Another asset of photovoice is that it is accessible to anyone who can learn to use an autofocus camera. Participants who cannot read or write may also experience esteem from participating. Wang and Burris (1997), for example, describe the success of photovoice methods with women of low income from Yunnan villages, where female education was lacking both parental and broader community support.

> the agency was identified by survivors as an advocate. In fact, survivors indicated that they rarely used the agency's resources because they perceived that it catered solely to white women (Lopez et al. 2005: 342).

On the other hand, it is recommended by Wang (1999, 2003) and Wang and Burris (1997) to identify and recruit community partners early in the project – as a community building strategy. We chose the advocates for a number of reasons, both intentionally and due to circumstance. First, we did not have the privilege of coming together as a group initially, or for more than one session. Second, identifying community advocates early meant increased support from the community throughout the initial data collection stages, as discussed earlier. For example, BCAS shared stories about the study in their newsletter. Lori Chartier (Project Manager of the New Breast Health Center, at the time) became the principle community partner for an IPHRC grant (to extend VBC) and advocated on behalf of the VBC participants to have their sharing circle funded by the Saskatoon Health Region (which it was). Peg Schmidt, community consultant and advocate for the Breast Cancer Community of Stakeholders acted as an adviser to the project and a consultant for review and evaluation strategies and for strategies of care for Breast Cancer Survivors. Rose Roberts, Peg Schmidt and Tia Lutz all became community co-applicants for proposals to extend the project. Elder Maria Campbell, an elder for the Indigenous People's Health Research Centre acted as a consultant throughout and invited women to be participants, through a personal story she wrote in an Aboriginal newspaper and speaking engagements.

We have learned that it may have been more ideal to meet with the women as a group more often, furthering consultation. The project, however, has new legs now – allowing future development by the participants of VBC and the breast cancer and research community. New community partners will be established by the women (and through their relationship with existing community partners), and ideas for policy initiatives and community education have begun. The research team also has an opportunity to broaden the scope of the research to remote Saskatchewan and national levels.

13.5.2 Data Analysis: Researchers as 'Learners'

To ensure proper analysis of the data, as researchers we continue to see ourselves as learners, not "experts". The point of this research is to learn the perspective of the Aboriginal women survivors. The analysis (which is ongoing) may involve deconstructing subjectivities and understanding this in the context of how individuals make meaning and create identities. Reflexivity is thus central – as our own subjectivities and identities also influence the research. The creation of knowledge and the research process is, therefore, intersubjective, acquired through the interaction of the researcher and the research participants (the survivors) and the interaction between the survivors.

The meanings within the photographs are also intersubjective and layered. The visual images were read by the women by looking internally at the meaning presented by themselves and by looking more externally at the image, examining how she chose to present her content – and what the action of taking of the photograph included (i.e., family and friends participation in this process, cultural protocols and more). The visual images are also read by examining the social and cultural context of the images that are presented. This involves the women's interpretation of what lies behind the image.

Interpretation of photographs within sociological research has often been done using a positivist paradigm – as a way to provide evidence for so called "objective research" (Stasz 1979). This is shifting, however, to a recognition that photographs may offer perspectives that are different, provided by the individual who is taking the picture – realising a more social constructionist view (more accommodating to decolonising methods) which understands the meaning of the photograph from the taker (see, e.g., Tagg 1988). The VBC project is informed by this social constructionist (and anti-oppressive) view, whereby the women's interpretation is viewed as being the most important. In addition, however, both the women and the researchers (as well as any other people who view the photographs) bring their own social position and specific interests to the interpretation of the photographs. In this way, it is also important to recognise where researchers and women are situated. In other words, as sociologists, we recognise that the pictures record interpretations and experiences of individuals within specific cultural and social positions. The task is as much to understand the individual representation and interpretation, as it is a social interpretation of the women's and researchers' positions in the social world and how this shapes social reality.

13.6 Conclusion

Through this research, the participants, university researchers (ourselves) and community partners, together (in a self-reflexive way) have participated to create a new understanding of Aboriginal women survivors' lives through collaboration. Despite challenges and unexpected occurrences, this project seems to have provided an essential first step in supporting Aboriginal breast cancer survivors in Saskatchewan, affirming their experiences, building collaborative relationships between the women and community partners and raising awareness of survivor's experiences.

The assets of using this method are clear to us. The method of photovoice empowers participants to share an understanding of their needs and share stories and narratives visually – privileging Indigenous knowledge, validating diversity of the participants and deepening opportunities for participants and researchers to explore personal, social and political experience and wisdom. The visual images draw out difficult experiences, unidentified needs and essential supports. Another key asset is that it brings forth positive health indicators – evidence of strength, resiliency, spirituality, family and community. The camera seems especially motivating and captures what the women see as important, prioritising knowledge from the community. However, two key limitations of this method are also noted. First, the motivation, time and thoughtfulness the women contributed for the VBC study is heartening. This also demands that we ask, however, if the VBC photovoice participants are representative, or how can more voices be shared? The second limitation concerns the connection of photovoice methodology to social policy. Minkler (2000) asks whether a focus on participants' contribution towards enhancing their lives and others' may take away from broader community responsibilities and cast social problems as individual problems. Key here, we argue, is that participants and researchers (and community members) continue to discuss how visual images and narratives are understood through the photovoice method (Wang 2003).

In closing, the participants (researchers and community advocates) have all expressed that they benefited from and enjoyed the creative process and the potential this work has towards helping newly diagnosed women and other women in similar situations. This approach affirms that the best way to learn about health experiences is from the participants (Moffit and Robinson Vollman 2004) – in our study, this means the Aboriginal women themselves. Importantly, the ways of knowing by First Nations peoples have been stripped through colonisation. We suggest that photovoice may be used to reclaim these points of view and, therefore, be seen as having potential for decolonising research (Smith 2006).

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Chapter 14
Participatory Photography in Cross-Cultural Research: A Case Study of Investigating Farmer Groups in Rural Mozambique

Elisabeth Gotschi, Bernhard Freyer, and Robert Delve

Abstract Visual tools are increasingly popular as alternative qualitative approaches for enriching and complementing quantitative studies, but also as a tool in its own right. The methodology "participatory photography" has been used for understanding group formation processes, obtaining insights into group dynamics, social capital distribution, assessing and documenting tangible and visible impacts of development projects. Putting cameras into the hands of people changes power relations between the researcher, the researched and between the researched themselves. From a methodological point of view, many questions arise: how to introduce the tool into the community, what guidelines to follow when training and accompanying a group during the process, how to analyse the multitude of data generated and finally, how to deal with ethical challenges? This chapter discusses the use of participatory photography of a cross-cultural research in Búzi district, Mozambique. The process we adopted consisted of three cycles of photography with eight farmer groups (11–35 members each), where they took pictures to analyse critically and collectively their group membership, required investments, problems they face, coping strategies and benefits/incentives from being in the group. Together as a group and in individual sessions, farmers explained their choice of picture and its interpretation of what it means to them. Handing cameras to people and observing how groups were handling the camera allowed insights into group processes and the ability of working together for a common purpose. It allowed further insights into group hierarchies and power distribution; in weak groups the introduction of participatory photography can cause conflicts and the researcher risks losing control over the process. However, the advantages, such as visualisation (e.g., of group activities and

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social realities), the incorporation of everyday knowledge and the active integration of various stakeholders in the research outbalances the dangers and disadvantages. We found that observing group processes of handling photo-cameras yields insights into new aspects of social capital (i.e., degree of mutual cooperation, solidarity and altruism, ability to handle the camera as a group). These insights can be used to develop indicators that describe the groups' maturity.

Keywords Participatory photography methodology, Farmer group, Rural Mozambique, Photovoice, Ethical challenge, Group process, Power distribution, Activism.

14.1 Introduction

Conducting social research means by definition working in a culturally different and maybe even in a geographically distant field, often under challenging conditions. This is especially true for cross-cultural research where foreign researchers collect data in completely different cultural environments with, often, limited insights into the investigated society. Cross-cultural research poses various methodological and practical difficulties for the researcher and requires considering a number of practical, ethical and personal questions: What are the "right" questions to ask, and what are appropriate methodologies to use? How to work with people who are considerably poorer in a way that one is not only "extracting" information, asking the researched to volunteer and donating their time to the sole benefit of the researcher, but also to make sure they benefit from the research and its findings?

In research situations such as between a researcher from a "modern", industrialised, urban area and people from "traditional", agricultural or rural areas, language barriers and cultural differences need to be considered (Hoffmann 2001: 144). Often, researchers work with marginal groups, such as ethnic minorities or people in rural areas, who hardly have a voice and are seldom asked for an opinion (Liamputtong 2007). Interviews can be slow as respondents may find it difficult to reflect on their own situation and provide interpretations and stories on a research topic. Similarly, researchers might find it hard to pose appropriate questions that are meaningful to the participants and capture important issues of their social realities. Researchers have to be careful to not misrepresent these realities and often need some time to "learn to see through the lenses of the cultural Other" (Harper 2000: 141).

Visual tools can serve as a medium that facilitates communication (Liamputtong 2007; see also Chapters 9 and 13 in this volume). Pictures, for example, can serve as a reference point to enlarge the amount of common understanding. However, photos can also serve as a method by visualising the self-evident and to dismantle contradictions between what is said and the content of the picture. Still, most pictures require verbal interpretation, and in case of examining them in isolation, they are often meaningless or at risk of being misinterpreted (Hoffmann 2001: 145).

In recent years, visual tools and photographs have received increasing prominence to enrich and complement data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires, participant observations, etc., finding their way also into "participatory research". However, the use of visual tools and photographs in research is not *per se* participatory as "social scientists have employed photos successfully to extract information from people" (Hurworth 2003). Participatory photography as we have used it is a research method that was developed in the tradition of Freires' (1972) liberation education. The methodology is meant to "consider, and seek to act upon, the historical, institutional, social, and political conditions that contribute to personal and community problems" (Wang et al. 2004: 911). See also Chapters 11 and 13 in this volume.

In this chapter, we discuss the theoretical foundations of visual tools in social and ethnographic sciences with a special emphasis on "photographs" and "participatory photography" (also named photovoice or participatory camera). By reviewing recent studies of this increasingly popular method, we develop criteria to assess commonalities and differences in their practical applications in different research projects. We then report on the application of disposable photo-cameras for researching farmer groups in a culturally different setting. This method is an example for participatory research to "better understand the world, and to enable people to improve their living conditions and overcome inequalities" (Scheyvens et al. 2003: 187). Finally, we link our analysis of group processes (i.e., their ability to handle the photo-cameras) building on Pretty and Ward (2001) and their findings regarding group development.

14.2 History and Theoretical Foundations of Photography

There is a long tradition of using photographs in the social sciences. Since its "discovery" in 1839, photography has "moved from illustration and documentation to serving as research data in the behavioural disciplines" (Heisley and Levi 1999: 257). Photography was used in anthropology since the 19th-century British colonialism as "a scientific tool … to gather objective data, rather than travel or adventure memories" (Harper 2003: 242). In early anthropology, photographs were used as "visual information for the classification of races … to support theories of social evolution" (Harper 2000: 131). Similarly, in the 1920s, the "Chicago School" of American sociology used photographs in research; "early sociological photographs were … used more to confirm textual descriptions" (Harper 2003: 242). Important studies were published during the 1930s and 1940s (e.g., *Balinese Character* by Bateson and Mead). Disputes on methodology and shifts towards quantitative research in the 1960s, have led temporarily to a decline in importance of visual research methods. Nevertheless, since photography entered empirical social research, pictures have been recognised "as a 'can opener' for deeper reflection and discussion within the interview process" (Collier and Collier 1986, quoted in Stanczak 2004: 1473). Researchers have developed different approaches to apply the method to a broad range of research fields in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their respondents' point of view and gain new insights into their research subjects. Within visual sociology and visual anthropology, for example, "photo-elicitation" has received increased importance for studying subcultures. This method is "a very simple variation on the theme of open-ended interviewing. The open-ended interview is an exchange initiated and guided by the researcher … stimulated and guided by images" (Harper 2000: 144) which are typically taken by the researcher. However, it should be acknowledged that there are a number of studies using photo-elicitation for discussing pictures retrieved from private or public photo archives.

In the 1990s, a different approach has been developed in the tradition of liberation education (Freire 1972), but also with its roots in feminist and action research, where researchers hand over the cameras to the researched not only to elicit and document social realities but also to actively engage in social change. Within this tradition, the "problem" of the "Other" as discussed above does not occur, as it is the "Other" who is empowered to take pictures. Through "photovoice" (Wang et al. 1998; Brown et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2004; Willson et al. 2006), or "participatory photography"(Singhal et al. 2004), researchers give "some degree of power back to the subjects in the sense that they could use photography as a means of 'telling their own stories' through the photographs they took. In other words their photographs set the agenda" (Markwell 2000: 92) of the research process. See also Chapter 13 in this volume.

Working with photographs and engaging in dialogue with the researched changes the dynamics of the research process and the relations between the researcher and the researched are of a different quality. Participatory photography is based in a dialogue "in which the typical research roles are reversed. The researcher becomes a listener and one who encourages the dialogue to continue. The individual who describes the images must be convinced that his or her taken-for-granted understanding of the images is not shared by the researcher, often a startling realization for the subject as well" (Harper 2000: 145). This is an important issue also for taking pictures, so as not to reproduce the perception of the outsiders but be sensitive enough to capture the realities as the social group itself perceives and lives it.

Photos have multiple meanings as the "truth" or the story of the photos is "socially and technically constructed" (Harper 2000: 136). The more we know about under what conditions, how and why a picture has been taken, the better we can judge its validity. According to Parker (n.d.: 9), three contextual aspects need to be considered when interpreting photographs:

1. Socio-historical context: Original production of the picture to understand in which type of situations the picture is representative. From the perspective of different social groups or different situations, the same picture can have considerably different meanings.
2. Socio-biographic background of the photographer: The postmodern critique on documentary photography, for example, is based in the understanding that the photographer is constructing the meaning of the picture as much as those who view it. The specific social context, the roles s/he fulfills, socio-biographic background determines the framing and interpretation of the picture. This critique largely addresses photography in cross-cultural contexts where usually "the powerful, the established, the male, the colonizer typically portray the less powerful, less established, female, and colonized" (Harper 2000: 140).
3. Context of interpretation and analysis: Different interpretations are reached depending on who analyses the photos (researched, researched, together, another

> viewer). The differences between scientific interpretation and viewing journalistic, artistic, or everyday pictures are evident. Photos can be used in the analysis to "trigger reflections by interviewees" (Parker n.d.: 6), especially when they "feel a strong connection to photographs, they can be encouraged to articulate how the photographs fit with and represent their world … and how they have constructed their identity, relationships and place in that particular world" (Parker n.d.: 6). In contrast, pictures interpreted by the researcher or a viewer of a photo-magazine lack this dimension of meaning.

A large number of studies have used photos for eliciting research questions (Heisley and Levy 1991; Markwell 2000; Clark-Ibánez 2004; Samuels 2004) or to address community problems (Wang et al. 1996; Gallo 2002; Wang et al. 2004; Willson et al. 2006); similarly, video-cameras have been used to work with communities in participatory research projects (Satheesh n.d.; Huber 1999; Okahashi 2000; Kindon 2002). Drawings and paintings have received increasing interest, especially for engaging children in studies, and enriching the perspective of adults (Harrison 2002; Lauritsen and Mathiasen 2003; Liamputtong 2007). A range of studies using photography are summarised in Table 14.1.

Comparing visual research methods to other methods used in the social sciences reveals that there has been relatively little written on "how photographs can be integrated into the interviewing process" (Hurworth 2003).

Table 14.1 Description of selected studies using photography

Name of methodology	Who takes pictures?	Purpose of taking pictures	Analysed how and by whom?	Author
Photo-documentation, presentation and elicitation	Researcher, guided by the project leader, takes over 150 pictures	Record and illustrate stages of the patient trail in a hospital, use photos to elicit interviews with hospital staff	Photo selection by researcher aided by staff, directed by steps identified by the project team; interpretation not stated	Buchanan (2001)
Auto-driving (using photos)	Photographer documented preparation of evening meal in three families	Professional photographer took pictures during family's dinner (1) Pictures used as *stimuli* to interview the family (informants). (2) Informants were confronted again with photos and the taped interview for commenting	Researcher chooses pictures to discuss with respondents, analysis of data and process by researcher	Heisley & Levy (1991)

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

Name of methodology	Who takes pictures?	Purpose of taking pictures	Analysed how and by whom?	Author
Photo-elicitation interview (PEI)	55 disposable cameras to children in a school, USA	Students generate data; a way to understand life from their perspective and what is important to them to complement ethnographic field work	Not clearly stated	Clark-Ibánez (2004)
Auto-documentary photography	22 disposable cameras for immigrant and refugee factory workers in USA within the context of an adult literacy programme	Take photographs on what is important in lives and out of work to empower learners to develop themes, discuss their lives an enrich language learning by involvement in meaningful communicative activities	First level: action research-like workers assisted by "facilitator"; second level: by the researcher	Gallo (2002)
(Auto-driven) photo elicitation	Nine disposable cameras to Monks, Sri Lanka	Elicit information from research participants on "a perfect monk", "something beautiful", "important temple activity", etc.	Not clearly stated, probably the researcher	Samuels (2004)
Participatory photography	11 disposable cameras to listeners of entertainment-education radio, India	"shoot back" to give feedback to the radio station on how it influenced the lives of the listeners instead of asking questions	Researchers analyse according to a set of pre-defined questions	Singhal et al. (2004)
Photovoice	60 disposable cameras to residents (20 children) of Contra Costa, northern California, USA	Enable community people to use the methodology to record, reflect and communicate the research topic	Participants drive analysis, from the selection of their photos, to descriptive interpretation	Wang & Pies (2004)

(continued)

Table 14.1 (continued)

Name of methodology	Who takes pictures?	Purpose of taking pictures	Analysed how and by whom?	Author
		(health assets), educate community leaders from a grassroots perspective, supplement quantitative data	Researchers do follow up	
Photo-novella	Two phases, 53 and 9 disposable cameras to women, China (12 women from ethnic minorities)	Empower to record, reflect from their own point of view, increase collective knowledge, inform policy makers and broader society	Not clearly stated	Wang et al. (1996)

Harper (2000: 137) reminds us that there are no universal approaches towards implementing visual research projects:

> Each project must be considered individually, and the researcher must apply all he or she knows from his or her own understanding of fieldwork methods to the visual project. Because the camera intrudes and reveals, it must be used with the wants, needs, and cultural perspectives of the subjects at the forefront of one's consciousness. Beyond that, each solution must be made individually.

14.3 Participatory Photography: Who Participates and How?

Participatory photography – or photovoice as it is named by Wang and colleagues (2004: 911) – is one example for a methodology that hands cameras to people to take pictures. It "is a participatory-action research methodology based on the understanding that people are experts on their own lives" (Wang et al. 2004: 911), with the aim to challenge social realities and address existing problems at the local level.

Participatory research emerged with the increasing interest of donors, governments and the wider development community in participatory development. Pretty (1995: 1251) suggests that "there is a long history of participation … and a wide range of development agencies, both national and international, have attempted to involve people in some aspect of planning and implementation". However, the meaning of the term "participation" varies considerably over studies and projects. And despite the increase in interest in participatory research and development (Chambers 1994, 1998, 2005; Parfitt 2004; Pottier 1997; Williams 2004), "[t]he standard practise is for outsiders to come in and do their research on people, after which they take away their data for analysis elsewhere" (Pottier 1997: 204).

To avoid doing research on marginalised people in an oppressive manner, Scheyvens and colleagues (2003) suggest that researchers should make efforts towards making their research not only a self-serving exercise, but also engage in respectful and friendly relations with the participants or engage in some forms of activism.

Methodological consequences of participatory research include the increased use of visualisation tools, such as drawings, or pictures, and the emphasis of

Table 14.2 Roles of researcher and researched when integrating photos into the research project

	Researcher	Researched	Other options
Decision on research project	• Researcher in charge of development of proposal and securing funds	• Researched/stakeholders approach the researcher with idea and funds	• Researcher and stakeholders (=the researched) develop based on workshop to identify together research questions
Who takes pictures and how?	• Hidden or open • Based on discussions with researched or as naïve visitor	• As individuals or in groups, pairs	• Field assistant, journalist, use of documentaries, archives, family album, etc.
Purpose of taking picture	• Optimising communication between researcher and researched	• Express own view	• Photos taken for a certain purpose
	• Capturing aspects not obtained by other instruments	• Challenge existing situation	
	• Visualisation of social situations	• Communication	
Who does the analysis? Who decides on what is analysed?	• Content of picture	• Self-reflection	• Researcher and researched develop together an understanding of social reality underlying the pictures
	• Narrative of story told by researched	• Telling content of picture	• Researcher encourages researched to advance in critical reflections
What happens with pictures?	• Publication • New research based on new insights	• Private use • Different worldview based on new insights	• Use by third persons, journalism, documentation, etc.
	• Private use	• Communication with others	
	• Other (popular/commercial use)		

integrating stakeholders in the research process. However, participatory research “must function as a means” because any research “must produce some outputs … but it must also function as an end, in as much as empowerment is viewed as a necessary outcome” (Parfitt 2004: 537). Similarly, Pretty (1995: 1251) describes the double-fold character of participation in development projects as a “means to increase efficiency, the central notion being that if people are involved, then they are more likely to agree with and support the new development or service”. Participation is also seen as “a fundamental right, in which the main aim is to initiate mobilization for collective action, empowerment and institution building”. He has further identified varying degrees of participation in research, ranging from “manipulative participation” to “self-mobilization”.

Our review of studies using photography (Table 14.1) revealed that the main difference in these methodologies was in who is responsible, or empowered, to take decisions on each aspect of the research (Table 14.2).

14.4 Application of Participatory Photography in Researching Farmer Groups

We have used participatory photography in our study “Farmer Groups in Búzi District Mozambique – Social Capital Development in the Smallholder Sector” (Gotschi 2006). The overall objective was to assess and compare social capital, group formation processes and power distribution, in groups of smallholder farmers during fieldwork between 2004 and 2006.

The creation of farmer groups has been a popular strategy for development projects to strengthen farmers’ capacities, enable them articulate their needs, or access markets and other resources that otherwise are out of their reach. In Mozambique, the creation of farmer groups has been a popular strategy for rural development projects, to be able to work with individuals in an organised way, develop their capacities to speak with a common voice and act in a coordindated way when articulating their needs, or trying to access markets and technology. In this process, supportive bodies like NGOs or governmental services (extension) rather look at groups as means to increase the take up of technologies or improve economic situations. Groups and group-related processes such as internal group dynamics, power relations, success factors or conflicts are hardly considered (Gotschi and Zach 2005). There is no data or information on what it is like to be member in a group, and its socio-economic functions, problems and benefits are hardly understood. Monitoring and evaluation remains at a structural level (i.e., of how many farmers were reached, how much production was achieved), rather than looking into the cognitive part of the groups (why people are members, what are their benefits, and problems from their point of view).

Many issues around group development and social capital distribution within groups could not be understood through a survey instrument, focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews. Discussing “abstract” concepts such as “cooperation”, “mutual support”, “social relations”, “gender differences” has proven difficult. Therefore, participatory camera was used to understand from the farmers’ perspective what membership in group meant for them and what impact they experienced in their daily lives.

Between March and June 2006, 18 disposable cameras were given to 8 farmer groups, generating 447 photographs. Groups had been chosen purposefully from a pool that was studied between 2004 and 2005 (Gotschi 2006). The process consisted of an introduction, three cycles of photography and a final workshop.

Before introducing the cameras, a meeting was organised to talk about objectives of the group, efficient and appropriate ways of working well together, characteristics of good groups, motivation of members to join and contribute to the group, benefits and problems. As suggested by Wang and colleagues (2004), we also discussed the use of photos and ethical issues. Because most farmers in Búzi district have never used a camera before in their lives, group discussions around ethical issues did not bring up issues of the responsibility of group members regarding privacy rights of others, acceptable way of approaching somebody or a situation to take a picture of and possible risks for photographed people in order to reduce risks of people to lose privacy or be embarrassed (e.g., Wang and Pies 2004). Farmers kept quiet, saying they had no experience and therefore would not know what to expect from the process or what to consider. Based on a common understanding and the clarification of the objectives of our research project, the camera as a methodology was introduced. As almost no farmer in Búzi district had used a camera by himself or herself before, an explanation of how cameras work and training on camera use was necessary.

Each group was given two disposable cameras to take pictures and it was agreed who would look after the camera. Farmers also discussed when and what to take pictures on. Meetings were time-intensive and lasted between two and four hours. Cameras were collected after two weeks and two sets of pictures developed; one to remain with the researcher, the other with the groups. Leaving farmers with the pictures was considered an incentive for them to engage in the process and allocate time and efforts towards its generation and discussion.

Before discussing the content of the pictures, we discussed the process: who took pictures, what went well, and what could be improved? Later, the photos were used to stimulate group discussions on issues around their group membership. In this research, the *stimulus* (picture) of the discussion is generated and interpreted by the farmers themselves. However, the whole process is not “authentic” as it needs to be remembered that the initial ideas, and therefore the frame of reference, was initiated by and coming from the researcher. It was us – the researchers, and not the farmers – the insiders, who introduced the tool and had the power to direct and determine the objectives of the research and the process (Table 14.3). During the discussion of photos, farmers analysed critically and collectively their group membership, achievements, membership

Table 14.3 Stages in participatory photography and involvement of actors

Research steps	Activity	Actors	Remarks/Challenge to participation
Pre-fieldwork			
General definition of research project	Defining research questions, approach, field, securing funds, etc.	Researcher and research institution Funding bodies Stakeholders	Subject to preferences of researcher, availability of funds; considering of stakeholders is of relatively little importance
Specification of research project	Whom to select? Adoption of research questions, logistic planning	Researcher, field assistants, stakeholders	Participation of stakeholders is possible, limits set by budget and time constraints, and interest of researcher
Fieldwork			
Implementation of research project	Introduction of cameras in community, training in use	Researcher, field assistant, researched	Researched come into and can shape the process
Shooting pictures	Researched reflect on the purpose of what to take pictures on, and the underlying research question	Researched	Researcher has no control, activity with the researched only
Discussion of photos	Reflection on process and discussion of content	Researched, field assistant, researcher	Different ways of managing process; researcher as workshop facilitator guides and determines the space
Workshop	Researched select most significant photos to present to wider public, researcher organises location, invites stakeholders	Researcher, researched, field assistant, stakeholder	Researched choose how and what to present, while researcher defines audience and process
Post-fieldwork			
Utilisation	Communication of results	Researcher, researched, stakeholders	Emphasis of what is communicated in publications, everyday conversations, personal reflections

issues, required investments, problems they face, coping strategies and benefits from being in the group. Initially, farmers found it difficult to reflect on their own realities, especially in groups where members had not yet experienced “being a group”, i.e., developed a feeling of belonging. As the process was repeated, farmers covered different aspects, and reported finding it easier reflecting their own situation.

As a final event, a “public” workshop was organised in the district capital to enable farmers to present their work to the local government, NGOs, CSOs, extension services, the radio and to each other. The workshop was also meant to strengthen links between the groups and allow farmers to address their concerns directly with people in power if necessary.

The methodology generated a rich dataset from the farmers’ point of view on the benefits of group membership, how they benefit and what problems still remain, by discussing their pictures amongst themselves and with the researcher. The analysis of group processes, how groups were sharing cameras and pictures, how groups differed in using the cameras as well as their agreement on how to take pictures, allowed further insights into group dynamics and the distribution of social capital within groups.

Each meeting was assessed in terms of who participated in the discussions: Did only the president speak or also members? Would everybody agree or were discussions contested? Similarly, the role of women was assessed. When collecting cameras from the groups, we organised a discussion on: Who took care of the camera? Who took pictures? This allowed further insights into power distribution of the group and into group dynamics and power relations.

Data from our participatory camera projects were analysed at different levels:

- Photographs as a text (usually done by the researcher): Which photos have been taken? What is in the photos? Comparison of pictures generated by different farmer groups, and so on,
- Stories of farmers, i.e., their own interpretations of the photos, comparison of the interpretation of pictures by different social groups,
- The research process, i.e., how groups were able to handle the tools,

The type of analysis chosen depended on the research question. For assessing group formation processes and group dynamics, we restricted the analysis to data concerning group processes and how the research developed.

14.5 Participatory Photography for Analysing Group Processes

Handing cameras to groups is new. To our knowledge, studies so far have given cameras only to individuals to assess their views or obtain insights into organisations through discussions with individuals, but there is no study that has worked directly with groups. We wanted to obtain insights into group dynamics and group development processes, linking observations, group discussions and so on, with the ability of groups to handle the camera (or any other collective tool). Further, the analysis of groups was related to the stages of group development (Table 14.4).

Table 14.4 Linking ability of groups to handle collective assets (photo camera) with stages of group development

Indicator	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Attitudes/values	No significant changes	Realisation-independence	Awareness-interdependence
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua	Jovens	Grudja, Bawa
Internal norms and trust	Externally imposed or derived	Development of own rules and norms	Evolution and strengthening of norms and values
	Guenene[a], Inhambinda[a]	Inhamuchindo, Djovo, Macessua	Bawa, Grudja, Jovens
Recognition of group value	Little recognition of group value	Members increasingly willing to invest in group	Value of group is shared with others
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua	Jovens, (Grudja)	(Grudja), Bawa
Links and networks	Few horizontal links, vertical	Links with other groups, information can flow up	Actively create and maintain horizontal and vertical links, group is strong to resist external power
	Links top-down	Grudja, (Bawa)	
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua, Jovens		(Bawa).
Relation to NGO	Dependency and reliance on external input	NGO as facilitator for example for conflict resolution	Group is self-determined, no longer “needs” external facilitation
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua		Grudja, Jovens, Bawa
Reason for being	Created from outside – breakdown easy	Achieve planned tasks – breakdown possible after achievement	Different activities – group stable
	Guenene, Inhambinda	Inhamuchindo, Djovo, Macessua	Jovens, Grudja, Bawa

[a] Guenene and Inhambinda rarely meet (adopted from Pretty and Ward 2001)

In some groups, the farmers understood the group not as a framework of working together, but as something to draw resources from. Consequently, the pictures taken did not display group activities, but would show people working on their private fields. In the group located in Macessua, conflicts arose over responsibility for the camera, and who, in the name of the group, should participate in the final workshop. The research process brought up a latent conflict between different members leading to heated discussions.

As one aim of this study, women were encouraged in particular to participate and take care of cameras. However, in some groups male members would not allow women to take care of cameras and discussions or observations revealed that cameras particularly allocated to women were captured by male group leaders. Similar difficulties have been reported by Verma (2001) who found that a son took the camera from mother.

While all cameras distributed to farmers were returned, the group named Jovens wanted to include the rice harvest as an important aspect of their work into the pictures. They only returned the cameras after six weeks instead of after two weeks to allow for this. Jovens demonstrated that participatory photography gave farmers the power to determine the "speed" of the research process.

During a final group discussion with the group in Grudja, the farmers expressed that through working together and thinking about the group they felt strengthened as a group. Farmers reported that thinking about what to take pictures of and later discussing the meaning of the photos stimulated self-reflection. People became aware of themselves and their roles as members of a group and they discovered new aspects of what it meant being part of a group (see Markwell 2000). The work brought about positive feelings and they felt much more emotionally involved with the group than before. They reported that trust had increased and they had discovered further possibilities of collaborating.

During the final workshop, groups could exchange ideas and asked the NGO to organise further meetings to learn from other groups. From the analysis of the research process we have developed further criteria to determine group formation (Table 14.5).

By handing over the research tool, the farmers were empowered to highlight aspects in the research "that *they* wanted to highlight and discuss, as well as their interpretation of what maybe relevant and useful to the researcher" (Banks 1995, quoted in Parker n.d.: 7) and started to jointly explore the research topic. Instead of the interviewee being subject of the interview, they became the expert and guide, leading the interviewer through the history, the places and the process, the people involved and the environment of the time (Parker n.d.: 8). This helped to look at the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees and to discover new aspects or hidden facts. It was also an opportunity for interviewees to decide on which aspects of their experience to put on the spot, which conflicts or contradictions to expose and on which topics to remain silent. Pictures also helped overcome language barriers by visualising social facts, and enabled discovery of misunderstandings. Pictures served as

Table 14.5 Extending stages of group development with indicators from participatory photography to determine ability of groups to manage collective assets

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Indicator	Reactive-dependence	Realisation-independence	Awareness-interdependence
Analysis of process			
Division of labour	Members work alone: individual goals are "group" goals	Members work together on tasks, evolve group objectives	Division of responsibilities to achieve shared objectives
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua	Jovens, Grudja	Bawa
Handling of camera	Leader is responsible and decides alone	Leader and some close members work together in the name of the group	Group meeting to discuss and decide together
	Guenene, Inhamuchindo, Inhambinda	Macessua, Bawa, Jovens	Grudja, Djovo
Proactivity in taking pictures	Dependency on input from researcher	Own ideas – real situations	Own ideas – symbolic, reflexive or simulative pictures
	Inhamuchindo, Guenene, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua	Jovens, Bawa	Grudja
Taking pictures	Pictures were taken because they were told to do so	Discuss what is in the picture and why it was taken	Symbolic meaning of pictures illustrates complex issues, self-reflection within community
	Guenene	Inhamuchindo, Inhambinda, Djovo, Macessua, Jovens	Grudja, Bawa
Outcome of research	Conflicts within group	Indefinite	Positive feelings, group is strengthened
	Macessua, Inhamuchindo	Guenene, Djovo, Inhambinda, Jovens, Bawa	Grudja
Analysis of pictures			
Solidarity and altruism[a]	Concerned with own situation, others are not considered in the pictures	Awareness on problems of others, but no action is taken or solution suggested	Problems of others and what to do about it is discussed; concrete action is being taken
	Guenene, Macessua, Inhambinda	Grudja	Bawa

(continued)

Table 14.5 (continued)

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Indicator	Reactive-dependence	Realisation-independence	Awareness-interdependence
Mutual cooperation	Help against payment (*buscato*)	In addition: help for help (*ajuda mutua*)	In addition: helping other people
	Guenene, Macessua, Inhambinda, Inhamuchindo, Djovo	Grudja, Jovens, Bawa	Jovens, Bawa
Services for community	No activities, or activities is in own interest only	Group provides services for community because they are asked to do so	Groups themselves engage in services for the community
	Guenene, Inhambinda	Djovo, Inhamuchindo, Macessua, Jovens	Grudja, Bawa

[a] Some groups could not be assigned accordingly (extended from Pretty and Ward 2001)

"communication bridges" (Collier and Collier 1986, quoted in Parker n.d.: 8), and helped farmers to remember. Photos did not only anchor the stories and description of their world, but became "a catalyst for remembering" (Samuels 2004: 1539) allowing farmers to co-design the research.

The photos further served as reference points to start discussions and pose questions and also to return later in the process to discuss discrepancies, inconsistent ideas or further clarify issues. Compared to semi-structured interviews, this proved a huge advantage. In our earlier fieldwork, it was often frustrating to see that discrepancies or points made earlier in a discussion could not be rediscussed at a later point of an interview. For example, discussions around gender issues have been a constant challenge. Farmers would usually say that there was no difference between the work men and women do, the way they participate in the group, or their expectations and motivation. However, it was evident that different activities (construction of the storehouse, transport of goods, cleaning and so on) as well as access to positions in groups (e.g., president, vice-president and so on) had gendered subtitles. A simple exercise of asking men and women to point out from selected pictures material things that were important to them strongly displayed differences of preferences between women (household goods, clothes) and men (radio, tools) and made it possible to discover and discuss these differences with the farmers. Contradicting information from previous fieldwork could be dissolved into shades and nuances that made sense and enabled deeper insights into these issues.

14.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed theoretical foundations of participatory photography, i.e., visual research methods and participatory research approaches. Based on a review of recent studies, we developed a framework that compares empirical studies. We have developed participatory photography as a tool to work with groups of smallholder farmers, obtaining insights into group development processes.

We found that photos can serve as reference points and overcome linguistic barriers between the researcher and the researched. A skilled fieldworker remains important to translate between languages and helping to translate the literal meaning. Loss of information through the translation process remains despite the visualisation, as when people talk to explain a picture and its setting, it is still impossible to translate everything and capture various shades of discussions and arguments.

Handing the camera to the farmers and asking them to document what is important from their own point of view is a considerably different approach to investigating group dynamics through a survey, where topics, structure and sequences, answers and analyses are predetermined by the researcher. Participatory photography allows analysing interactions between group members and to better understand the perspective of the interviewed with little influence from the researchers. Therefore, participatory photography follows a transdisciplinary research approach (Gibbons et al. 2000). The farmers documented their realities and the pictures were used as *stimuli* for self-reflection and explanation.

Photos make voices heard that otherwise remain silent; these voices tell the researcher about otherwise implicit issues. Photos, however, also tell us about the photographer and the actual context that frames the picture. Discussions have allowed insights into personal values and group dynamics that cannot be easily assessed through other research methods. However, the generated data is not the only truth about group dynamics and only allows one of several perspectives in how farmers themselves perceive their realities. Whilst for Parker (n.d.: 6) photos are historical accounts, here pictures are used to illustrate social change, and document collective action. Participatory photography has been "a powerful trigger" for accessing memories and reflection in cross-cultural research and valuable *stimuli* for response.

The different options to hand out the camera – to an individual member of a group, a leader of a group or the whole group offer different insights in individual and group perspectives and relations. However, there are more options to use the methodology such as to contribute towards the overcoming of gender, ethnic or social status barriers. Our research has demonstrated that participatory photography can visualise the significance of social status, as well as, gender aspects. The approach further allows the group to decide on how to put the research question into practice by deciding themselves which pictures to take, and who, on behalf of the group, takes the pictures, whereas in survey studies it is the researcher who fully determines all aspects of the research.

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Chapter 15
On the Use of Focus Groups in Cross-Cultural Research

Erminia Colucci

Abstract In spite of the diffusion of focus groups method across disciplines and in several areas of research, and although scholars have indicated the utility of this method in cross-cultural research and research with ethnic minority groups, focus groups have been used in this kind of study to a limited extent. One of the reasons for this might be due to the lack of confidence of the researcher in using this kind of method in culturally diverse populations. Being culturally sensitive and, at the same time, pursuing data comparability, makes doing cross-cultural focus groups research a difficult task that necessitates adequate planning and preparation. In this chapter, I present advantages and possible pitfalls of the use of focus groups in cross-cultural research, referring to my recent experience as moderator of focus group discussions in Italy, India and Australia. Suggestions and recommendations for the use of this method with culturally diverse groups are provided, looking at the three phases of the focus groups process: planning, conducting and analysing/reporting.

Keywords Focus group in cross-cultural research, Cultural Sensitivity, Moderator, Planning, conducting and analysing focus groups, Spirituality and youth suicide, Positionality of researcher, Insider and outsider, Language issue, Activity-oriented question.

15.1 Focus Groups in Cross-Cultural Research

Humans, as "social beings", tend to gather together and discuss important issues in groups. Researchers have incorporated this naturally occurring behaviour, refined it and made it a method of research. Forms of group interviews have been used by social scientists since at least the 1920s, but it was mainly in the field of marketing that focus group discussions, initially called "focused interview", developed (Colucci

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2007). However, academics began to re-examine the potential for focus groups in the beginning of the 1980s (Krueger and Casey 2000) and, since then, the interest for this method has grown. To date, focus groups are used across a wide variety of fields such as education, communication studies, political sciences and public health (especially development and evaluation programmes) (Colucci 2007).

In spite of the diffusion of this qualitative method in various areas, much of what is known about focus groups is based on white, middle-class, adult American participants (Kueger and Casey 2000). In fact, even though scholars have indicated the utility of focus groups in cross-cultural research and research with ethnic minority groups, this method has been used in these areas of study to a limited extent. One of the possible reasons why focus groups are not used to the degree they should be in cross-cultural research might be due to the lack of confidence of researchers in using this method, which already requires a lot of planning and effort, in ethnoculturally different populations. Nevertheless, focus groups can definitely be used in such populations and often can be the ideal method to explore cultural issues (Hughes and DuMont 1993; Kitzinger 1995; Knodel 1995; Schilder et al. 2004). The matter is how to do this without introducing bias or being disrespectful towards other cultures' practices and habits. But, as indicated by Vissandjée et al. (2002) and Winslow et al. (2002), there is limited literature available on the use of focus groups in culturally diverse groups. This chapter will be dedicated to how this can be achieved hence, suggestions and recommendations for the use of this method with culturally diverse groups will be provided, looking at the three phases of the focus groups process: planning, conducting and analysing/reporting.[1]

15.2 Methodological Considerations in Cross-Cultural Research

Some authors have offered guidelines for the focus group method (Morgan 1996, 1998; Phan and Fitzgerald 1996; Bloor et al. 2001), defining its organisation, structure and process. These are general guidelines and focus group procedures must be adapted to the specific population of interest. For example, Krueger and Casey (2000) advise on the specificity of focus groups with young people, who are particularly sensitive to age differences, peer pressure and moderators' ability to relate to them. Focus groups also need to be adapted considering also other characteristics such as level of education, familiarity with the topic and the research method, gender, and ethnocultural background (see Colucci 2007). Furthermore, the study aims determine the focus group organisation. In this regard, scholars (Khan and Manderson 1992; Kitzinger 1995; Phan and Fitzgerald 1996; Morgan 1998; Strickland 1999; Krueger and Casey 2000; Madriz 2000; Smithson 2000; Bloor et al. 2001; De Jong and Ommeren 2002) have listed

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[1] A discussion on the concept of culture and more general considerations for cross-cultural research, not repeated in this chapter, are freely accessible in Colucci (2006). Other suggestions are in Colucci (2007) and Colucci and Martin (2007). A helpful resource is the recent literature review by Halcomb and collaborators (2007). Other particularly useful readings are Hennink (2007), Billson (2006), Huer and Saenz (2003), and Vissandjée et al. (2002).

various areas of applicability of focus group interviews. The purposes for which focus groups may be used include: generating research hypotheses (which can then also be tested with other methods); exploring and gaining insight about the range of opinions, knowledge, level of awareness, feelings, attitudes, experiences, reported practices, problems and fears that people have about the topic of inquiry; throwing light on the normative understandings that groups draw upon to reach their collective judgements (group meanings) and cultural values; developing and pilot-testing ideas, materials, plans, policies, strategies, and diagnosing potential problems with a new programme, service, product, and so on.

Keeping in mind that focus groups must be adapted to the specific groups under investigation and the aims of research as well as the resources available, the topic under study and so on, the next sections of this chapter offer some reflections on the use of this method in cross-cultural research. Where appropriate, I will give some examples from the focus group sessions that I moderated for my Ph.D. project (Colucci, submitted), where I compared the cultural meanings and social representations of youth suicide in 18–24-years-old University students in Italy, India and Australia through a structured and semi-structured questionnaire, followed by focus group discussions. More examples are also provided from focus groups that I moderated in a recent study on spirituality and youth suicide in India. My research belongs to the kind of projects where the same moderator (and team) organises and facilitates groups in the different cultural settings, and this is the type of research to which this chapter is specifically dedicated. However, there are also multi-site projects where different local collaborators have these tasks. In this latter case, it is critical that moderators receive extensive training to control bias that might threaten data comparability. With the same aim, Billson (2006) suggests having on-site supervision by one central coordinator. Similar suggestions are given by Hawthorne and colleagues (2006) who, after implementing an agreed international protocol for the conduct of focus groups eliciting quality of life of older adults, also recommend that protocols be clear, detailed, well designed and practical, and that full specification of the results to be reported be included. Knodel (1995) argues that in any cross-cultural project, there is tension between the need to adapt the study design, research methods and procedures to suit the specific country settings and, on the other side, the need to maximise comparability across settings. As Knodel (1995: 12) comments, "striking the appropriate balance is never easy", but this is what we must aim for.[2] See also Chapters 16 and 18 in this volume.

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[2] The scope of this chapter is specific to focus groups, but there are other issues which are common to every research in a foreign setting and need researchers' attention, although these are not discussed in this chapter: for instance, the absence of an Ethics Committee or a less central role of this in some countries which means that studies in these countries might be conducted without ethical clearance. Establishing a trusting relationship with the community is another essential part common to any research. Adderley-Kelly and Green (2005) argue that ideally this relationship begins prior to the study (and I believe should continue during and after the study) and that researchers must gain the trust of the key persons so that they will endorse them. Such endorsement, as the authors highlight, is needed to gain entry into the group for the recruitment. In the study on spirituality, before beginning recruitment, we asked permission the Dean, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor to first of all have access to the college. By coincidence, the Dean needed a psychologist to give four lectures to Master's students in Psychology on the Rorschach projective method. Although I was given less than a day to prepare the first lecture and had a few

15.2.1 Planning: Sampling, Recruitment, Time

Firstly, I want to underline that even in projects where culture is not the focus of the study, ethnocultural variables must be considered during focus groups as for any other method. This is because some cultural groups can feel more or less comfortable with this method or with some aspects of it. Yelland and Gifford (1995) note that newly arrived Cambodian women reported a reluctance to meet in formal groups because, in their country of birth, groups were often linked with the authoritarian government and organised work camps. That is, focus groups, as a method, may not always be acceptable or may generate some negative feelings: all things that the research team must be aware of before the study begins. While the method chosen is culturally appropriate, parts of it might not be. For example, Strickland (1999) found that, while the typical pattern of communication in the focus groups followed the styles of old Indian communities (i.e., "talking circle" and "storytelling"), it would be inappropriate and insensitive to ask Pacific Northwest Indian people to "speak up" and participate, as usually encouraged by focus group moderators, or arrange the room in a "U" shape instead of the circular shape to which these tribes are used to. Similar points were raised by Berthelette and colleagues (2001) in regard to Aboriginals. In rural India, the custom is to sit on the ground, shoes off and legs crossed (Vissandjée et al. 2002). In focus groups with Asians, a barrier placed in front of a person is a welcome physical defence thus, focus groups customarily provide desks or tables for participants (Halcomb et al. 2007).

Sampling needs to be thought through very carefully in cross-cultural research. Issues to consider are: the group size, composition, number of sessions, recruitment and so on. Generally, focus groups are composed of 6–12 members, plus a moderator. Kitzinger (1999) suggests smaller groups (from 4 to 8 people). A group of 8 people is the most typical size (Bernard 1995). Bernard cautions that small groups can be dominated by one or two outspoken individuals and larger groups (beyond 10–12) become difficult to manage. Twinn (1998) also notes a tendency, in a larger group, for several participants to speak at the same time. For these reasons, Twinn suggests groups of 4–5 participants. An optimal number of participants cannot be fixed and size depends on the topic, involvement with the topic (e.g., sensitive topics), depth of discussion desired and recruitment factors. Once the size has been decided, it is very important to over-recruit by 1–2 participants because there is always the risk of withdrawals, although the need to over-recruit and by how many participants is culturally determined. For instance, in my research in Italy and India, all participants usually came,

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hours every day to prepare the next lecture, I agreed to help. Thanks to this, I was granted accommodation in the lecturers' guesthouse inside the campus. This not only meant that I was then officially part of their community, but also allowed me to get in touch with lecturers who then facilitated the data collection; furthermore, my students spontaneously helped with other students' recruitment too. Contributing our expertise and knowledge is also a way to give back to the community (which can include sharing the findings with the community as well). This has also been emphasised by Adderley-Kelly and Green (2005).

but in Australia a few participants did not turn up (although they all confirmed their intended presence in the "remind" call made the day before). Vissandjée and colleagues (2002) do not recommend over-recruiting in the context where focus groups are new events, where it is actually likely that unsolicited participants will turn up.

In regard to groups' composition, often researchers neglect to explicitly express sampling criteria: first of all the way in which "culture" is operationalised should be clear. Often, this is based on the country of origin. For instance, for my Ph.D. study participants had to be at least second generation in their home country (although, in reality, the majority of participants were at least third generation). Being second generation *per se* does not necessarily determine to which cultural group the person belongs (although it defines that participants have grown up in a similar cultural-historical milieu and have been exposed, to a certain degree, to similar social values and norms) and for this reason participants' own ethnic identity was also investigated through an open-question and their ethnic affiliation was assessed through a scale.

Groups should also be homogeneous enough to allow free discussion and interaction, and heterogeneous enough to provide a range of perspectives (Phan and Fitzgerald 1996).[3] A way to reach this objective is organising groups that are homogeneous within participants of the same group while maintaining some heterogeneity between groups (*segmentation*). For example, in my research participants have been segmented not only on the basis of their culture (Italians were in a group, Indians in another and Australians in another), but also their gender. Each country was organised into three types of groups: mixed-genders, only-males and only-females.

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[3] Homogeneity is believed to increase participants' compatibility, thus creating more productive and "smooth" discussions (e.g., Morgan 1995). Background or demographic characteristics (sex, ethnicity, age, religion, education level, occupation, etc.) are common bases for selecting homogeneous focus groups. In my Ph.D. study, groups were homogeneous in their ethnicity, education level (i.e., university students), age group (i.e., 18–24 years old) and, as much as possible, also socio-economic aspects (i.e., private universities were usually omitted and in India colleges accessed mainly by the wealthier sections of the population were excluded). Krueger and Casey (2000) caution to not always assume that homogeneity should be based on race because if this is used as the dominant factor, race tends to become the major issue. Morgan and Scannell (1998) state that participants' experiences matter more than their demographics. A heterogeneous group but with shared experiences can produce a successful discussion because participants have something in common (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). On the other side, in my Ph.D. study, the questionnaire, which included questions on suicidal behaviour, was anonymous so I was not aware if those participants who decided to take part also in the focus groups had any personal experience with suicide. However, having together participants who had had previous personal experience with the topic (themselves or because they knew someone who was suicidal) with those who did not have any made the discussions very interesting and increased the variety of perspectives. The important point to highlight is that they have to respect each other's point of view and it is the moderator's job to make sure participants follow this rule. Also Khan and colleagues' work (1991, cited in Khan and Manderson 1992) indicates that, in some cases, heterogeneity may be useful in assessing community attitudes and beliefs and in maintaining the flow of the discussion. For example, difficulties in stimulating discussion on reproductive issues among young women were resolved once an older woman (mother-in-law of one of the participants, also present in the group) started talking.

This decision followed Okazaki and Sue's (1995) suggestion that researchers should match or control groups for some aspect that they believe may moderate the relationship between the variables of interest.

Typically, participants do not know each other, but this depends on the purpose and circumstances and pre-existing groups can have some advantages in some situations, but not in others (Bloor et al. 2001). Furthermore, in some instances it is not practical to organise groups of strangers: this can be the case in research with "minor" ethnic minority groups, small or secluded communities or institutions. In my studies in India, generally, students lived on campus so they often knew each other. This was especially true in the study on spirituality, where there were only a few hundred students and the University, linked to an ashram, organised several extra-curricular activities and ceremonies attended by all students. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) observe that in the Thai context, strangers are not trusted; therefore, people are not willing to disclose family matters with strangers. This is probably the case also for other ethnocultural groups, and for the same group, it might be different for specific situations. For instance, Khan and Manderson (1992) evidence the particular need for flexibility in the conduct of these groups in developing-country settings. Anonymity, for instance, may be easily realised in certain urban contexts, but it may not be possible in small villages or in slum and squatter settlements. Moreover, familiarity rather than anonymity may be the key to the fluid discussion in this context. Women, for example, may not be prepared to speak openly in front of strangers. Therefore, the researchers must carefully make decisions about the choice of homogeneous vs. heterogeneous groups and groups of strangers vs. familiar faces.

One of the dilemmas in cross-cultural research is the emic (insider) and the etic (outsider) position of the researcher (see also Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume), which becomes more important as the contact between researcher and participants becomes closer, such as in focus groups. A facilitator of the same race/ethnicity as the participants' usually enhances relations and increases the willingness to respond, because of participants' feelings that the facilitator shares common experiences with them (Madriz 2000; Chew-Graham et al. 2002). Thus, being an Italian might have had a positive influence on the Italian focus groups as well as, at a lesser degree, being not a complete outsider in Australia, where I had lived for several years. On the other side, being an outsider also manifested advantages in the Indian groups, where students discussed some issues they would probably have taken for granted had I been an Indian. Furthermore, it was likely that being an outsider gave them more freedom to talk about such a sensitive topic (whereas their confidentiality might have been compromised, and thus also the data collected, had I been a member of the community). As a dilemma, there is no "a" solution for the emic/etic position. In my opinion, the best that can be done is to reflect upon what gives the most in every single situation. In my case, I think that being an outsider in India was the greatest advantage, even though to be able to access participants I had to be supported by insiders.

In regard to the recruitment, various participants' sources are available: existing lists, snowball sampling, referrals, "on location", advertising, and selection services

(Morgan 1995). Snowball sampling is rather typical and it might be the only possible way in some research where participants will accept to take part in the study only if the stakeholders and other “influential” people in the community invite them to do so. Although having permission and collaboration from these people can be necessary in research, especially in small communities and low-income countries, the “invitation” to participate can be an issue: at times, stakeholders and leaders can be forceful with potential participants and this goes against that ethically aimed “volunteer participation”. This can happen even if researchers make recommendations to invite stakeholders and leaders to invite potential participants without pressure. For this reason, I always started my focus groups in India (where without stakeholders’ help I would not have been able to do the data collection) reminding participants that participation must be on a voluntary-basis and if they accepted to take part in the study against their will, they were absolutely free to leave the room. I did this, fearing every time losing half the group (although no one ever left but a couple of participants felt “free” to not come to the second session), although being volunteers was one of the conditions in the form they signed before accepting to take part in the session.

Another strategy often used for participants’ recruitment is offering some sort of compensation/incentive (e.g., money, voucher, gift). Beside the fact that basing participation on a financial reward might select a specific part of the population (probably the most in need or in desire of money), I generally aimed at having participants who were interested in the topic or had a personal experience with it so that I could collect relevant and good quality data. The basis for this is that, as argued by Twinn (1998), incentives might increase the number of participants, but do not guarantee the quality of data. Offering money can also be offensive for some kind of people (e.g., genuinely interested) or for some cultural groups. In fact, in Australia participants often refused money even to pay for their transport. Twinn (1998) attributes the high response rate from her study, without the use of incentives, to the personality traits of Chinese population. People might accept to take part in a study for several reasons. These include indirect awards, such as contributing to the community, gather with other people and the opportunity to spend time with an academic/foreigner. Nevertheless, it is nice to show appreciation for participants’ time and effort, so I generally gave them a small surprise gift, which usually was from one of the other countries that were taking part in the cross-cultural study. With the gift, I attached a card with details of who to contact for the study findings as well as help-services contacts. This information should, regardless, be given to participants prior to the study. In fact, during the recruitment phase, participants were usually given a plain language statement or information sheet and a consent form to sign, which contained these contacts. In this regard, the study by Barata and colleagues (2006) with Portuguese Canadian and Caribbean Canadian immigrants shows that different ethnic groups might have different concerns (e.g., with respect to trust and the need for knowledge) and, therefore, different approaches to recruitment and to the informed-consent process are needed.

Gender issues also need to be taken into account during recruitment. In their study in rural India, Vissandjée et al. (2002) found it necessary to have a man initiating contact to approach local leaders, but to speak to women of the villages they needed the support of a woman. The authors recognise that this gender-specific rapport building with the community was essential to the success of the data collection. They found that they had to involve other family members in the recruitment because women often must seek permission before conducting activities outside the household. Khan and Manderson (1992) argue that, where there are cultural restrictions on women's mobility, bringing them together from different villages to a central place may be difficult, even if transportation is provided. Gender can have a different impact when we move in another country, or from rural to urban areas in the same country, and from more educated (or less traditional) to less educated (or more traditional) community members. The consequences of being a male or female participant (and moderator) must be openly addressed in all phases of research. In my experience, women were generally more at ease around me in India and in Australia were more immediately at ease. In my study in North India, neither I or the female assistant were allowed to have access to men's accommodation, and we had to rely on the help of a male student for this.

The concept of time is very significant in cross-cultural research: beginning with what time means (2 pm can mean anything between 1 pm to 3 pm!), how long the sessions should be (some people are more used to sitting still and concentrating on a task for a long time than others), and when the session should be planned. This latter refers to the time of the day (e.g., avoid running focus groups in the local "siesta" time), day of the week (in some religious/spiritual groups, a certain day of the week, and also time of the day, are dedicated to rituals and ceremonies)[4] and time of the year (many commitments are cancelled during Christmas time, which, for many "starts" the first week of December and lasts until the end of January, and summer; remember that summer holidays are in July–August in the northern hemisphere and overlap Christmas holidays in the southern). I planned the data collection for my Ph.D. considering exams periods, school closures and festivities, but in the spirituality study, I was not made aware that one of the biggest Hindu festivals (Diwali) that year fell during my second week of stay. Nevertheless, with extra effort, I managed to organise a great part of the sessions before the festival. Similarly, one of the focus groups organised on a Saturday was cancelled and another one moved much later because there was a last moment notice about the Goverdhan Puja (i.e., holy-cow ceremony) and we all had to go to the shed to celebrate.

In the specific case of students, it is also important to consider lectures and exam times and that some students cannot leave the University or have to be back by a certain time.[5] This latter case is quite typical in Indian colleges, and in fact I did all my focus groups in the University facilities, often after 6 pm (but girls had to be

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[4] For instance, during their study Yelland and Gifford (1995) experienced that Malay women who observed Ramadan preferred to stay indoors during the time of fasting.

[5] Of course, also choosing a location that facilitates participation (e.g., at work/study place) will make recruitment easier.

back in the boarding house by 8 pm and boys by 8.30 pm), and also on Saturdays. Time equivalency is also important: researchers must assure that time differences do not confound the comparability of any study (Irvine et al. 2007). In other words, the data collection should be planned close by (or at the same time in case of multi-team studies) in the various countries. The time of data collection might also need to be modified if a major event occurs. For instance, my Ph.D. focus groups in India were initially planned for January 2005 but, to limit possible effects of the recent tsunami on Indian students, I moved the data collection by a few months. With the Italian data collection, it had to be shifted because I was involved in a car accident while travelling to Padua (Italy), so the Indian data collection ended up soon after the Italian one, followed by the Australian.

15.2.2 Conducting: Opening, Question Route and Practicalities

Before planning a research project with culturally diverse groups, it is necessary to learn as much as possible about the communities of interest, including their history, customs and style of interaction (Huer and Saenz 2003; see also Chapter 1). Part of this should be the knowledge of specific rituals and ceremonies. For instance, Indigenous peoples (Australian Aboriginals and Maori) often began group activities with acknowledging and farewelling the living dead.[6] Other groups might want to light a candle, say a prayer, sing and so on. The moderator should check with the specific participants if there is any ritual/protocol that they desire to follow before the session starts (and should not take for granted that this is the case because some people are less traditional than others or might prefer to not perform their rituals in front of an outsider/stranger).

Knowledge of local communication habits will avoid misunderstandings. For instance, as pointed out by Vissandjée et al. (2002), some non-verbal gestures of agreement in India resemble North American gestures of disagreement and, as I experienced, it can take some time to become familiar with what is a "yes" and what is a "no". Similarly, the role of silence can be culturally determined and it is important that the moderator is able to deal with silences and understand their cultural meanings.

An issue to consider at the beginning of any study is that people have varying degrees of experience and knowledge with research and, particularly, focus groups. For many of my Indian participants, that was the first time they ever took part in a research project, and for the majority of Italian, Indian and Australian participants, that was the first time they were involved in focus groups. For this reason, I always spend a few minutes of the session explaining what a focus group is and what the "rules" are. Another thing to do in the beginning is to decide if participants should use their real names (stating clearly that these will not appear in the findings) or a

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[6] See Berthelette et al. (2001) and Willis et al. (2005) for considerations on focus groups with Aboriginals.

pseudonym (never use numbers!) during the discussion. Whatever choice is made, I suggest asking participants to write the name on a label to stick on the shirt or put on the table. This is particularly useful when people have names that are difficult to remember (as it is the case of many Indian names). Halcomb and colleagues (2007) suggest identifying participants only by their first name (or pseudonyms) because this reduces the ability of the other members to identify each other unless they are known by sight.

One of the most important findings of my Ph.D. was that Indian youths would not ask for help from a mental health professional because of fear of confidentiality breach. Issues of anonymity of data and confidentiality need to be openly addressed in the beginning of any session in any country. But, it might need greater reinforcement in some countries, for instance those who place more importance on not losing "face" and where shame can have serious consequences. It can help to prepare a consent form that contains an undertaking by participants to not disclose the experiences shared by others (Halcomb et al. 2007). However, because confidentiality can never really be assured (we have no control on what other participants do when they leave the room), I prefer not to let participants disclose personal experiences if this can constitute a threat to them. Following this suggestion, participants often talk about themselves in a third person (and later disclose to me that they were talking about themselves or make me understand this). I always ask participants to fill in an anonymous form at the end of the sessions, where they are given the chance to share only with me something they preferred or had no chance to share with the group and any comment on the session. Basically, I prefer to renounce some intimate accounts, and potentially miss some data, than placing participants in a unsafe position. For the kind of disclosures that, in some cultures or communities, can constitute a threat, I believe individual interviews are a safer and more adequate option.[7]

All focus groups have a structure (at minimum, a list of topics to be covered): they can range on a continuum from highly structured, which emphasise research team's interests, to relatively unstructured, which emphasise group's perspectives. The latter is typical of exploratory projects and requires a more skilled moderator. The former is usually preferred in multiple-groups projects in order to foster the consistency of data collection for comparison (Morrison-Beedy et al. 2001). However, in my cross-cultural studies, I usually design an agenda with a few core questions that I intend to ask and a couple of exercises (or activity-oriented questions, see Colucci 2007) for each session with the aim of increasing data consistency and setting the focus of the discussion. Each session then follows the direction that the group is taking (i.e., the successive questions are decided on the basis of the group's previous answers and comments), but keeping participants inside the topic under study. For the rest, there are no restrictions. In this way, I was able to access deep meanings and understandings which would have remained hidden had I used a tight schedule instead.

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[7] In this regard, Kruger and Casey (2000) also observe that group discussions on topics that can put the individuals at risk once the researchers leave the community should be avoided.

The kind of questions to ask, the order, the structure and so on depends upon the group and the topic objects of the research and, to take decisions in this regard, is essential to pre-test the questions. This can be done by organising pilot focus groups (as done for my Ph.D. research project) or, to do something cheaper and easier (although, in my opinion, it might not be always appropriate) with individual interviews, as done by Morgan (1995). The researcher might also want to involve participants to generate the questions. As mentioned before, this is a requirement for focus groups with Australian Aboriginals and in this regard Willis and colleagues (2005) describe several advantages of allowing participants to set the agenda topics including facilitation of discussion of sensitive topics and coming out of critical issues relevant to the communities.

In my writing (Colucci 2007), I have presented and exemplified several activity-oriented questions, as supplement to more traditional verbal questions. This kind of questions provides "a different way of eliciting answers and promoting discussion" (Colucci 2007: 3). Bernard (1995) notes that exercises produce a wealth of information that can be compared across informants and across cultures, and for this reason, are becoming increasingly popular in anthropology. Some of these techniques are particularly capable of capturing the cultural dimension. For example, Bernard (1995) indicates that the free listing, where participants are invited to list all elements of a domain, is often used to study a cultural domain. Participants can also be asked to create a story, a narrative around the topic under study. The materials and scenes to build the vignette can be derived from a previous session or from a previous exercise in the same session and this strategy is particularly appropriate when the moderator intends to catch a "real life" situation about a category of people different from him/herself, for example in cross-cultural research (Colucci 2007). This storytelling exercise can give particularly interesting outcomes (Strickland 1999). Stories are very important in cultural studies. In fact, as Hughes and DuMont (1993: 793) suggest, they "are a central medium through which people reconstruct and interpret their experiences and are a primary channel for the transmission of cultural knowledge". Pile and picture sorting and other exercises can also be properly used in cross-cultural research.

Beside the ability of some specific exercises to investigate cultural issues, the introduction of some activity-oriented questions can be very useful to reduce language barriers because participants do not have to rely only on oral language to express their ideas and to break the routine of a long session (which can be a real struggle for people not used to long meetings). These activities can make the experience more enjoyable and less threatening, and I recommend researchers to include some kind of exercises wherever possible, adjusting them to be sensitive towards cultural differences (Colucci 2007). The materials developed during the sessions (such as photographs, plays, videos and drawings) could also be used to communicate the research findings to the rest of the community. Art, as a way of eliciting thinking and discussion (thus collecting data) or to report findings (see next section) can be a powerful tool in cross-cultural research. For instance, Bissell and colleagues (2000) used a documentary film at the beginning of the focus group session which depicted working children in Bangladesh as a means of eliciting data on this topic.

Sessions usually last around one or two hours and the same group of people may be brought back for more than one session. Meeting again, the participants know each other better and a sense of rapport is build, a sense of shared history develops, and the groups are likely to take on a life of their own (Morgan 1997). The observation by Wellings and colleagues (2000) that the inclination to disclose views perceived as contrary to social norms may increase as the group interview proceeds, in my experience, also applies when the number of times participants meet increases.

It could be useful to programme a more structured first session, driven more by the researcher's topics and ideas, followed by a second session with lower moderator involvement, driven more by the participants' perspectives (Morgan 1997). In my Ph.D. research, I found it useful to use the first session to ask more general questions on youth suicide and the second, given that participants usually were more familiar with each other and more at ease, for more intimate topics (e.g., one of the second session questions was broadly "If you were thinking to kill yourself, to whom would you talk to?") and more practical aspects, such as suicide prevention strategies. I generally found that during the second session participants increased their trust between each other and felt more at ease to speak (and speak out!). This can be particularly useful in cultures where people are educated to keep things to themselves, are less used to being open and sharing in front of strangers, or tend to avoid expressing disagreement. This, for instance, was more typical in Indian and, to a lesser degree, to Australian participants, although Italian participants also benefited from a second session.

Depending on group members and the purpose of the session, it may be helpful to have one or more assistants in the room in addition to the moderator. The "assistant" (who can have a role of assistant, or co-moderator, or observer/note-taker) provides an extra pair of eyes for observing and recording the session (e.g., keeping notes and observing non-verbal communication and group's dynamics), and can also be of help with organisational matters (e.g., food arrangement or to assist participants who need debriefing, make telephone calls).[8] Co-moderators are essential in focus groups where the moderator has limited understanding of the language, habits, shared knowledge and beliefs of the group under study, as it is likely to be in a great part of cross-cultural research. The co-moderator(s), in this case, can be the "cultural mediator" and/or interpreter. However, at the least, a note-taker must be present and Knodel (1995) observes that this would eventually be the ideal person to do the translation.

This takes us to the language issue. Scholars (Krueger and Casey 2000; Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005; Twinn 1998) recommend focus groups be conducted in participants' native language and, usually, a bilingual moderator is used to facilitate the discussion. There are situations where the researcher needs to conduct the focus group in a language other than the participants' and in these cases a translator

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[8] Because notes are an essential part of the analysis I suggest, where possible, involving both a research assistant, with the main role of helping in organisational matters, and a note-taker, who will devote his/her time mainly to write field notes.

is necessary (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). However, the natural flow of discussion will be affected and there is the possibility that instead of being a discussion, focus groups turn into a group interview (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). This was also noted also by Yelland and Gifford (1995) and I experienced the same in my projects as well. While for my Ph.D., I chose to use Bangalore-based Indian students, who were generally fluent in English, for the spirituality study, I went to Haridwar (North India), and with a few exceptions, students had poor English competence and the majority of sessions needed a translator. This often broke the dynamic of the discussion.

In the beginning of this section, I highlighted the importance of spending a few words on focus groups protocol and rules. However, some participants embody these "rules" more promptly than others, and part of the reason for this is based on cultural differences. For instance, during the session participants are expected to interact with each other rather than turning only to the moderator who is expected to facilitate but not dominate the discussion. These rules might appear simple to follow but the way people interact with each other (e.g., debating, showing disapproval and/or agreement) and with people of higher status (which might be the case for the moderator if he/she has a higher status looking at education level and/or profession) can be very different in different cultures. In India, for instance, there was a tendency for some participants to agree with one another. Generally, this problem was overcome by using other participants' opposing opinions to demonstrate that "it is ok" to express divergent opinions in this method and that this promotes discussion. Yelland and Gifford (1995) had difficulties in some groups (especially in Southeast Asia groups) to encourage women to express views that they felt would not be acceptable to the other members or the moderator ("courtesy bias"). Also age, gender and socioeconomic status differences can have an influence on participants' willingness to share their own beliefs or express disagreement. In these situations, if after inviting participants to share their opinion, the moderator has the impression that some participants refrained from doing so, using a form to collect individual opinions at the end of the session (see later) can give a chance to collect "deviant" views. If feasible, researchers could invite some of these participants who they have the impression had different opinions, but did not share them, in taking part in individual interviews.[9] Because of the status power, moderators should also always be neutral and never express his/her opinion (verbal and non-verbal communication) because participants might then feel forced to answer in a congruent way.

Other things to consider are that, in some cultures, people might tend to speak over each other (take Italians for example), and talking loudly might be a sign of lack of respect (but this politeness will create problems in the recordings). In all these cases, the rules need to be reinforced and exemplified several times during the session and in each session, but moderators must accept that a focus group session cannot change

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[9] For instance, Vissandjée et al. (2002) conducted individual interviews with lower-caste women who did not speak in front of higher-caste women or women with higher education.

strongly established habits. On the other hand, for as much as researchers must be culturally sensitive, some things cannot be accepted. For instance, key leaders or other community members, relatives, people who do not meet sampling criteria and so on might turn up at the session. In my study in Bangalore, a lecturer who gave me permission to involve her students in the project, turned up, with another colleague. Although I let them in the room at the introductory phase of the session, as soon as I had to ask the first question on the topic, I approached them and explained that for confidentiality reasons, only the participants could be present. As suicide is a sensitive topic, I was afraid students would have felt inhibited to share their opinions in the presence of their teacher. In some cultures, women might be used to bringing along children or a male component of the family. Key leaders can turn up to give their (superior) opinion on the topic. In all those circumstances, the team must decide how to deal with them considering the impact on the participants of the presence of these “outsiders”. Having a written protocol where it is specified that no one out of the team and the participants can be allowed during the session, can help to convey the message without appearing unfair or threatening (e.g., “It is a rule of this method”, “It is a requirement of our ethical committee”).

Going to practical arrangements, usually chairs are placed around the table to favour eye contact between participants and the moderator but, as indicated earlier on, researchers should assess if other formats are typical or more accepted in a particular culture. Also food can be something to think about. All *loving* moderators should provide some refreshment during the session. They must be culturally sensitive about when to give it (at the welcome, at the break, at the farewell), how many times and how much. My Italian and Australian participants were very appreciative of the treats I gave them at the beginning and in the middle of the session. I found that serving food and drinks in both these parts of the session has a good impact. However, the Indian participants generally rejected the plan of buying food for them (although they generally accepted tea and cookies if these were delivered in the room during the session). The importance of food in Aboriginal gatherings is also underlined by Berthelette and colleagues (2001).

So, now everything is set: participants are there, ready to start; the list of questions or topics is determined, the co-moderator/note-taker is there, room and food arrangements are set: just press start and begin recording! Wait: also recording needs some planning. First golden rule: never rely on one method of recording, wherever you are, but this can be particularly so in places like India where electricity fluctuates many times during the day and equipment that requires mains power (e.g., my tape recorder) can systematically stop recording for a couple of minutes or a digital recorder (my iPod) can stop working because of the change in the strength of the electricity. Consider distractions and undesired loss of information as well: noise-isolated conference rooms are only a dream in many low-income countries (this can also be true in wealthier countries). Also windows (and at times doors) are an extra-expense in many places and in fact in the recordings of my focus groups in Bangalore it is often possible to often hear “Chai…chai…chai” coming from the streets. Although I love chai, I became more considerate towards these potential noises in my following studies. Furthermore, in some circumstances, the use of the tape recorder (or video recorder) may interfere with the flow of the conversation or the willingness of participants to join the group, or they might break down or be unavailable or unacceptable (see also Berthelette et al. 2001 and Vissandjée et al. 2002). In all those situations, the use of the tape (or video) recorder may have to be suspended (Khan and Manderson 1992) and researchers will have to rely on their notes and their assistants. In these cases, member-checking (see section 15.2.3.) is absolutely necessary.

Before moving to the last step, it is wise to pilot test as much as possible before starting the data collection. Rituals, food and room arrangements; number, acceptability, understanding, structure and kind of questions; number and structure of sessions; the appropriateness of the forms to be used at the beginning and/or at the end of the sessions and so on, are best tested before data have been collected. Although focus groups are a flexible method and can be modified during the data collection, it is best for data comparability to make major modifications before the study begins. However, the researchers might have a very tight time schedule and might have no time to organise a pilot study once they arrive in the countries where the focus groups will be conducted. In this case, it might be possible to pilot on participants similar to those with whom the study will be done, in the country where the researchers reside. Before beginning my Ph.D. study, I organised three separate groups with Italian, Australian and Indian students in the same age range of the participants. Aiming to reduce the effects of acculturation, the Italian and Indian students had to have recently arrived in Australia. A few things changed in the focus group agenda after these pilot studies.

However, for as much as training has been received, procedures piloted, recording facilities tested, researchers must always expect unexpected things to happen and be prepared to quickly find a solution for unforeseen circumstances. For instance, during my spirituality project, a student who matched the selection criteria and volunteered to participate in the study was following 108 days of silence as part of his Dhyana (meditation) which was, as he described, for “the total sublimation of five senses in the mind and thereafter, sublimation of mind in the soul”. Although I needed to make changes in the procedure (the participant, fluent in English, wrote his thoughts on a paper and I read them to the other members and checked that I understood what he meant to say), in my opinion people should not be discriminated by a study because of a religious/spiritual practice. Instead, qualitative researchers should be open to rearrange methods to suit every participant’s needs, even when this puts extra work on the moderator.

15.2.3 Analysing/Reporting

Techniques of data analysis are seldom discussed in any detail, if at all, in accounts of focus groups research.[10] As it is important not to neglect the heterogeneity of opinions in participants belonging to the same culture, it is also essential to never

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[10] See Colucci (under submission) for a discussion on focus group analysis and report.

begin analysing the data focusing on the cultural differences, but explore commonalities across cultures as well. The kind of terms used during the coding/analysis of any interview (individual or group) can also make a difference. For instance, Ratner (2001: 6) advises not to use abstract terms which express no specific cultural content and, instead, to identify concrete meanings at every level of analysis: "[U]sing concrete terms for all the codes enables the cultural psychologist to relate each one to cultural factors and processes."

The issue of language also applies to the analysis and report: in which ways should the analysis and report be done? It all comes down to the researchers' familiarity with the languages, resources available and use of the report (local vs. international). In my Ph.D. study, Italian focus groups transcriptions (which were verbatim) were analysed in the original language (i.e., Italian) and extracts inserted in the reports were then translated (verbatim) into English, whereas the Australian and Indian data were collected in English. In my last study in North India, the majority of the focus groups were conducted in Hindi with the help of bilingual collaborators who later translated and transcribed them (verbatim) in English.

It can be particularly of help in analysing data across cultures to develop some kind of table (e.g., see Braun and Nichols 1997) where the main themes and subthemes emerged in each ethnic group are listed and a direct comparisons on key topics can be made. For instance, overview grids can be developed (Knodel 1995). As observed by Billson (2006), the guide used to gather data can become an effective device for analysing the data and, I add, to produce such tables. However, although these "summarising" strategies are certainly useful, investigators should try to represent all participants' points of view as well as possible (Huer and Saenz 2003); that is, relevant but less frequent thoughts also deserve attention in the analysis and successive report. I, in fact, strongly recommend that unique themes within the sample, as well as common themes across samples, and not only commonly agreed, but also contested opinions be analysed and reported.

Specifically in regard to the analysis of the activity-oriented questions, it must be considered that data collected through the use of exercise-oriented questions might be more complex to analyse (Colucci 2007). Some ideas on how to analyse data are provided by Ryan and Bernard (2000). The authors suggest, for example, using component analysis and producing taxonomies or mental maps if the aim is to understand cultural domains. Taxonomies can be produced leaning on various techniques, such as paired comparison, pile sorts and triad tests.

A debated issue in qualitative data analysis is that of the inter-rater reliability. More typically, a single researcher carries out the process of indexing and developing categories, but some researchers believe that the reliability of qualitative data is improved when analyses are consistent between researchers. Whatever position is taken (pro or against inter-rater reliability measures), there can certainly be merits in involving more than one person in any analysis. Because focus groups analysis is particularly complex, due to the interaction between group members, the involvement of another researcher in the analysis can be very valuable. An ideal person to express a "second" point of view on the findings is the assistant/co-moderator who was present during the focus group session. However, the most crucial technique for establishing credibility is member-checking, where findings are tested with members of the groups from whom the data were originally collected (Jones 2002). For as much as this strategy can be impracticable in some research projects (for instance, multi-countries studies done by a solo researcher in low budget, as it was for my Ph.D. project), having focus groups participants validating that the researcher's interpretation and selection of quotations is adequate can definitely increase the research credibility. Member-checking is generally crucial for research with some Indigenous populations and it can be particularly valuable when the beliefs, values and ways of thinking of the participants are different from those one is used to (e.g., in cross-cultural research). Knodel (1995) argues that the accuracy of the analysis is also enhanced if those who analyse the data are also deeply involved with the data collection, for instance, moderated the sessions. As with any research, also drawing on other evidence (such us existing literature and findings emerged with other research methods) is an important way to enhance the plausibility of the results.

The method of analysis, aims of the study and the audience that will be using the report determine the kind of report produced. Reports can be done in writing (various styles are available) or orally, although with the fast development of internet and multimedia resources, alternative and mixed forms of reporting are appearing and will probably increase.

Reports can be complemented with physical and visual media, for example, theatre performances, photographs, audio and video clips. These art-based ways of reporting research findings have tremendous potential. Above all, they can reach a wider audience in a more powerful manner. Using alternative ways of reporting can make research available to those populations (or strata of population) who will struggle with traditional reports (e.g., illiterate or people used to other ways of communication) or who have no access to academic literature (Liamputtong 2007; Liamputtong and Rumbold 2008).

15.3 Conclusions

There is no such thing as "the best research method" and the method chosen for a research project depends (or should depend) on the research purpose and topic investigated. The same is certainly true for focus group: focus groups are a valid research method as long as they are used carefully for a problem that is suitable for focus group inquiry (Krueger and Casey 2000). Taking this for granted, it is certain that there are many situations in which focus groups can be "the best" choice and certainly it is a valuable method for research exploring cultural issues and can be fruitfully used in cross-cultural research. But, as for any research method, it needs to be adapted to the specific population and research aims/topics. This chapter suggests what to consider in the planning, conduct, analysis and reporting of focus groups in cross-cultural research. What I aim to have left in the readers' minds, however, is not a series of methodological notions; the message I want to leave is that in research every small step matters and researchers should carefully plan each one of them, considering what the research aims and the characteristics of the population under investigation are (without falling into stereotypes). In this way, it is possible to reduce research bias and make the experience enjoyable and respectful for those people who choose to spare some of their time to fulfil "our" research needs.

I have learnt, as a golden rule, always be ready for the unexpected! Being in another country or working with an ethnocultural group different from the one the researchers belong to, increases the chance that something unpredicted or unpredictable will happen. In these situations, researchers who have good problem-solving skills, think creatively and can also see these problems as improving their knowledge about the ethnocultural groups at hand (and maybe can even laugh about it…later), are certainly at an advantage.

Acknowledegments I am grateful to the people with whom I had the chance to learn these lessons, which I am now able to share with others, in particular the participants and collaborators in the focus groups I moderated. Thanks also to Shawn Ashkanasy (The University of Melbourne) for proof-reading the manuscript.

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Chapter 16
Let's Tell You a Story: Use of Vignettes in Focus Group Discussions on HIV/AIDS Among Migrant and Mobile Men in Goa, India

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Abstract This chapter presents my experiences in carrying out this research in India. Talking to men in India on sexuality in in-depth interviews is easier than in focus group discussions; this we realised when we started the research on HIV/AIDS risk assessment. Thus, we introduced vignettes in the focus group discussion; they were derived from in-depth interviews which were real experiences of migrant and mobile men. The vignettes were localised by including names such as Lingappa – a name common for rural migrant men from north-Karnataka and by situating Lingappa in a migrant area in Goa. This projective technique yielded lively discussions about Lingappa. We found that men were more vocal when they had to talk about this fictitious person. Men also shared with us other stories of people living with HIV/AIDS or about incidents relating to HIV/AIDS. Fieldwork was carried out in Goa, India, in 2004–2005. We present examples of the vignettes and some reactions to them. The use of the fictional people and the manner in which we culturally adapted the vignettes show that men could both identify with the character and find other anecdotes to make sense of the situation.

Keywords Use of vignette, Focus group, HIV/AIDS research, Migrant and mobile men, India, Sexualiy, Rapport, Positionality of researcher, Language issue, Informed consent.

16.1 Introduction

Focus groups have been used by social scientists since the 1930s and were more popular in market research. However, recently, there is much more use of focus groups in health research (Dawson et al. 1993; Barbour 2005; Liamputtong and

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Ezzy 2005; Hennink 2007; see also Chapters 15 and 18 in this volume). Vissandjee and colleagues (2002) point out that within health research in non-Western settings focus groups are more preferred as compared to surveys due to the informal and open nature of the societies. Dawson and colleagues (1993) define focus groups as formally constituted, structured groups of people brought together to address a specific issue within a fixed time frame and in accordance with clearly spelt out rules of procedure. The advantages of using a focus group is to arrive at a range of views from a select group of participants in a short period of time (Saint-Germain et al. 1993; Hennink 2007). As opposed to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions explore a wider range of issues (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005). However, focus groups on issues related to sexuality in non-Western settings prove to be very challenging. This may be due to the fact that there does not exist the cultural space wherein issues related to one's own sexuality can be discussed in the open.

To overcome this handicap in this study, we (the author and the research team) presented vignettes as a projective technique. Hughes and Huby (2002: 382) define vignettes as those that "consist of text, images or other forms of stimuli to which research participants are asked to respond. They can be presented to participants in a number of different forms, ranging from short written prompts to live events". In a study among disabled people, Sim and colleagues (1998) found that the use of vignettes in the focus group discussions provided an important stimulus for the discussions both among the disabled groups and the non-disabled groups. The staging of the vignettes to both the groups helped them to analyse the groups separately. Vignettes are also potentially useful in eliciting information from groups which are hard to reach (Hughes and Huby 2002; Kroll et al. 2007), for example, minority groups not accessing health care, or when the topic is too sensitive to give personal accounts, such as mental illness (Link et al. 1999). In a study which examined the sex education needs of Thai adolescents, Vuttanont and others (2006) applied vignettes using two fictional characters, namely, Mali (female) and Somchai (male). This projective technique aided in their research to understand the gender stereotypes and perceptions among adolescents about their own sexuality. In all the studies that were reviewed for this chapter, there was no mention about how the vignettes were constructed by the research team. In this study, we describe the process by which we constructed and locally grounded the vignettes.

Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) suggest that focus groups can be used as a complementary instrument in multi-method studies. Focus groups can be combined with quantitative surveys or analysis from surveys. Matsuo (2003), for example, observed in the Japanese Fertility Survey an increasing age of women at first birth; she further employed focus groups in order to find reasons for this postponement of the first child. Other than the complementary nature of focus groups, they are also used by survey researchers to improve the validity of the survey items (O'Donnell et al. 2007). In this study, we used a linked trajectory of method triangulation, wherein we validate information at each level (Bailey and Hutter in press). In this chapter, however, I deal more with the question on *how we did it* as opposed to *what did we find*?

16.2 Focus Groups in Goa

The present study is part of a larger project on ‘Risk Assessment of HIV/AIDS by Migrant and Mobile Men in Goa, India’, conducted from September 2004 to February 2005. Data include 25 in-depth interviews, 16 focus group discussions and a survey involving 1,259 men (migrant population n = 752; mobile population n = 507, comprising 260 truckers and 247 fishermen). In this chapter, the discussion is more on the designing and conducting of focus group discussions using vignettes. As the vignettes were derived from the in-depth interviews, the conduct and design of the in-depth interviews is also included in the chapter. Among the 16 focus group discussions, we had 5 each from fishermen and truckers and 6 from migrant men. In all the 16 focus group discussions, at least 5 men participated in each group, respectively. The focus group discussions lasted from 30 minutes to one hour.

16.2.1 Selection Criteria

For the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, migrant and mobile men were selected based on the following criteria:

- Ever-married
- Between age 18–45 years
- Migrant men: of Karnataka origin and in case of migrants having spent the last whole year in Goa
- Mobile men: travelling between Karnataka and Goa for work, in the fishing industry and the transport business

16.2.2 Study Sites

The fieldwork among migrant and mobile men was carried out in five sites in Goa; two sites located in Mormugoa, and sites in Salcete, Tiswadi and Canacona. In Mormugoa, Salcete and Tiswadi, the respondents live in migrant settlements. Migrant settlements are usually located on the urban periphery. The settlement in Mormugoa had shops with boards written in Kannada. There are schools where Kannada is the medium of instruction (these schools are allowed to operate in Goa). The migrant settlements were usually situated around industrial areas, and some were outside the city. Many of the settlements close to the industrial areas were built on illegal lands, leading to a sense of fear and insecurity. Regarding the mobile population, fishermen were contacted at fishing docks near Canacona and Mormugoa. Two of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with whom we worked have been carrying out HIV prevention programmes in and around the fishing docks. Fishermen come once in two or three days to the docks with the catch and remain on the dock till the boat is refuelled. Many of the migrants who come from north-Karnataka are not skilled in fishing, but conduct fishing-related activities such as those repairing nets, and are engaged as labourers in loading and transporting fish. We also included them in the study. Truckers have been contacted at parking lots near industrial areas, near truck stops and at *dhabbas*. *Dhabbas* are places along the highway where truck drivers stop to get refreshments and rest. We checked the registration number of the truck: if the number plate included KA –short for Karnataka– we would approach the driver. Truck drivers in India are accompanied by a co-worker called *keener* (cleaner). We also included the *keeners* in the study. Hence, the term trucker includes both truck drivers and keeners. The truck drivers and keeners sleep at night in the trucks, the truck being a mobile home for them.

16.2.3 Entry into the Community

The entry into the community and rapport establishment is crucial for any research involving marginalised groups (Liamputtong 2007). Even though the research team knew Kannada and could speak in the style that is native to the migrants, they were still viewed with suspicion during the pilot study (see also Chapter 1 in this volume). Thus, in the larger study we took the help of NGOs in introducing us to the community. As the migrants knew the NGO personnel, they felt less threatened when we approached them for an in-depth interview or focus groups. This introduction process need not to be very elaborate, in the initial phases we just walked around with the NGO personnel and observed their work. NGOs such as FXB-Goa (François-Xavier Bagnoud), Life line Foundation, Jan Ughai and Population Services International were helpful in introducing us into the communities.

16.2.4 Positionality of the Research Team

In any qualitative research, it is important to remember that the interpretation and process of inquiry are to some extent influenced by the researcher's social and cultural background (Liamputtong 2007). During the fieldwork, the research team faced both challenges and opportunities due to their positionality. We realised the significance of our cultural background in yielding access, rapport and trust among the migrant groups. Language and, oddly enough, a licence plate from Karnataka on the motorbike gave initial access to the communities. The research team was always asked whether they were from the government or the police. Some of the migrant settlements were built on illegal land; hence, many migrants were afraid of being evicted and having their houses demolished, just as what had occurred in Baina.[1] An interesting case of rapport establishment was

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[1] In 2004, at the time of this study, a former red light area in Baina and some migrant settlements surrounding the red light area were demolished by the then government of Goa.

seen during the fieldwork in Zarri, at the Yallingeshwara Matha. A Matha is a lingayat monastery. After a long day in the community, as we were leaving, the *pujari* of the Matha offered us a dinner of *jowar roti* and *brinjal* curry. Offering food and resting place to travellers is a service of the Matha. In our case, the sharing of food was an indication of acceptance by the community (see also Chapter 1). On the other hand, the research team being from Karnataka also had its own share of drawbacks. In the duration of the fieldwork, one of the survey investigators was abused and beaten up by a Goan during an interview session. The truck drivers from Karnataka intervened and asked the investigator to leave the place. In the whole fieldwork, the researchers had to position themselves between the categories of "us", "them" and "everyone". The research team, coming from Karnataka, had their own definition of who "us" were and through the process of rapport-building we tried to include ourselves in the "us" (nama jana = our people) category of the migrants. Realisation of the positionality of the researcher is crucial in providing an inter-subjective account of the study population. In many of the focus groups, we had lot of laughter at the anecdotes mentioned by other men in the group. In such cases, the moderator also joined and made jokes about the situation. Wilkinson and colleagues (2007) suggest that humour can be used among focus group participants to maintain solidarity, navigate coping strategies, and negotiate power. In our focus groups, it aided in reducing the gap between the moderator and the participants.

16.2.5 Ethical Considerations

In all the techniques of data collection, discussed in the preceding sections, oral consent was taken from the men. In the field, we observed that assurances of confidentiality as written consent forms were negatively associated with official government affairs (see also Chapter 1). The fact that the migrants built their home on illegal land made them more cautious about signing a consent document. Men were assured that the information collected from them will be used only for the purposes for the study. To safeguard their privacy, neither names nor addresses were kept as record. The tapes were anonymised and to identify the area and not the individuals. All the transcribed data has been carefully stored and used only for academic purposes. To dispel the fears of migrant men, it was made clear that the researchers were not from the Karnataka government and that the information provided would not be given to the government.

The NGO collaborators in Goa were also consulted on the design of the instruments, and after incorporating some of their comments, we conducted the interviews and focus group discussions. The NGO collaborators were helpful in introducing us to the community, but as a rule, the research team did not discuss the interviews and the focus group discussions with the NGO personnel. We also took care that other than the migrant and mobile men who were included in the study members from the community were not around as this would interfere with the discussions.

16.2.6 Vignettes from In-Depth Interviews

Within HIV/AIDS research, in-depth interviews have been used extensively to document and comprehend risky sexual behaviour and to obtain an emic view (i.e., the insider's point of view) of the different understandings of risk within a particular culture or a subculture (Liamputtong 2007). In this study, interviews were first conducted to understand how men interpreted their risk of HIV infection, how they understood the severity of AIDS and their use of condoms. A general criticism of in-depth interviews is whether they capture only the beliefs of an individual or whether they are shared. In order to ascertain whether the qualitative information provided by in-depth interviews is part of the broader cultural rationality (Bailey and Hutter 2006), focus group discussions were employed to validate individual beliefs. The data from the interviews were used to formulate the vignettes. We took out all identifying information and added fictional names and put them together with names of places in Goa. For example, we talked about Lingappa from Vasco. Lingappa is a common name among migrants from north Karnataka and the addition of the place Vasco, city in Goa, helps in situating the story. The association of Lingappa and Vasco made the group realise that he was also a migrant as the name is not used by native Goans. The research team made a list of different names one could use. The names also had a rural flavour associated with it. The different names we used included Manjunath, Bhimu, Nagraj, Sangya and Patil. The understanding among the research team was that the vignette was not to be changed, but the names could be. This measure was taken to avoid embarrassment to a focus group member whose name was similar to that of the fictional person. The local grounding of the vignette was necessary as we wanted the migrant and mobile men to identify with the characters. As the study was only about men, we did not use any female names and referred to the female sexual partners as hendathi (wife), lover (non-commercial sexual partner) and sule/randi (sex worker). The vignettes were first written in English and then translated into Kannada (language of the migrant and mobile men). The vignettes were staged in the north Karnataka style of speaking Kannada.

16.2.7 Pre-Test and Training

The focus group guide was pre-tested among a group of truckers in the port area of Vasco. It was a bigger group than what we had arranged for. The curiosity of two men speaking Kannada taking a few men aside was too much for the other truckers, hence, they also joined in. Our motive was to test the reception of the vignettes by the group and not on the response per se. After the pre-test, we had to change the style of the vignettes and also the order in which they were presented. The next task for us, as the research team, was to standardise the manner in which we narrated the vignettes. The research assistant had to be trained in both the intonation and the speed of the language. As they were stories, the research assistant was asked to remember his childhood storytelling sessions. Each vignette was practised so as to get the right effect of arousing interest in actions of the fictional person. The focus groups were tape recorded and played to ascertain if they were useful in provoking the discussion. In the first few focus groups, we realised that the order of the vignettes could be presented based on the discussion that was taking place in the groups. Thus, we decided not to narrate a vignette if the men were already discussing the issue.

16.2.8 Time and Location

Finding an appropriate time and place is crucial in having a successful focus group discussion. Among migrant men, they left for work in the morning and hence were available around 5 in the evening. In many of the migrant settlements, we conducted the focus group discussions in the evenings after they retuned from work and before they left for their respective houses to retire for the day. Sunday was the day when the migrant men had a day off. This was the day when they went to the market or to the town to buy groceries in the morning but late afternoons were ideal to bring them together for a discussion. We had to find a place within the community where we could have the discussion as inviting them to a place outside the settlement was not feasible. In one of the communities, we used the premises of the NGO to run the focus groups. In the Zarri area, the temple premise was used. The advantage of conducting focus groups with men is that more public places were accessible to them. In their study among women in Gujarat, Vissandjee and colleagues (2002) found that there were few places which women could access and express themselves freely (cf., Chapter 15 in this volume).

Among the truckers in many of the situations, we conducted the discussion in the front cabins of the truck. The truckers did not have any accommodations in Goa. The trucker and his assistant slept in the front cabin and cooked their meals in open air on kerosene stoves in the truck parking areas. These parking areas were usually surrounding industrial yards. Finding a location was a challenge for the research team, but once the truckers found that the research team could be trusted then they would invite us to conduct the discussion in their truck cabins, which were their mobile homes. Among the fishermen we could find places around the docks where we could have the discussion. In some instances, we had to conduct the discussions in the fishing boats as the men could not leave their boats unattended. The fishermen, similar to the truckers, did not have other accommodations in Goa. They lived on the boats. They came to the shore once in two or three days to haul the catch and mend their nets.

16.3 Results and Discussion of the Methods

The focus group vignettes were constructed on the flowing topics; severity of HIV/AIDS, locus of control, condom use, risky behaviour, partner assessment, trust and perception on gender stereotypes. In the following sections, we present three examples on the use of vignettes and the discussion that ensued post narration. We also discuss the nature of the discussion and context behind the choice of the vignette.

16.3.1 Social Consequences of Having AIDS

The concept of *perceived severity* is derived from the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock and Strecher 1997). It is generally measured as the perceived medical consequences of having a disease. However, we found that men also gave importance to the economic and social consequences of HIV/AIDS. We first observed this attitude in the in-depth interviews:

Respondent (R)*: If I die, then my wife will die, then my children will die and then who will take my family name further? The family is destroyed.*

Subsequently, we composed a vignette which dealt with this attitude and presented it in the focus groups. As can be seen in the following discussion, groups discussed the incidents that happened in their communities. In the vignette below, we introduced a fictional person called Lingappa and used the information from the interview to speak about Lingappa's fear that there would be no one to continue his family name. As seen in the discussion accompanying it, we see the dynamic interaction on how respondents ask each other questions as a way of arguing about Lingappa's fear.

Vignette

In Vasco I met Lingappa. He told me that if a person gets HIV/AIDS then his whole family is destroyed. Because there will be no one to take his family name further. What do you think of his story?

Discussion

R1: Now I am sick, when I die, my children and my name will be spoilt.
R2: How will the family be destroyed?
R3: If someone knows then they will say: "His father had AIDS." People will wonder who will marry his children. What do you say?
R4: I know one such case, husband and wife both died. The elder child survived but the one born afterwards which was in the womb, that died, mother died, man also died. All three of them died. Only the eldest child is alive. Two such cases, another one in Madgaon. They went to Karnataka and died, husband, wife and child. No one survived.

Although the vignette was only about the fear on continuation of the family name, the discussion brought out more perspectives on the problems that the children, of a person who died of AIDS, would face. This method of staging the vignette also brought out other stories from the community. The stories from men added to the context in which the fear was expressed in the interviews.

16.3.2 Baina: Sex Workers and Risk of HIV

Baina is a neighbourhood located in the city of Vasco and commonly known as the red light district. According to some reports, this red light area sprung into existence 40 years ago. The area consisted of a single stretch of land along the coast, surrounded by migrant settlements which were criss-crossed by tiny alleys and closely clustered houses. Sex work took place in cubicles closer to the seashore. Baina's proximity to the port had made it a popular destination for sailors, truckers, migrant labourers and tourists. The sex workers in Baina came from different states, with the majority from the neighbouring states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Sex workers could be found standing along the road. Once they negotiated a price they would take the client to an assigned room or to a *gharwali* (brothel owner).

All this changed on 14 June 2004, when the government of Goa – armed with an order from the High Court in Mumbai and reinforced by the police and civil servants – demolished the cubicles of sex workers and houses of some migrants which bordered the red light area. The government's claim was that the cubicles and houses were illegally built. In the course of the demolition, migrant neighbourhoods behind the red light area were demolished and migrant families evicted. The Goan government issued an official statement indicating that the reason for demolition was the construction of a highway.

Vignette

Remember Bhimu from Vasco; he told me he used to go to Baina (red light area). Now there is no one in Baina. What happened there? Now that Baina is no more where do you think Bhimu will go?

Discussion

R1: It's good.

R2: It's good.

R3: It feels good for whom? For those who haven't lost. Now if I have lost my house then only I will know. Should search for a different room, and if I have take a different room pay rent, should work to pay that rent, all such things that I should do only I will know. Like, they say "jiski jalrahi uskoich Khabar" (the one who suffers knows the pain of it) *like that, who has lost his house, he will only understand it. These haven't lost, so what do these people know?*

R2: We are not saying this about them we are saying this to those "randigol" (sex worker)

R1: That only others not for them but the "randigolu" went that is good for us also.

R2: That only we are saying.

R1: If our house goes, is it good for us?
R2: Good people also have lost.…If they had just removed the roof tiles it would have been…good.
R3: Both have lost, those who had to go they left, those doing dhande (sex work) *they went, those who work and eat its, difficult for them, they are finding it difficult.*

The presentation of the vignette had two motives. One was to find out if the migrants associated the demolition of Baina with the lowering of risk of HIV/AIDS and the second motive was to find out the other places that men would go to buy sex. As seen in the discussion presented above, men discussed that it was good that the sex workers had left but they were also sympathetic towards the migrant families who had lost their homes. In many of the focus groups, the sense of fear was apparent as the migrants felt that the demolition could also take place in their own settlements. This fear was less expressed among the mobile men. This vignette is a good example on how to include the changed circumstances during the fieldwork into the research enquiry.

16.3.3 Identification of New Risk Group: Lovers

During the fieldwork, NGOs in Goa reported that they knew that migrant men also had non-commercial sexual relations. However, they could not identify and target this new risk group of women. Population Services International was trying to make forays by staging street plays, where they spoke of the “other women”. We first heard about this group in the interviews, where men referred to these women as “lovers”. The term lover echoes the Bollywood movies wherein the romantic ideal of love is depicted. The discursive meaning that men attach to it demonstrates that they prefer to have a lover rather than a sex worker, as they perceive a low risk of HIV infection from the former as compared to the latter.

R: I have some lovers and I don’t use condoms with them. They are here in this area and in Birla. I feel safe so I don’t use condoms. There in Baina (former red light area) it’s a different story. There in Baina many people would have come and gone. Here we know that there is no one else. And it’s only between me and my lovers.

The term lovers was not limited to a certain group of people. In the focus group discussions on lovers, we could identify the background of these women. Through the anecdotes that men gave, we could identify that the women were either neighbours, co-workers, women they met as part of their work and among the younger men they used the term girl friend.

Vignette

Then Nagraj has a lover who works in the factory with him. He does not use a condom with her. He says that because she loves him a lot he trusts her. And he says *he knows this from his friends with whom she talks. She does not talk with other men. He feels he can trust her. Do you think Nagraj is right?*

Discussion

R1: Now a person died here, I will not tell you his name. He had a lover and a wife. First his lover died, then he died and then his wife died.
R2: We know we know the story.... It was his neighbour.
R1: First his lover died, then he died...
R3: He is his friend (pointing to a person in the group).
R1: We were in Panaji. He would go after many girls. He was mad...he died.

The risk of getting infected from a "lover" was perceived to be low. These other women in this discussion refer to women who do not engage in commercial sex and who are not married to the respondent. These women resided in the area or the area surrounding the research area. In the survey, we asked the men who these "lovers" were, and 65% reported neighbours, 22% reported co-workers and 13% said other women. As the perceived threat from such sexual interactions is low, men do not use condoms. The vignette we used was instrumental in identifying this new risk group. As seen in this example, the discussion following the vignettes helped us later to define the answer categories in the survey instrument.

16.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have considered some of the issues surrounding the practical application of vignettes in focus group discussions. Through this study about migrant and mobile men in India, the chapter illustrates how to adapt a method to the cultural settings. The advantage of using vignettes was that we could provoke men to discuss about sensitive issues such as sex, sexuality and identity.

Although vignettes do not capture the whole reality of people's lives, they still arouse enough interest in the life of this fictional person. The use of the fictional people and the manner in which we culturally adapted the vignettes show that men could both identify with the character and find other anecdotes to make sense of the situation. Vignettes are ultimately projective instruments; the method by which they are staged still depends on the skills of the moderator.

In my study among migrant and mobile men, vignettes were useful as they made men comfortable to discuss the issues as they did not have to personalise the information that they shared in the group. From the methodological point of view, the study applied vignettes to validate the information from the in-depth interviews. This further aided in designing the survey instrument. Thus, methods were triangulated and information was validated at each level. However, vignettes can also be used on their own or in conjunction with other methods. I conclude that for any research that plans to apply vignettes, due attention has to be paid to the construction of the vignettes and the manner in which it is locally grounded in the culture of the study population.

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Chapter 17

Face-to-Face versus Online Focus Groups in Two Different Countries: Do Qualitative Data Collection Strategies Work the Same Way in Different Cultural Contexts?

Guendalina Graffigna, Albino Claudio Bosio, and Karin Olson

Abstract Recently there has been renewed interest in cross-cultural qualitative research underscoring the epistemological and methodological pitfalls implied in this kind of research. In particular, focus groups, because of their intrinsically relational nature, require an accurate analysis of how the setting influences interpersonal exchanges and people's attitudes toward participation and, thus, the results achieved. In this chapter, the authors consider how the data collection medium framed the results of a study involving 16 focus groups on HIV/AIDS, 8 conducted with Italians and 8 with Canadians aged 18 to 25. The focus groups were designed to reflect four techniques (face-to-face, online forum, online chat, online forum+chat) and were distributed equally in the two countries. Data were analysed using software-based content analysis (T-lab), psychosocial discourse analysis, software-based discourse analysis (Atlas.ti), and conversational analysis. The different techniques had specific influences on the findings production, which were fairly consistent between the two countries. The authors discuss the importance of these findings in cross-cultural qualitative studies, as researchers frequently make situated choices regarding data gathering in various settings according to their research objectives.

Keywords Online focus group, Face-to-face focus group, Chat, Forum, HIV/AIDS and risk research, Italy and Canada, The Internet, Generalisability, Theory of technique, Moderation style.

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P. Liamputtong (ed.) *Doing Cross-Cultural Research*,

17.1 Introduction

In recent years we have seen renewed interest in cross-cultural qualitative studies in social and marketing psychology. This is due not only to the increased globalisation of communication and business exchanges and attempts of casting light on the affinities and the differences among sociocultural settings (*intercultural issues*) (Bateson 2000), but also to addressing *multicultural issues* in societies that are becoming increasingly multi-ethnic (see Nevid and Maria 1999). Furthermore, the Internet has contributed to the diffusion of qualitative research in cross-national settings by offering new data collection opportunities (see, for instance, increased interest in the past 15 years in online qualitative research for overcoming geographical boundaries; cf., Mann and Stewart 2003; Underhill and Olmstead 2003; Liamputtong 2006). However, this renewed interest in cross-cultural qualitative studies comes with an enhanced acknowledgement of their epistemological and methodological pitfalls. Many researchers have expressed concern about the appropriateness of their research practices in cross-cultural settings, and they note that this leads to a need for enhanced "*researcher reflexivity*" (Mangen 1999). As Brislin et al. (1973: 12) state

> The meaning of every aspect of any investigation is important, and it is especially important for cross-cultural work since the researcher does not know the meaning that people of other cultures attach to our research process.

From this perspective, Nieben (1982) summarises the problems of cross-cultural qualitative (and, to some extent, quantitative) research with the concept of *meaning equivalence*.[1] Choosing appropriate research practices and methods in different sociocultural contexts is an essential aspect of functional equivalence. By carefully considering the choices related to each step of the research process from a cultural perspective, the researcher becomes aware of how both the research process and his/her actions influence the outcomes of the research study.

Furthermore, the problem of cross-cultural comparability of qualitative results reopens the debate on the extent to which qualitative results are *generalisable* and at what level of abstraction qualitative results are exportable from their situated context, as many scholars agree that qualitative research is strongly anchored to the context in which it is generated (Alvesson and Skoldberg 1994). This problem of qualitative findings' *generalisability* is becoming particularly relevant in the current debate about their translatability into practice (for a synthesis see Sandelowski 2004).

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[1] His analysis comes from Scheuch's (1968: 184) concept of "*functional equivalence of indicator meaning*". According to Scheuch, in cross-cultural research the literal translation of indicators/words from one language into another is not enough, but it is important to reach a conceptual equivalence of the meanings they carry (see also Chapter 1 in this volume).

17.1.1 Towards a "Theory of Technique" of Cross-Cultural Qualitative Research

In the literature, contributions on cross-cultural qualitative research have mainly focused on how pragmatic choices made at all stages of the research implementation frame the results. Beyond the traditional epistemological problems related to the formulation (and translation) of research questions and knowledge objectives (Benkert 2002; Eide and Allen 2005) and the choices of qualitative methods in different cross-cultural settings (Atkinson and Silverman 1997; Ryen 2003), several authors have recently addressed the impact of specific tactical choices made at each stage of the research process on the achieved results and their cross-cultural comparability. Examples include the following:

- *Sampling and recruiting process*: The units of analysis may differ in structure and compositions across cultures; therefore, samples constructed in the same way might be poorly equivalent in different sociocultural contexts. Moreover, accessing a particular target population might not be easy for a researcher who is an outsider to the community and would require specific strategies and precautions (see, for instance, Nieben 1982; Scheuch 1968; Eide and Allen 2005).
- *Collection of informant consents*: Values are culturally based; therefore, cross-cultural research requires specific ethical considerations and evaluation in the process of obtaining informants' consents (cf., Baarnhielm and Ekblad 2002; Benkert 2002).
- *Data collection*: This can be particularly challenging because of both linguistics problems (cf., Brislin et al. 1973; Temple and Edwards 2002) and the meaning that data collection practices assume in different sociocultural settings (cf., Nevid and Maria 1999; Laverack and Brown 2003).
- *Data analysis*: Issues arise related to the need to reach a balance between an *emic* and an *etic*[2] perspective (see, for instance, Munet-Vilarò 1988; Guba and Lincoln 1989; Bhopal 2001; Tsai et al. 2004).
- *Results communication and reporting*: Efforts must be taken to avoid the loss of the original meaning and of its nuances (see, for instance, Ungerson 1996; Mangen 1999; Birbili 2000). See also Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in this volume.

The recognition of the importance of considering the influence of tactical research choices on the production of research findings in cross-cultural settings seems, to us, an interesting stream in the debate about qualitative methodology. In our previous work, we have already argued the importance of analysing how

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[2] According to Smith and Stephen (2007: 160), "*etic is a finding that is the same in different culture, emic is a culture specific finding*". Moreover, "*the emic approach examines behaviours from within the cultural system. The data are obtained from the insider perspective in a specific culture*". The *etic* approach, on the contrary, "*examines behaviour from outside the cultural system*" (Munet-Vilarò 1988: 114).

all the tactical choices made in the research implementation frame the results of a qualitative research study. We have named this analysis *Theory of Technique*, borrowing this concept from clinical psychology (Bosio et al. 2007). Furthermore, we have discussed the relevance of this approach to facilitating tactical choices that fit the research objectives (see, Graffigna and Bosio 2006; Bosio et al. in press).

From this perspective, we thus consider cross-cultural qualitative research an appropriate observatory

- To further highlight the value of the *Theory of Technique* approach to qualitative research because a broader and more systematic analysis of how research tactical choices frame the results across countries can help the researcher in making better "situated choices" in cross-cultural settings and
- To study the cross-cultural stability and generalisability of evidence already reached in the *Theory of Technique* approach with the purpose of understanding whether the various tactical choices made in the research implementation influence findings in the same way across cultures

17.1.2 Conducting Face-to-Face and Online Focus Groups in Cross-Cultural Settings

In this chapter, we shall discuss a specific aspect of data collection in cross-cultural qualitative research: the analysis of how the data collection medium (and the way it is used) specifically influences the results across cultures. In particular, we shall focus our analysis on focus groups conducted using different media in two countries.

Focus groups are particularly delicate techniques in cross-cultural research settings (see also Chapters 2, 15 and 16 in this volume). Because of their intrinsically relational nature, focus groups require an accurate analysis of how all elements of the data collection setting influence the interpersonal exchange and people's attitudes towards participation (Nevid and Maria 1999). Aspects such as the appropriateness of time schedule, length of sessions, respect for silences and breaks in the accounts, and opening and closing rituals are all extremely important elements to consider when preparing a focus group setting that is to be comfortable and culturally appropriate (Laverack and Brown 2003). Even common practices such as recording the research exchange, which is of great help in overcoming possible comprehension problems (because interviews can be listened to more than once, perhaps assisted by a native speaker), could assume a particular meaning in a particular culture that would affect participants' narratives. Some cultures, for instance, are particularly concerned about privacy and about the attribution of collected material: this is the case of communities in developing countries, with low incomes and low level of education and of communities ruled by nondemocratic governments (i.e., Asian countries – Benkert 2002; Monshi and Zieglmayer 2004 – African countries – Hoosen and Collins 2005 – and Islamic communities – Al-Kodmany 2000). In addition, the tape recorder might inhibit their participation in the study. Furthermore, the media used to collect data (face-to-face vs. phone vs. Internet vs. video conferencing) could influence data construction differently across cultures, depending on people's familiarity with technology and on the meanings they attribute to it.

In previous studies, we analysed how the data collection medium (and how it is used) frames the interpersonal exchange in focus groups and, thus, the results achieved (Bosio et al. 2006; Graffigna and Bosio 2006). Now our main aim is to analyse how different focus group techniques "work" in two sociocultural settings. In particular, we shall discuss the extent to which our typology of the different (face-to-face vs. online forum vs. online chat vs. online forum+chat) discussion contexts' influence on the achieved results can be considered stable across cultures. In this way, cross-cultural qualitative research has become a testing ground for the application of our *Theory of Technique*.

17.2 Study Design and Method

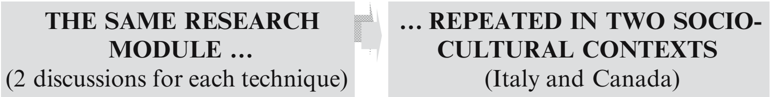
17.2.1 The Objectives

We report here the results of a study that was intended to describe how data collection strategies frame findings production in cross-cultural qualitative research. In particular, we wanted to analyse how different focus group techniques "work" across cultures by comparing data collected using the same techniques and on the same target participants but in two different countries. Our main aims can be summarised as follows:

- To describe how the same topic of research (*young adults' discourse about HIV/AIDS risk*) is constructed differently in two sociocultural contexts (Italy and Canada) and
- To analyse how data collection strategies specifically structure interviewer–interviewee interaction (and thus shape findings) across sociocultural contexts by comparing face-to-face focus groups
    - With different online focus groups (forum, chat, forum+chat)
    - At both the thematic and the dynamic (interactive) levels

17.2.2 Data Collection

To obtain broader and deeper coverage of our research goals, we chose a mixed-methods qualitative design combining *content analysis*, *discourse analysis* and *conversational analysis*. To compare the influence of the data collection medium



	FACE TO FACE	ONLINE		
		FORUM	CHAT	FORUM+CHAT
ITALY	2	2	2	2
CANADA	2	2	2	2

Fig. 17.1 The research plan

(and how it is used) on the findings production process in focus groups, we conducted 16 focus groups (Fig. 17.1) equally distributed in two countries (Italy and Canada) using four different research settings (face-to-face, forum, chat, forum+chat). The groups were homogeneous in terms of participant numbers (6–8) and characteristics (young adults aged 18–25, half of them living in Italy and the other half living in Alberta, Canada; see section 17.2.3) and in terms of moderator's guide, but the situational context in which they were conducted differed. All discussions involved different participants.

We conducted two sessions for each format of discussion (face-to-face, chat, forum, forum+chat). Having two sessions for each type of setting allowed us to explore the analysed topic in greater depth, and a within-group comparison in addition to an inter-group one (face-to-face vs. online focus group) was possible.

17.2.2.1 The Focus Group Techniques

In practice, we carried out the following interviews:

- *Four face-to-face focus groups*: These lasted about 2 hours and were led by a moderator and an observer. Two were conducted in the focus group laboratory of the Psychology Department at the Università Cattolica of Milan (Italy), whereas the other two were conducted in the focus group laboratory of the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, University of Alberta, Edmonton (Canada). The focus groups were audio and video recorded.
- *Four 3-day forums*: During these forums, participants were asked to write at least two messages a day to answer the moderator's questions and other participants' comments at a convenient time for them (participants did not need to be online at the same time; they could log into the forum and write their messages at any time of the day). The forum was conducted on a private website expressly set up for this research, and interviewees participated anonymously, accessing the site using a private password and hiding their identity behind a personal ID assigned by the researchers. The forum website displayed all posted messages

so that participants could read them at any time and write their comments as a new message (using the "post my message" button) or in response to a specific message (using the "reply" button).

- *Four chats*: During these chats, which lasted about an hour, online participants interacted and discussed their opinions in real time. In this setting, participants shared their opinions synchronously as in a face-to-face focus group. The chats were conducted on the same private website as the forum, and here, too, interviewees participated anonymously by logging onto the website with a private ID and password.
- *Four forums+chats*: These consisted of a 3-day forum combined with a chat. This discussion started with a 2-day forum, during which participants logged onto the site to write their comments at a time convenient for them (asynchronous computer-mediated communication [CMC]). In the evening of the second discussion day, interviewees were asked to participate in an online chat (synchronous CMC) of about 1 hour to continue their discussion in real time. The discussion groups ended with a final forum day to collect further comments on the topic; this discussion was, again, conducted via the same private website used for previous online focus groups, and interviewees participated anonymously.

17.2.2.2 The Moderation Style

All the discussions were moderated by the same bilingual researcher. However, in the Canadian phase of the study the moderator (Italian) was assisted by a native Canadian researcher both in the data collection and in the data analysis. The 16 focus groups were moderated by the same researcher in order to keep the discussions moderating style constant as much as possible. This made the comparison among the focus groups easier, and highlighted the influence of the data collection setting on the findings production. However, we required the support of a native researcher for the Canadian part of the study. This guaranteed a more ecologic and "*emic*" perspective on the research process and data analysis (see also Chapters 1 and 3 in this volume). The Canadian researcher's support was particularly important in order to perform our conversational and discursive analysis of focus groups data: these approaches require a deep understanding of cultural and linguistic specificities of the sociocultural context under study.

The *moderating style* was as non-directed as possible to let participants express themselves freely so that we could examine the influence of setting on the content and on the elaboration of themes. Moreover, the same semi-structured interview guide was used to moderate all discussions. It was decided that the moderator would intervene principally on three occasions to guarantee comparability among groups[3]:

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[3] The choice of using the same (low-profile) moderating style for all discussion formats helped us to determine how the different discussion settings influenced the results. However, it is evident that each discussion format is best suited to a particular moderating style (not necessarily non-directive), which should be chosen on the basis of its specific methodological features.

1. A starting intervention to illustrate the study, when participants were asked to express themselves freely on the discussion topic
2. A second one after about a third of the way through the discussion, when they were asked to read an information message about HIV/AIDS created expressly for the research and to consider it as a further discussion stimulus[4] and
3. A third and final one to focus discussion on their personal experience concerning the topic

These were the same for every discussion group.

17.2.3 The Participants

University students aged 18–25 of both genders and living in two countries (Italy and Canada) were the reference universe of our research participants. We opted for Italy and Canada as our research sociocultural settings for the following reasons:

- Both countries are Western societies, where HIV/AIDS risk is still an issue even if it is not perceived by the population as relevant to it. Furthermore, in both countries the level of preventive education is high and basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS and strategies to avoid infection are taken for granted by the population.
- However, Italian and Canadian societies[5] differ in many historical and cultural aspects. The most important differences may be summarised as follows: *language* (Italian vs. English); the dominant *religion* (Catholic vs. Protestant); the *average age* at which young people become independent and *exit from the parental family* (earlier in Canada than in Italy); the different historical *approach to cultural minorities* (more closed in Italy vs. more open in Canada); and the level of *Internet literacy* in the two countries (in 2005 the percentage of Internet users was up to 70% of the Canadian population and around 53% of the Italian population[6]).

In all, 115 youth participated in our research. However, in this case it seems more appropriate to consider the number of focus groups conducted (four for each discussion format equally distributed for the two countries) as our participants. Because we sought in this study to explore how HIV/AIDS risk discourse is constructed by interpersonal exchanges in different sociocultural and communication contexts, we considered groups rather than individuals as our unit of analysis. We, therefore, had 16 units of analysis, 12 online and 4 face-to-face; half of them were conducted in Italy and the other half in Canada.

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[4] This study had two objectives: (1) from a methodological perspective to understand how qualitative data collection strategies (particularly online focus groups) work in different sociocultural contexts and (2) from a social communication perspective to understand the "interpersonal assimilation" of preventive information in health care in two countries, particularly related to HIV/AIDS risk. This is why in the second part of the discussion a preventive message about HIV/AIDS was proposed to the interviewees as a further discussion stimulus. We refer to other works discussing our study results as regards health prevention (Bosio and Graffigna 2008).

[5] Here we refer in particular to Albertan culture.

[6] Source: Fessel GfK database, 2006 (http://www.gfk.at).

17.2.4 Data Analysis

Verbatim notes of all online focus groups (forum, chat, forum+chat) were available in text format, whereas the face-to-face focus groups were transcribed by the researchers. We analysed our corpus of data at three conceptual levels (*thematic*, *discursive* and *conversational*) according to four main strategies (see Fig. 17.2 for a description of the analysis flow):

1. *Software-based content analysis* (T-lab 5.2; Lancia 2004) to achieve a systematic analysis of the different focus groups thematic characteristics in the two countries
2. *Psychosocial discourse analysis* (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Edwards and Potter 1992; Wood and Kroger 2000) to detect the main discursive patterns elicited by each research situation
3. *Software-based computer-mediated discourse analysis* (Herring 2004) to achieve a systematic analysis of each research setting discursive and argumentative characteristics and
4. *Conversational analysis* (Schegloff 1987; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998) for a detailed analysis of the interaction in all the different research settings.

17.2.4.1 Software-Based Content Analysis (T-lab 5.2)

Software-based content analysis using T-lab 5.2 allowed a preliminary quantitative analysis of how themes were explored in the different discussion formats. T-lab bases its analysis on context units (CU) and lexical units (LU). Text can be divided into elementary contexts (EC) and variables, which are two subsets of context units. EC are text portions delimited by punctuation that correspond to one or more

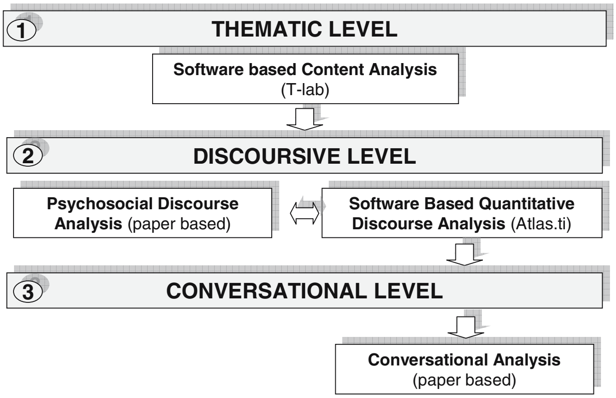

Fig. 17.2 The analysis flow

statements. Variables are the criteria that the researcher chooses when organising and classifying the textual data (in our case, the four focus group techniques). LU are words that are considered in the graphic forms they assume in the text or ascribed to dictionary headwords or to semantic classes (e.g., working = work; pneumonia = illness). The software produces matrices representing relations between the units of analysis (CU and LU) with frequency numbers indicating occurrences or co-occurrences of the phenomena in question.[7]

17.2.4.2 Psychosocial Discourse Analysis

Following the preliminary exploration of the different discussion thematic characteristics (reached by T-lab), we analysed the discussion transcript using a paper-based psychosocial discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Edwards and Potter 1992; Wood and Kroger 2000). This strategy allowed the description of how discourses were structured and organised in the different discussion settings. In particular, this analysis allowed the identification and interpretation of patterns in the discourse such as the systematic variability or similarity in the content and structures of portions of texts. We performed this analysis focusing on the following main aspects of discourses: *content* (e.g., accounts), *features* (e.g., intensifiers), *form* (direct, indirect, simple, elaborated), *structure* (hierarchical, sequential), or *function* (constructing a motive). We also focused on how speakers *position* themselves in the discourse and on *emotions* and *feelings*, either directly expressed by speakers in their discourses or implicitly carried by images and metaphors.

17.2.4.3 Software-Based Quantitative Discourse Analysis (Atlas.ti)

To achieve a systematic comparison of the principal discursive patterns detected in the previous paper-based psychosocial discourse analysis (Herring 2004), we reverted to a software-based coding of the transcripts with Atlas.ti. We chose Atlas.ti, although it was originally developed for analysing data collected using a grounded theory approach (and not a discourse analysis one), because it is very flexible and can easily be adapted to different researcher objectives and methodological standpoints (Lonkila 1995; Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

Using Atlas.ti, we systematically attributed the discursive indicators previously detected in the paper-based analysis (and organised in a specific coding frame). The coding frame was organised into four macro conceptual areas (interaction patterns, discourse co-construction, rhetorical and argumentation strategies, and disclosure of private experiences and feelings). Each macro area was exploded into categories (variables), which, in turn, were transformed into subcodes (analysis units). Once the coding was concluded, Atlas.ti was used to count the code (and thus category)

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[7] For further information see Lancia (2004) and http://www.t-lab.it.

frequencies in each transcript. The resulting variable frequencies were then transformed into percentiles to render them comparable. The significance of variances was verified using the t-test.

17.2.4.4 Conversational Analysis

Verbatim extracts codified by Atlas.ti as "cooperation processes" were then explored using conversational analysis (Schegloff and Sacks 1973; Hutchby and Wooffitt 1998), which allowed a more detailed description of the micro-linguistic and interactive characteristics that the group exchange assumed in the different discussion contexts. In particular, we developed our conversational analysis at two conceptual levels: a linguistic and a dynamic (of interaction) level.

- At a linguistic level, we focused on *lexical choices* (words, adjectives, adverbs), *punctuation* (for written texts), *grammatical structure* of sentences (complex or simple), *overall structure organisation* (e.g., of phrases or sections), and *conversational style* of utterances (e.g., negative construction of phrases, irony, sarcasm).
- At a dynamic level we analysed *turn-taking* organisation (e.g., self-designation, designation of other speakers, non-designation), *silence management* (e.g., lapses, gaps, pauses, silence), and *sequences organisation* (e.g., adjacency pairs, character of preference or dispreference, repair sequences).

17.3 The Main Findings of the Study

17.3.1 Culturally and Situationally Based Implicit Models of the Exchange

The discursive construction of HIV/AIDS risk in the two countries shows several commonalities. In both contexts, the disease is not a concern for young people. They perceive it as *far away* and not realistically relevant to their daily lives. Furthermore, in both cultures young people show an "*it cannot happen to me*" attitude by describing themselves as potentially risk free. Moreover, the evident link between HIV/AIDS and sex makes it a difficult topic to debate in interpersonal exchanges. This gives the disease a sexual connotation that makes it a *social taboo*.

As a result, HIV/AIDS is an "*ineffable disease*" in both countries, and only some aspects of the problem can be approached interpersonally without distress. In young adults' exchanges about HIV/AIDS, there appears to be a clear demarcation between

- *Public issues*, the aspects of the problem that can be discussed easily (e.g., in Canada the global economic and political connotations of the problem and criticisms of government policy, in Italy the Catholic Church's role in the epidemic's growth and criticism of the government's past preventive interventions) and

- *Private issues*, the most intimate HIV/AIDS discourses that are not usually disclosed in an interpersonal setting (e.g., the use of condoms, undergoing an HIV/AIDS test)

Although this distinction between *speakable* and *unspeakable a*spects of the problem is common in the two cultures, there appears to be a different implicit culture-based regulation of the exchange (and of its content) (Fig. 17.3). These implicit rules of interpersonal exchanges determine the rhetorical strategies by which different aspects of the problem can be debated as well as speakers' involvement in their discourses.

For example, in Canada young adults do not deny the emotional connotation of the problem (it is scary), but they try to *neutralise* it (and to make it aseptic) in their discourses. Furthermore, Canadian participants show a general psychological detachment from the discussion topic. In this cultural setting, debating about prevention strategies, particularly related to sexual intercourse, is possible only in a sterile and neutral way, namely by *medicalising* them.

In Italy, on the other hand, HIV/AIDS is discursively constructed as scary and basically unpreventable. The viral nature of HIV/AIDS makes it *hazy* and difficult to define. It follows that in Italian culture HIV/AIDS is more emotionally loaded than in the Canadian one and Italian youngsters expressed the feeling of *powerlessness* toward the contagion in their discourses.

However, it is interesting to note that the situational context of the discussion modulated the concrete application of these culturally based implicit rules in different ways (see Fig. 17.4 for an outline). In particular, our study shows how culturally and situation-based implicit models of the exchange interact when sensitive topics are concerned. Furthermore, situational implicit models of the exchange are partially independent of the cultural setting in which they originate, and they are basically stable in the two countries, as we shall describe in the following paragraph.

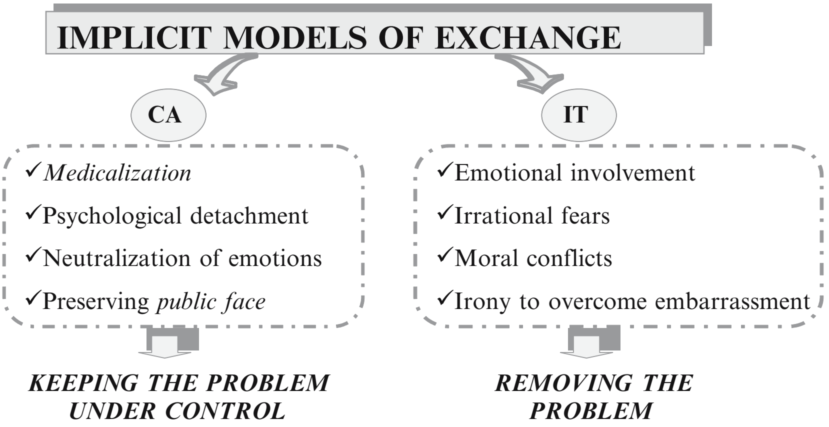

Fig. 17.3 Summary of the implicit models of exchange in the two countries

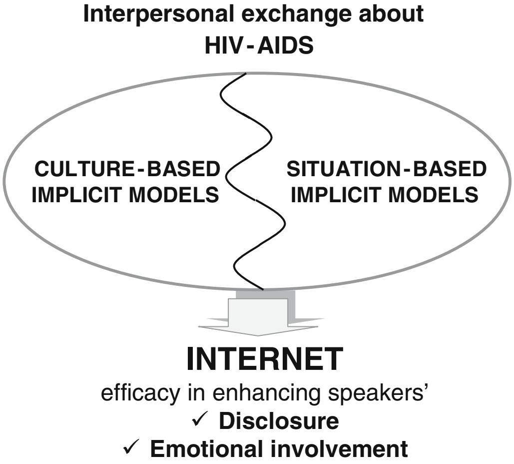

Fig. 17.4 Interaction of culture-based and situation-based implicit models

17.3.2 Do Online Focus Groups Work in the Same Way Across Cultures?

The results of the three levels of analysis conducted on the two data sets (Italian and Canadian) show several points of convergence. These findings confirm not only a general difference between face-to-face and online discussion groups, but also the specific features of each discussion technique (which we have discussed in detail with regard to the Italian case of research; see also Bosio et al. 2006; Graffigna and Bosio 2006). Furthermore, not only does each technique shape the interpersonal exchange in terms of conversational characteristics in both cultures, they also orient the discussion towards different levels of discourse (Table 17.1). These results are important from a *Theory of Technique* perspective because they underline the importance of making a carefully considered choice of tools according to the research objectives.

We shall summarise below the main cross-cultural commonalities with regard to how focus group techniques work.

17.3.2.1 Conversational Characteristics of the Exchange

Each focus group technique shaped the conversational characteristics of the exchange in a way that appeared to be fairly constant in the two sociocultural contexts.

- *Face-to-face focus groups* produced the greatest amount of discursive material. They were characterised by high levels of interaction (mainly dyadic)

Table 17.1 Main conversational and interactive features of focus group techniques in the two countries

FACE-TO-FACE ⬇ Ideological-critical discourse	– Intense dyadic interaction
	– Difficult turn-taking negotiation
	– Leadership phenomena (*mainly in Italy*)
	– Intense cooperation in the discourse construction (*mainly in Canada*)
	– Indirect and implicit structure of sentences
	– Irony and impersonal formulae
	– Critical attitude
	– Limited disclosure
FORUM ⬇ Rational-reflective discourse	– Limited interaction
	– Subject–group interaction and sense of group belonging
	– Limited cooperation (*mainly in Italy*)
	– Articulated and premeditated comments
	– Frequent hypothetic periods
	– Great variety of speech acts
	– Studied wording
	– Few communication problems
	– Meta-analysis of personal experiences
CHAT ⬇ Impressive-emotional discourse	– Chaotic and frenetic interaction
	– Centrality of the moderator
	– Informal register
	– Brief, direct comments
	– Spontaneity
	– Frequent communication problems (*mainly in Italy*)
	– Frequent expressive speech acts
	– Disclosure of feelings and emotions
	– Tendency to state rather than to negotiate personal opinions
	– Polarisation of participants' positions (*mainly in Canada*)
FORUM+CHAT ⬇ Pragmatic-proposing discourse	– Unique synthesis of forum and chat characteristics
	– Intense and balanced interaction (both dyadic and towards the group)
	– Cooperation in task resolution
	– Sense of working group belonging
	– Articulated and multisided personal accounts
	– Greater disclosure of personal experiences and emotions (*mainly in Italy*)

and, with particular reference to the Canadian data set, they allowed a high level of cooperation among participants. However, turn-taking management was problematic, and leadership phenomena frequently occurred, specifically in the Italian groups. In both countries, participants tended to assume a critical attitude throughout the discussion, and they appeared concerned about peer group norms and social desirability. This produced less spontaneous participation in the debate and inhibited disclosure of private experiences regarding HIV/AIDS.

- *The forums* were characterised by the lowest levels of interaction and cooperation among participants, although the level of cooperation appeared higher in the Canadian forums than in the Italian ones. Respondents developed their contribution in articulated monologues. Forum comments were well thought out, revealing participants' main attitudes through reflection and rational considerations. Moreover, in both countries participants assumed a meta-analytical approach when recounting their personal experiences and opinions, with much detail and analysis of their causes and consequences.
- *The chats* were characterised by an intense and, sometimes, chaotic interaction. Respondents participated in the debate with brief comments and tended to state, rather than negotiate, their opinions. In Italy, the interaction speed and the brevity of posts often produced misunderstandings and *flaming* phenomena[8] (Sproull and Kiesler 1986), whereas dysfunctional communicative phenomena were less frequent in Canada, perhaps because of the participants' higher level of Internet literacy. However, in both countries the rapidity of exchanges allowed greater directness and spontaneity throughout the discussion. Participants disclosed the most private aspects of their personal experiences regarding HIV/AIDS, often expressing emotions and feelings.
- *The forum+chat* discussions presented the characteristics of both forum and chat but produced a unique synthesis. In the initial forum, participants had the opportunity to become familiar with the e-environment and the topic of discussion. This allowed them to develop a basic form of relationship that enhanced cooperation in the chat. In both countries, the forum+chat assumed the features of a "working group", with participants discussing various aspects of HIV/AIDS in an organic and articulated way. Moreover, the forum+chat was the online discussion format that produced the richest discursive material and, in the Italian context, the setting that allowed the greatest number of personal accounts.

Table 17.1 shows in more detail the main interaction and conversational characteristics of the different discussion formats that were common to the two cultures.

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[8] Flaming phenomena are detectable when the communication exchange becomes frenzied and characterised by provocations or insults.

17.3.2.2 The Main Communication Axes of Interaction

Apart from the specific conversational characteristics that the different focus group formats presented, the interpersonal and interaction dynamics of the exchange were also framed by the discussion setting. In this regard, our software-based computer-mediated discourse analysis, performed using Atlas.ti, allowed us to analyse the main directions that the exchange took in the different discussions. In particular, we analysed which interlocutors a participant designated for his or her utterances in the different discussions, detecting the following three communication axes:

- *Subject–subject interaction* (when a participant directly addressed comments to another participant)
- *Subject–group interaction* (when a participant addressed comments to the whole group as if it were an interpersonal entity) and
- *Subject–moderator interaction* (when a participant addressed comments expressly to the discussion leader)

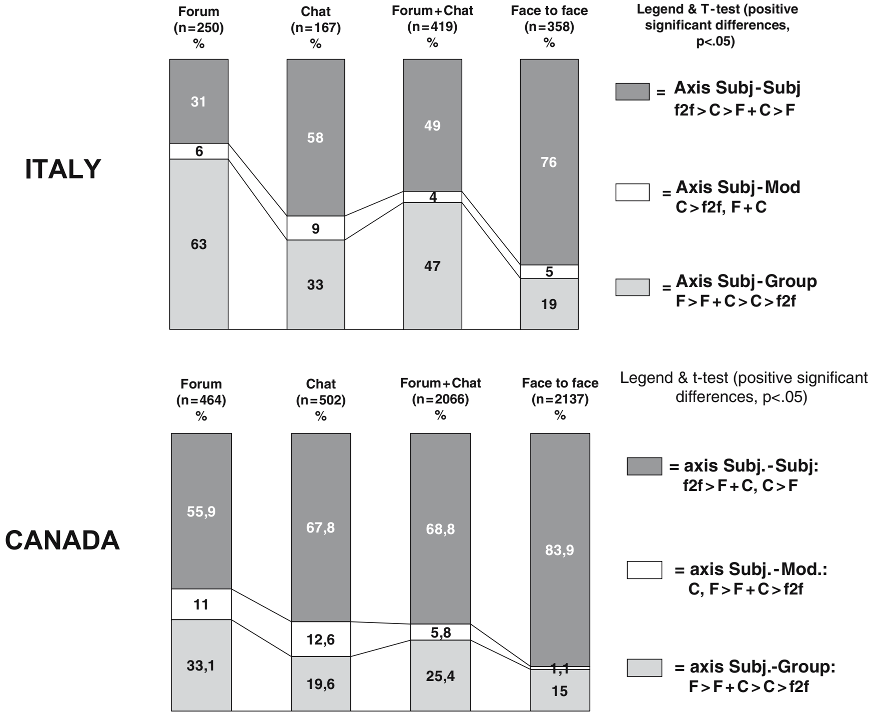

Fig. 17.5 Interaction patterns among the four techniques – a comparison between Italy and Canada

We counted the frequency percentages[9] of these three axes in the four discussion formats in each research case. The analysis (Fig. 17.5) showed that the four techniques elicited specific patterns of interaction that were confirmed in the two research scenarios, albeit with a different emphasis.

In short, we observed that the face-to-face discussions were characterised mainly by a dyadic form of communicative interaction (subject–subject axis). Dyadic interaction was also frequent in the chats, although less so than in the face-to-face groups. The forums, on the other hand, were characterised mainly by subject–group interaction. Finally, in the forum+chat discussions the two communication axes of subject–subject and subject–group were balanced, confirming the hypothesis of the *working group* nature of the forum+chat.

17.3.2.3 Thematic Structure of the Discussions

In confirming that the discussion setting plays a key role in framing the data construction process, as mentioned above, our computer-based content analysis, performed using T-lab 5.2, showed how the different focus group techniques frame the thematic structure of the discussion in specific ways. Although the thematic development of the discussion is obviously specific to each sociocultural context, some recurrences can be detected. These recurrences seem to be

- Independent of the sociocultural setting (Italy vs. Canada) and
- Dependent on the specific discussion setting (face-to-face, forum, chat, forum+chat)

As shown in Fig. 17.6, correspondence analysis of lemmas × techniques[10] allowed us to position the four focus group techniques on two thematic maps (one for each country). These maps highlight some interesting (and distinctive) thematic features for each discussion technique. Before considering the meaning of the two maps and of their constituent dimensions, however, we should note that the horizontal axes of the two thematic maps clearly differentiate between face-to-face and online discussion content. It is also interesting to note that the vertical axes of the two maps differentiate the content characteristics of the three online focus group techniques,

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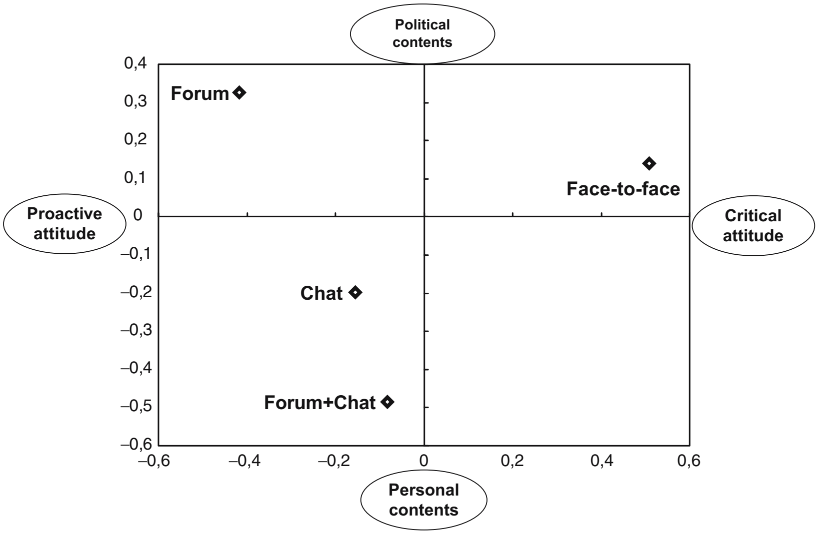
[9] We made 100% the total amount of addressed utterances (no matter to whom) in each discussion format, so in Fig. 17.5 *n* is the total number of addressed utterances for each technique.

[10] This analysis describes the relations between semantic units (lemmas) and variables that divide the corpus (in our case the focus group techniques). The analysis outcome consists of a matrix made up of lemmas in rows and variable levels in columns. Correspondence analysis casts light on relations between the data-gathering techniques and their specific discussion content. In other words, this analysis allows us to represent in graph form specific content (lemmas) as well as the similarities and differences among the different focus group techniques (face-to-face, chat, forum, forum+chat). It also detects factors that explain variance among variables. The meaning of these factors is interpreted based on their constituent element threshold values (i.e., the lemmas and the four levels of the considered variable).

ITALY



CANADA

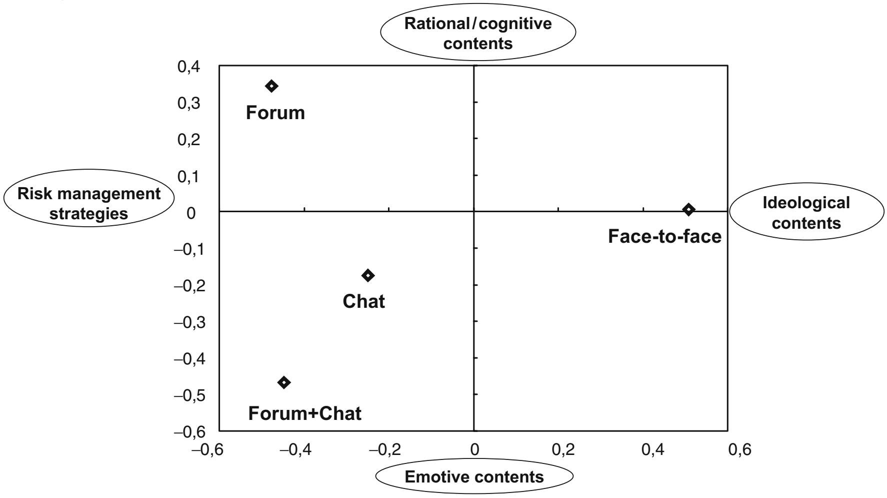


Fig. 17.6 The content specificities of the four techniques – a comparison between Italy and Canada[11]

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[11] Thematic maps resulted from T-lab 5.2 correspondence analysis of lemma × techniques in the two datasets. Explained inertia for the Italian dataset: AXIS 1, 15%; AXIS 2, 12%. Explained inertia for the Canadian dataset: AXIS 1, 19%; AXIS 2, 7.9%.

confirming the distinctiveness of each virtual discussion format and, thus, that online focus groups should be considered a class of discussion techniques rather than a single research approach. In particular, with respect to the two horizontal axes, the content of face-to-face focus groups presents a more critical, ideological and impersonal discussion concerning the role of Roman Catholic Church prescriptions with regard to AIDS (in Italy) and the social taboo related to the problem and the difficulty of talking with adults about it (in Canada). Participants in the online focus groups tend to be more proactive in resolving the problems under discussion, with participants bringing their pragmatic attitudes and personal experience to the topic: the use of condoms, the HIV test and so on.

The vertical axes, on the other hand, differentiate among online focus groups. In this regard, we can observe that in both cases the forum is associated with a more rational, meta-analytical and thoughtful discussion (the state of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world and its main causes, criticism of the inconsistency of previous political initiatives to stop the epidemic, ethical issues related to the diffusion of HIV/AIDS in developing countries); the chat tends to elicit affective and emotional contents (fears and doubts about HIV/AIDS, the problem of condom negotiation in the couple, the issue of trust in sexual relationships); whereas the forum+chat tends to be somewhat more than the sum of the parts, allowing the expression of personal, intimate experiences and of real, pragmatic attitudes and behaviours towards the issue.

17.4 Conclusions and Research Implications

This study shows that, although young people's discourses about HIV/AIDS are specifically framed by the sociocultural context, the situational context of the exchange specifically orients both the style and the contents of the exchange. Independently of the implicit models of interaction that are culturally driven and typical of the sociocultural context, focus groups, thus, elicit specific models of the exchange that are determined by the discussion setting and that are fairly constant across cultures. These findings are important because they confirm the influence of the research setting (and in particular of the data collection medium and the way in which it is used) on the achieved results. They might also have interesting implications for preventive education, as they can cast light on how different media specifically shape (by enhancing or inhibiting) young people's exchanges about health-related topics (see also Bosio and Graffigna 2008).

Focus group techniques, thus, present particular features that make them suitable to specific research objectives, and they have a tendency to work in the same way in the two sociocultural contexts. Although these results are preliminary and need verification, we can devise a typology of specific features of online focus group techniques when researching health-related topics with young people that is fairly uniform across cultures. This typology is particularly useful in helping the

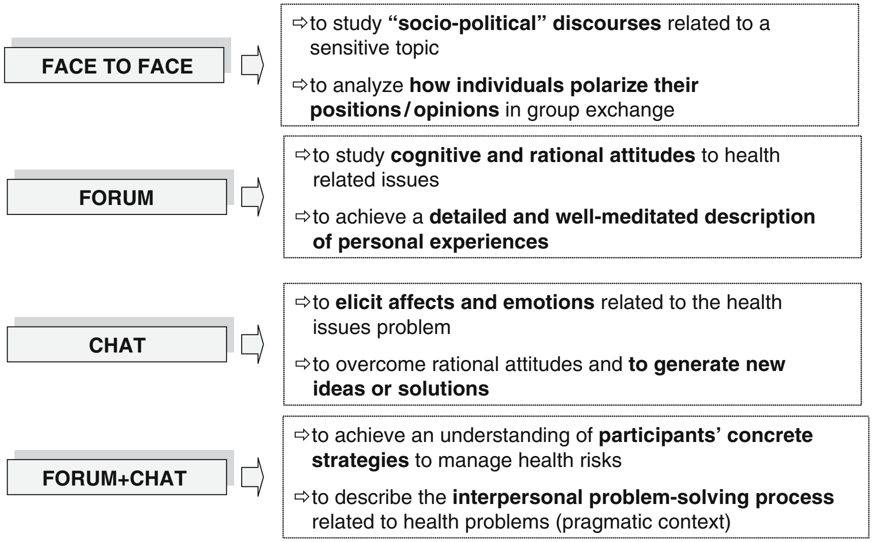

Fig. 17.7 A summary of online focus group choice criteria

researcher to choose the technique best suited to his/her research objectives in cross-cultural settings (as Fig. 17.7 describes).

The results of this study cannot solve the problem of generalising qualitative findings but do provide interesting evidence of the way in which qualitative data collection strategies concretely influence the data construction process. Furthermore, this study confirms the relevance of a *Theory of Technique* approach to allow a better "situated choice" when selecting such strategies. The *Theory of Technique* approach may thus enhance the researcher's reflexivity on his/her research endeavour, particularly when approaching cross-cultural and multicultural issues.

We hope that this study would sensitise qualitative researchers to the relevance of deeper understanding of the specific meaning of each qualitative research practice and of its specific contribution to the knowledge construction process. This appears to be extremely important both when researching in one's own sociocultural context, but especially when approaching research in cross-cultural settings. However, a broader and more systematic analysis of how different tactical choices made at each step of the research endeavour (i.e., recruiting, data analysis, results communication) is needed to further substantiate our concept of the *Theory of Technique*. Thus, we plan to address these issues by repeating our study on different topics (e.g., *alcohol abuse, smoking*), with different targets (e.g., *not only young people*), and in different sociocultural contexts. Furthermore, we plan to broaden our focus of analysis to other steps of the qualitative research process.

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Chapter 18
Refining the Occupation of Research Across Cultures

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Abstract This chapter discusses an 8-year international collaboration involving research teams from three countries: New Zealand, Thailand and the United States. The purpose of the research was to explore and compare the meanings that the food-related occupations associated with potent cultural celebrations (Christmas and Songkran, the Thai New Year) hold for elder women. The researchers began with what seemed a straightforward multi-site study in three countries, and then found that the richness and complexity of the data and analysis required the development of methods to work across all three cultures. The team created and lived a lengthy and rigorous process as the methods were implemented and refined. This process was informed and enriched by growing understandings of our participants' cultural uniqueness as well as our own cultural differences. We discuss our team process as we learned to communicate effectively and with integrity for our study. The team's development will be illustrated with some of the data, methods and findings as they emerged. We conclude the chapter with a summary of what was helpful to this team of international researchers to look across cultures in a trustworthy way.

Keywords International collaboration, Northern Thailand, United States, New Zealand, Food-centred occupation, Occupational therapist, Elder women, Rigour and relationship, Methodological challenge, Language issue, Use of technology.

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18.1 Introduction

Over the past 8 years, three groups of researchers from Auckland, the northern-most city in New Zealand, Chiang Mai, in the north of Thailand and Richmond in eastern Kentucky in the United States, have worked to bring an international collaborative study to fruition. Along the way, much has been learned. This chapter addresses one aspect of that learning: how to collaborate despite disparities in language, culture and financial resources; different levels of academic seniority and methodological backgrounds; and geographical distance and different time zones.

The project that brought us together was an exploration of what it means to elder women to participate in the food-centred occupations associated with Christmas and Songkran, the Thai New Year festival. Our purpose in seeking to understand the meaning of planning, preparing, cooking, offering and sharing food was twofold. Firstly, as occupational therapists, we are aware that due to population aging in all three countries, increasing numbers of elder women will be living in our communities, and we assumed that a proportion would ultimately enter residential care. We anticipated that occupational therapists working in either setting would be better equipped to provide therapeutic occupations if they understood what it had meant to these women to provide food for cultural celebrations. Our second and more theoretical purpose was to consider whether some of the meanings of food-centred occupations cross cultural boundaries. This concern rests in occupational science, which is the study of the form, function and meaning of human occupation, broadly interpreted as the things people do to occupy themselves (Yerxa et al. 1989).

When we initiated the study, we looked forward to what we might uncover by talking to participants. Perhaps naively, we did not fully appreciate the complexities of interpreting the findings across cultures. More importantly, we did not know how much we would need to learn in order to work successfully as an international research team. In the discussion that follows, we describe how our interpretations were enriched by our growing awareness of our participants' practices, circumstances and beliefs, as well as our own cultural differences. The focus is on the team process as we learned to communicate effectively and with integrity, whether in face-to-face meetings, over the phone or electronically. The process of developing into a team that could collaborate across national boundaries is illustrated with some of the data, methods and findings as they emerged. We conclude our chapter with a summary of what was helpful to this team of international researchers to look across cultures in a trustworthy way.

18.2 Creating the Collaboration

This international study of food-centred occupations for older women was initiated to advance an existing relationship between the schools of Occupational Therapy at Auckland University of Technology and Chiang Mai University. Older women were identified as a relevant population to research in both countries. In New Zealand, it is expected that increasing numbers of occupational therapists will work with older people as the population ages, and increasingly with elder women who will be disproportionately represented in the older age groups (Statistics New Zealand 2007), live alone or be in residential care (Davey et al. 2004). Thailand is also experiencing rapid ageing of the population. Since the 1970s, life expectancy of females has increased from 64 to 75 years (National Statistical Office 1996). Because older people are increasingly left alone at home while adults have to work outside of the home, their well-being was of concern to Thai occupational therapists. Accordingly, we identified that the occupations of older women warranted further study. The intention was to research similar occupations in each culture, because we were aware that trustworthy interpretation across cultures hinges on selecting "constructs that make sense within and across the cultures under study" (Von Glinow et al. 2002: 126). Accordingly, food-related occupations were selected, as we were confident this serves similar purposes, and has similar levels of skillfulness and familiarity to elder women in both countries. We decided to hone in on preparing and sharing food for a special occasion because we thought the meanings might be more salient, compared with day-to-day meal preparation.

Having agreed on a topic and target population, the New Zealand researchers secured funding and travelled to Chiang Mai for a week-long meeting to design the study with the Thai research team. In fully collaborating on the design, our actions were consistent with recent advice to form international collaborations of researchers in order to minimise Western bias in topics, methodologies and data-gathering methods (Harkness et al. 2006). An additional motivating factor was our intention that each team would collect the data in their own country, meaning that both teams needed to understand and be committed to implementing the method as designed.

Agreeing that the study would be interpretive and consist of three focus groups with older women in each country was relatively straightforward, driven by theoretical and pragmatic considerations. There was little discussion of the occupation in the professional literature, so the design needed to be exploratory. We agreed that women in both countries were comfortable talking to each other in small groups, and three focus groups would yield sufficient data to generate initial insights (see also Chapters 15 and 16 in this volume). Similarly, agreement on inclusion and exclusion criteria was reached relatively easily: women deemed "older" in our respective countries (65 years of age in New Zealand, 60 years of age in Thailand), still actively involved in the occupation, and not cognitively impaired or acutely unwell at time of interview. We talked of feasible recruitment strategies, and were comfortable that our somewhat different thoughts about how we might access participants would not materially influence the findings.

Crafting the focus group questions was more complex, even with Kruger's (1994) guidance about structuring opening, introductory, transition, key and closing questions (see also Chapters 15 and 16 in this volume). The challenge was to identify how to ask about women's experience of their food-related occupations in terms that could be readily expressed in both English and Thai. That is, we were attempting to achieve semantic equivalence (Schaffer and Riordan 2003) of the focus group questions. In this, the New Zealanders were reliant on the Thai researchers, who worked in English from the beginning of the collaboration as none of their international partners spoke more than a few words of their language. To become more confident in English, the Thai researchers attended weekly English classes over the course of the study.

Achieving translatable questions was assisted by rapidly attuning to the different tasks the women in each country undertake; roasting a turkey is not the same as preparing *kang nguan* (glass noodle soup). While the Thai researchers had some pre-existing appreciation of Christmas traditions and food, the New Zealanders were novices in relation to Songkran. Aware of this, our meeting was timed to coincide with the Songkran festivities and the Thais provided an introduction to the key dishes, the intricacies of wrapping *kha nom jok* (a northern Thai traditional dessert), early morning alms at the city gate, and the ancient tradition of going to the temple to offer food to the ancestors.

Armed with preliminary understandings of the food practices in each other's country, we realised the need to "get down to basics". That is, we needed to formulate questions open enough to allow participants to respond from their culturally embedded knowledge of the ingredients, recipes, cooking techniques, tastes and smells, time frames, means of serving and storing food, and ways of working with others to procure, produce and distribute the food. This process was informed by shared theoretical understandings that performing an occupation brings together three elements; the person, the place in which the occupation is performed, including any objects used, and the occupation (Kielhofner 2007). We learned to boil ideas down to their simplest terms and ask about the concrete elements of the occupation. What jobs come first? Who is involved? How do people know what to do? Where is the food prepared? What things do you use? Does it go to plan?

Somewhere towards the end of this intense week of thinking, discussion, and repeated redesign of the focus questions, the New Zealand team's thoughts turned to time frames for gaining ethical approval for the study. Here lay an initial insight into the different research cultures of our two countries. While securing the approval of an ethics committee is mandatory in New Zealand, our Thai colleagues informed us that there was no equivalent at the time the study began, in Thailand. At that time, ethics approval was required only for those studies considered invasive, such as drug studies. Feeling somewhat ill at ease with this, the New Zealanders endeavoured to incorporate both Thai and local data gathering into their application, only to be told that the Auckland University of Technology Committee had no jurisdiction in Thailand. Thus, the study proceeded with the usual assurances of confidentiality and signing of consent forms in New Zealand, while the Thai researchers merely informed prospective participants when the group would run.

Subsequently, New Zealand and American researchers met at a symposium in the United States, a country also focused on the aging of women in its population (Office of Women's Health 2002), and a team from Eastern Kentucky University was invited to join the collaboration. Agreement was reached to follow the study design as closely as cultural differences would allow, and the focus group guidelines, questions and the New Zealand application for ethical approval were forwarded by email. The focus interview questions were again culturally tailored and appropriate internal review board permission obtained through Eastern Kentucky University.

18.3 Working Within Our Own Cultures

The first phase of implementing the research involved each cultural team working within its culture to collect and analyse the data in the local region and report the findings of the site-based study. Each team tailored the interviews and contexts to suit the older women in their culture, and communication took place primarily within each cultural team for data collection and analysis.

18.3.1 New Zealand

New Zealand is a colonised nation, with the majority of settlers having arrived from Britain and its former colonies within the last 150 years. In New Zealand families, women typically hold primary responsibility for both day-to-day meals and preparing the festive foods associated with Christmas. Providing food is an accepted part of women's role, to the extent that older women's identity and self-expression are interlinked with their ability to produce an attractive plate of baking (Park 1991). Accordingly, when the New Zealand Sugar Company hosted a "bake-off", thousands of women sent in recipes and stories that revealed their use of recipes as temporal, generational and cultural markers (Hocking and Wright-St. Clair 2002).

Participants for the study were recruited via the Older Women's Network (OWN), a community-based society that exists to enrich the lives of older women through education towards healthy living, exploring changes within the self and society, and opportunities to develop and share creativity (Older Women's Network Inc. 1999). The researchers had no previous contact with the network or any of its members. Although demographic data were not systematically collected, most of the participants were New Zealand-born and the others were immigrants from Canada and Britain. All the women resided on Auckland's North Shore, an urban population centre. While some of the participants knew each other, most had not previously met. Nonetheless, they readily engaged in the focus groups, sharing girlhood memories of piping hot meals served on hot summer days and more recent experiences of staging Christmas dinners, to which each family had contributed a dish. The conversation flowed so freely that participants often pre-empted focus questions, and the leaders had difficulty interjecting the next topic. The discussions revealed the women's wishes and aspirations, their thoughts and planning, and how these are grounded in tradition and a women's view of the world. They also showed the women's awareness of their relative good fortune, through their actions in ensuring that individuals with few ties were not alone at Christmas, their contributions to Christmas dinners hosted by charities, and their advice that we would hear quite different perspectives should we collect data in less affluent suburbs.

Notably, the most intense interchanges occurred when participants unabashedly claimed expertise in the dish they were "known for" and shared recipes, old and new (Wright-St. Clair et al. 2005). In fact, their accounts of "festive slice", creamed salmon on toast for Christmas breakfast, herbal shortbread and a "fail proof" Christmas pudding cooked in the microwave were so prominent that the New Zealand researchers gathered a favorite recipe from each participant, collated them into a booklet, and gifted one to each participant. When the findings were shared at a subsequent OWN meeting, at which only one of the research participants was present, knowing smiles and now familiar stories confirmed the women's recognition of the researchers' interpretation.

18.3.2 United States

The older women from eastern Kentucky come from rural Appalachian culture, where, in the isolation that the mountains provide, traditions are preserved (Cunningham 1987). Smith (1999: 9) suggests that the "historical agency" of Appalachian women is found not in historical documents, but in the kitchen, in the jokes, and in stories, "old wives tales". The women were interviewed in several community groups already in existence, and were of varied socio-economic and educational backgrounds. One of the groups comprised women who met for education about diabetes, a medical factor that contributed to their awareness of food and food preparation. This group welcomed the interviewer as a health professional, expecting and receiving understanding of their particular health and dietary challenges. Another group regularly attended a senior social centre for exercise and other classes. The third group consisted of women connected through church activities who called a special meeting for the interview. The focus groups were conducted in a friendly and informal manner with the questions phrased to ask about food customs and occupations that were familiar, and for the most part, treasured, by the women. Joking, laughter and sharing of family stories remembered through the foods and recipes characterised the groups.

Transcription of the tapes was difficult at times as the women were very engaged with the topic and often talked over and interrupted each other. The recipes flew around the group. The interviewers assured that everyone was able to speak as much as they wanted to. During one of the groups, several of the women were somewhat quiet, and when the rest of the members filtered away to other activities they wanted to stay and say more about their Christmas experience. Their stories, welcomed by the interviewer, told of holidays with more financial constraint and social commentary. While the interviewers had some insider status, that is, were from the same region in Kentucky, they did not quite have full insider recognition, something that could come only from generations of family in the same area. The interviewers were not as old as the women interviewed (65– 89). However, they were women and obviously over 50, which gave them some credibility as far as being able to understand some of the life experience of the groups, as well as the art and meaning of Christmas food preparation. As the women recounted their Christmas experiences the interviewers were swept into the cyclical time of the holiday season (Kuper 1993; Waits 1993) and the world of Appalachian matriarchal tradition (Wigginton 1984, 1990). After the study was completed, the results were shared with some of the women who, while once again talking recipes and joking about men's "contributions" to the Christmas meal, agreed with the interpretations.

18.3.3 Thailand

As the only country in Southeast Asia to avoid European colonisation, the kingdom of Thailand's cultural traditions date from the 13th century A.D.. The population of approximately 65 million people is relatively homogeneous, being 80% ethnic Thais and 95% Buddhist (Limanonda 1995). Nonetheless, older Thai people have witnessed substantial social changes resulting from globalisation and industrialisation, with many working-age adults migrating from rural lifestyles to modernised centres (Kwong 2000; Liamputtong 2007). In northern Thailand, kinship ties are established through the female line (Kwong 2000; Liamputtong 2007). Elders are respected and are responsible for teaching religious and social values, including the food traditions of their region, to the younger members of the household (Limanonda 1995).

The Thai participants were members of three existing community support groups for older women, which had been created as a collaborative venture between social welfare and Chiang Mai University. All of the participants were residents of the area surrounding Chiang Mai city and they spoke in the northern Thai dialect, which was spoken by two of the Thai team. The older Thai women in this study hold a five-generational consciousness of the meaning of preparing and giving foods, as they honour their deceased parents and grandparents and pass on food traditions to their daughters and granddaughters (Wright-St. Clair et al. 2004). The focus group interviews were conducted at the usual club venue for each support group. The women in each group knew each other well both from living in the same town and participating in the groups together. They also knew the researchers, who created a comfortable environment for the groups. The women enjoyed talking with each other about Songkran, and sharing methods of food preparation and related stories.

18.4 Working Together as an International Collaborative

Once individual site data collection was completed, the Thai findings were translated into English. This was achieved with New Zealand funding and much time commitment from the Thai team. Next, each team independently completed analysis of their data, and, set about presenting and publishing the findings. A meeting in Auckland involving members of the Thai and New Zealand teams laid the foundations for publications in English, by providing extensive time for each team to present their findings to the other. Notes written by the New Zealand team at the end of each day and critiqued next morning by the Thai team ensured understandings were accurate. One member of the New Zealand team took a lead role in publishing the Thai findings in English while the Thai team published in Thai (Rattakorn et al. 2003; Wright-St. Clair et al. 2004). Subsequent publications presented the New Zealand and US findings (Shordike and Pierce 2005; Wright-St. Clair et al. 2005).

We then began to face the challenges of working as a full collaborative, going from culturally based groups of two or three to the larger group of seven. What had not been clearly included in the design was the way we would look across cultures. This became the most exciting, demanding, time consuming and exhausting part of the research.

18.4.1 Finding Our Similarities and Differences

As we began to look across sites, our first challenge was to agree on commonalities and express these in codes that were reflected in all cultures. At this point, all seven researchers read the interviews from all of the sites for the first time. The amount of data was daunting. Interestingly, the most data came from the New Zealand groups, followed by eastern Kentucky with the least conversation from the Thai groups. We still find humour in this; the New Zealanders have been teased about their talkativeness. This may be due to cultural differences. We have also speculated that it may be due to the importance of "doing the same" in Thai culture, the flexible but close adherence to tradition in eastern Kentucky and the forging of new tradition, which might require more discussion, in New Zealand.

Once we had all read the complete data sets, several of the researchers met in Kentucky, and together determined likely codes that would hold true across sites and include the richness and uniqueness of each culture. Unfortunately, not all team members and no Thai team members were able to be present at the meeting. The entire group was involved in discussion via telephone and email for agreement and further refinement of the proposed codes. All data were then separately coded, in English and with a computer program, by a New Zealand and American researcher. This process took one season; summer in Richmond, winter in Auckland. During this time, we had little communication, other than to navigate the qualitative analysis computer program we used to code the data. We resisted asking each other about some of the clearly cultural content in the data that we may not have understood. After coding was completed, the coded data for all sites, well over 300 pages in length, was distributed by email to all team members for comment and analysis. We were now finally able to clarify with each other some of the details in the data, such as what jam cake was, whether the coins went into the Christmas cake or Christmas pudding and who the Songkran food was taken to and in what order, the village spirits, the ancestors and the monks.

Most of the similarities we found, which were expressed in our initial codes, were broad and came easily, such as tradition. For example, in all of the sites older women passed down the traditional food preparation methods and recipes to their daughters, granddaughters and daughters-in-law. Other similarities were more subtle, such as the affect expressed by the women; the excitement with which the eastern Kentucky and New Zealand women shared their recipe variations or the feeling of a “cool heart” when the older Thai women completed their centuries-old ritual preparation and gift of food to the monks and ancestors at the temple (Wright-St. Clair et al. 2004).). Our cultural differences were often expressed within the codes that captured our commonalities. While the women of each culture all valued and upheld tradition, there was a broad range of how this was done. In Chiang Mai, the women valued *buot bath tee tum prajum*, knowing and doing the same. They stayed with the traditional foods and food preparation of their ancestors and, with the possible exception of individual ancestors’ favourite foods, the preparation rituals and the foods themselves were the same in each household (Rattakorn et al. 2003). In eastern Kentucky, traditional foods and preparation methods were valued; however, more flexibility had been incorporated over generations to accommodate changes in families and society (Shordike and Pierce 2005). In New Zealand, the women were aware of traditions from the countries their families had immigrated from and kept them as they chose, while being very aware of creating new traditions for a new land with Christmas in the summer (Wright-St. Clair et al. 2005).

18.4.2 Working with Data and Emergence of Method

The design of the study was interpretive and without theoretical framework in order to allow the data to be unfiltered, to not be limited by a particular theoretical lens. As we explored the literature regarding cross-cultural research, we realised that there were many interpretations, opinions and methods of looking across cultures, most of which involved bringing Western-based instruments to cultures that were not Western-based (Shordike et al. submitted). We questioned whether we could even call our research cross-cultural and have most often referred to it as a multi-site study that looks across cultures.

Our study did not fit well with any of the models we found, and we were very committed to having it be as trustworthy as we could make it. We determined that a derived etic approach for data analysis (Berry 1989, 2000; Bond and Smith 1996; Helfrich 1999), one which begins with understanding and interpretation of culturally based data by researchers who are members of or closely related to the culture being studied – then looks across the cultures from the broader, more objective, etic perspective, held the most promise for our study. We expected that designing a method in this way would best allow the voices of the participants and older women from all of the cultures, as well as researchers from all of the cultures, to be heard. English speakers reviewing literature in English then bringing it to the team initiated this. Having adopted this approach, we continued to encounter challenges in our interactions with the data and each other as we developed our derived etic method.

As we began the analysis across sites, we assumed that we had spent adequate time and effort in the data within our own culture. In hindsight, this may have been more perceived by the American and New Zealand based teams than the Thai team. The initial plan to begin data analysis, originated by the Americans and agreed to by all, was for one person to write a memo about one code using the data from all three sites. The memo would then be shared through email so that each member of the collaborative could contribute. The first memo was lengthy and all team members had difficulty responding either through email or by teleconference. This was disappointing, particularly to the author of the memo. One of the Thai team members, foreshadowing the method that would later emerge, said at this time that the Thais could respond to the codes and contribute to the analysis only as far as the Thai data.

Our failed attempts to do our work through email and teleconference led to our realisation that quality face-to-face time was needed to further our understanding and analysis of the data. The entire collaboration met in Chiang Mai for 2 weeks in April 2005, just as the Songkran festival was finishing. The American researchers each brought the memos on the codes we had determined would first undergo analysis from the team, tradition and time. As we discussed these pre-written memos, we realised that while this initial analysis was somewhat fruitful, we were attempting to look across cultures too quickly. We spent the next 2 weeks in a process that moved through several of the codes, carefully attending to the emic, culturally based interpretations prior to determining the etic, cross-cultural, interpretations of the data. We spent long days in an air-conditioned room at Chiang Mai University going through the data both in our culturally based teams and the whole group. For this process, we developed a system of a series of tables to capture each team's ideas at various points in the analysis, which were discussed and amended as our ideas gained clarity. The work was often grueling and draining, most probably due to cultural and language differences. It was also engrossing and exciting. As one New Zealander recalled:

> The methodological insights were perhaps the most exciting. I also vividly remember days when we worked and worked and didn't seem to get anywhere; we covered a tiny piece of our mountain of data, or we couldn't find the right word to convey what we meant, or there was a university meeting to go to, or one of us had to step out of the meeting to attend to something else. I learned that being in a hurry does not fit with "analysis time" – the time it takes to understand, explain, think, write, reconsider, recheck the data, translate, suggest, and think again.

The method and processes we developed in Chiang Mai became our map for looking at the data and sharing our interpretations. We have used and adapted this system to work through email and videoconference up to the present.

18.4.3 Communication

Communication between the local teams was perhaps the most challenging aspect of this collaboration and was where the cultural differences in the group were most accentuated. Language, time zones, and hemispheres separated us. Our use of email and teleconference was inconsistently helpful and clearly unsatisfactory for effective data analysis and general collaboration. Although we had occasional face-to-face meetings of some of the team members at conferences, the time we spent together in Chiang Mai was pivotal in the progression of our research and our individual and team relationships. It revealed our cultural differences and strengthened our relationships and communication. Nonetheless, it was difficult to convey cultural customs and ideas to each other, especially between English speakers and those for whom English was not the first language. As one of the Thai team members noted when discussing some of the difficulties:

> While seeing Songkran from the insider perspective as a Thai person, we found it particularly difficult to explain the differences in Thai beliefs and customs to the USA and New Zealand team. For example, when themes contrasted in the sense that food is cooked at Songkran for our dead ancestors and cooked at Christmas for the family to share. It was very delicate and complicated work, truly understanding those situations.

The difference in language was and is the most problematic aspect of this research. The Thais were forced to work in English, and not all the Thai concepts could be expressed in English. Some Thai words have very deep meaning, and the Thais tried very hard to find similar meanings in English words (see also Chapter 1 in this volume). They had to be extremely vigilant through every step of our process, to make sure that the English words used would express the Thai meaning. This was a tremendous burden for the Thai researchers, and we spent a good deal of time trying to find words that could accurately convey what was happening in the Thai data. We were not always successful, even though the native English speakers gradually learned from their Thai colleagues to arrive at meetings with good quality dictionaries to assist our search for an English word with the right connotations. This complexity extended to how we might describe our topic. From the beginning of the study, we had difficulty with words such as holiday, often used with Christmas. This word did not describe the Songkran festival and we laboured without the common descriptor for some time, finally settling on celebratory food preparation. One of the Thai team members related:

> This is the most difficult research I have carried out in almost 20 years of my working life. Although I can understand and read the English language better than speak and write it, I could not fully overcome the language barrier. Nevertheless, I struggled on with my mind thinking faster than my words. Every time we had a discussion, I spent all of my energy listening to and concentrating on every English word in order to follow the conversation. I had to think hard about the research content and sometimes the translation.

The long working days in Chiang Mai underscored for the Westerners the added difficulty and energy expenditure required of the Thai members of the group. The New Zealanders and Americans remember the soft sound of the Thai team conversing in Thai at length over our English language interpretations, making sure that they understood what we were saying, and then formulating a response they would give to us in English. An American team member remembers our process this way:

> I simultaneously long for more engagement while feeling overwhelmed by engagement. In our team, the Thai voices are very quiet and hard to understand and the English voices are loud and confident, and I longingly amplify one and try to dampen the other constantly. I think we all do, and it is tiring. Our Thai colleagues work so hard to cross these barriers for our team and we try to wait patiently on the other side, but patience is not really in our Western natures.

The loud and confident English voices described above, as well as the difficulty of allowing adequate time as the days tick past, illustrate how easily people from Western cultures can dominate in a team. In relation to this, Niblo and Jackson (2004) describe the likelihood of non-Western researchers deferring to Western members of the team. Nonetheless, the process was rewarding. Although we were all well saturated with the data from all sites, as we met together, we were often surprised by explanations and insights. This came most often for the Westerners regarding the Thai culture and data. As one of the New Zealanders said:

> Suddenly a comment was made and I questioned all I had understood up to that moment. It was the moment of realizing there was no Songkran dinner, as there was a Christmas dinner. We had been talking openly but my own pre-understandings were so deep I hadn't been able to imagine the Thai women doing the food work at Songkran without then sitting down to share it with family. And that is how the journey has been, one of constantly moving into a place of not knowing but each time understanding more than I did before.

One of the Americans had a similar experience when we were discussing aspects of family in the data:

> I had a sudden realization that when the Thais referred to children, in the data and in our conversations, that this did not necessarily mean daughters or sons, or the nuclear family as I expected it to be. When I asked, they explained that children could mean almost any one, such as, friends, neighbors and household helpers. I was struck by my unconscious attachment to my own definition of family. I had to reconsider the data in a broader way.

Similarly, the Thai researchers were surprised to learn that the older women in New Zealand were from many countries and, rather than the snow-clad scenes depicted on Christmas cards, were excited by the prospect of spending Christmas at the beach and adapting their Christmas menu to the summer season.

18.4.4 Formal Scholarly Endeavours

We have collaborated on numerous presentations of our work and are now involved in writing together about the cross-cultural findings. This is complex to manage and achieve, as with any large research team. Our differences in language and culture add more layers to the complexity. When we have shared presentations, we prefer to have at least one team member from each cultural group speak. Most of our presentations have been in English, even in Thailand, when the Thais have been required to give presentations to their colleagues about this research in English. Accordingly, the New Zealanders and Americans have helped by hosting video conferences, proof-reading drafts and having practice runs to assist with pronunciation. Writing is, of course, more challenging. Although we planned to share the writing load, this has varied according to who is most interested and available. We have systematically rotated authorship, so that we take turns in the lengthy line of authors in our work. The majority of writing has been for English language books and journals, but we envisage a simultaneous publication in Thai and English.

18.4.5 Travel, Hospitality, and Social Aspects of the Collaboration

It was important for us to visit the sites of our research and experience the festivals we were studying to better understand each other's cultures. These visits required extensive social participation, travel and expense. Our cultural immersion went beyond the celebratory food occupations we were studying. We all tried to share as much of our cultures as we could with each other. Our genuine desire to do this and our enjoyment and respect of the experiences helped to build our relationships. During the visits to Chiang Mai, Auckland and later in eastern Kentucky, we were able to share in the Songkran foods and the Christmas meal. We visited the Thai countryside, elephants at work and many temples. We were also able to participate in a ceremony that honours the elders in Chiang Mai, a part of the Songkran celebration. We carved Halloween pumpkins and visited a historical re-enactment of pioneer life in Kentucky. The New Zealanders staged a midwinter Christmas complete with decorated tree and video of the food preparation, arrival of family members, table setting and consumption of Christmas dinner at one family's Christmas day. We met each other's families and colleagues and shared meals, cultural events and laughter with them. We went shopping together. The group was honoured at all of the participating Universities. We found that attending all of the University functions and meetings was necessary though it took away from the valuable and rare analysis time we had together. The Westerners were educated about gift giving, a social norm in Thailand which has now become very natural for all of us. The numerous social responsibilities of the collaboration, as well as the enjoyment of the social aspects, in some ways mirrored our research, which was conducted in natural social settings and included primary social involvement and roles for the older women whose occupations we were studying. One Thai researcher remembers:

> I have felt exhausted and fatigued and sometimes I would have liked to quit the team. However, the one thing that kept me going was the friendship among us. I could feel helping hands from the other team members.

Travel requires funding and we managed this in a variety of ways. The initial development of the study in New Zealand and Thailand was grant-funded. We met several times at international conferences where we were presenting, for which travel was funded at least partially by our Universities. At times, we used our frequent-flyer miles for travel, tied travel for this project with other projects, and put the project up for research awards – in order to keep meeting. We helped each other through any budgets we had access to. As noted by Niblo and Jackson (2004), Western researchers more often have better access to funding than those from non-Western settings, such as Thailand.

18.4.6 Use of Technology

Technology allowed us to communicate across the globe although there were struggles both to negotiate the technological hurdles between our sites as well as to achieve effective communication through technological means. Email was first important for setting up meetings and determining strategies, later for sharing drafts of presentations and publications. It was not sufficient for solving some of the more complex issues that arose, such as understanding some of the data and clarifying cultural view points. International teleconferencing was not effective. It was cumbersome to set up and, even with speakerphones, it did not suit the processing time needed to assure understanding for all teams. Videoconferencing was much more helpful, particularly once we had all met in person and established relationships. We better understood how to talk with each other and how to wait for everyone's contributions. We were fortunate to have the resources of the Universities to help us with the international videoconferencing, but the meetings were complex to arrange through three universities in three different time zones with the need for some different technologies to interact. When we met through videoconference, it was usually 8 am for the Thais, 2 pm for the New Zealanders and 10 pm the night before for the Americans. Many times the technology failed. While videoconferencing was not ideal, it allowed us to reconnect and remember our friendships and long years together, and to proceed with already established methods.

We also used technology when we met in person for data analysis. As we worked with the coded transcripts, we used computer projectors to capture our ideas in charts and tables and have a wall-sized view. This allowed all of us to see and work with our ideas, in English. We also set up a website to store our data and analysis and later, presentations and publications, so that everything would be available easily to all team members.

18.5 Conclusions

Our international team has been involved in this successful research collaboration for the past 8 years. The length and depth of the research process has deepened our understanding of the individual sites and the occupation under study in all sites, and we continue to be surprised each time we meet about each other's data and culture. The team members agree that the relationships we have developed sustained and supported our process. Although each local team was well acquainted with its members, we did not know the other individuals prior to beginning this study. We had to get to know each other, and appreciate each person's different training, research experience and background. In the end, we all agree with our Thai colleague who said: "I am of the opinion that in working with the international team, the most important thing is not the productivity or amount of research output, but the friendship among the researchers." One of most important elements in this collaboration was taking the time to do the work demanded of us as well as staying with the study and each other over many years. None of us expected that we would be involved in this study for this length of time. We could not have maintained the integrity of the research and method development if we had done it more quickly. As one of the American team reflected: "With all of our struggles (and fun) we kept our integrity, we did not take a quick or easier way. We made a method that would work best for us, no matter how often it had to be changed or how long it took. This makes me feel so good about this team, about each member of the team."

The study has been lengthy for several reasons. There were, of course, the communication, logistical and financial constraints associated with any large research team. Communicating through different languages made this far more complex for our group and we had to make the time to do this. We all had to keep up our academic and social lives as we worked on this research. We also had to take the time to struggle through attempts at analysis across cultures before finding the method that worked for our study. This painstaking and rigorous process leaves us exhausted and exhilarated, and with the knowledge that we have done this research and looked across cultures in the best way we can at this time. Travelling to all sites and experiencing the celebrations and other aspects of the culture was necessary to our understanding of our work. Responding to the time and funding demands this entailed was challenging and important to achieve. Exploring, finding, and managing technological communication were essential to our research. We were fortunate to have access to some financial resources and technology through all of our Universities. While the technology was problematic at times, we could not have completed the research without it. Our attempts to avoid the dominance of Western culture in the research team evolved and continue imperfect. We did our best to speak well and hear all voices, and took the time to do so. We offer this chapter in the hope that our experience may be of help to others who may be undertaking qualitative research that crosses cultures.

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