The Australian Community Psychologist

Formerly Network

The Official Journal of the Australian Psychological Society
College of Community Psychologists

Volume 19 No.1 May 2007

Office Bearers

Published by:
The College of Community Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society ltd

ISSN 1320-7741

Contents

Contents continued

Book Review

General Information

The Official Journal of the College of Community Psychologists of the
Australian Psychological Society

SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR NON MEMBERS

Institutional rate for 2 issues $60
Individual rate for 2 issues $25
International individual rate for 2 issues $35

ADVERTISING RATES

Full page $100
1/2 page $50
1/4 page $25

INSERTS

All inserts must be trimmed and folded to at least 5mm less
than the dimensions of the Australian Community Psychologist.
A single sheet or brochure equivalent to 1 A4 page $50.

All payments to be made out to:
APS College of Community Psychologists
The Australian Psychological Society
PO Box 38
Flinders Lane Post Office
Melbourne Vic 8009

Editorial

The complexities, challenges and successes of applied, innovative, and community-based research: Introduction to the special issue on applied research methodologies

Lauren J. Breen
Edith Cowan University, Australia
Dawn Darlaston-Jones
University of Notre Dame, Australia

Welcome to our special issue dedicated to applied research methodologies that are directly relevant to community psychologists and fellow travellers. Community psychologists have a history of exploring innovative methodologies that allow their research and/or practice to reflect the applied nature of their work. This is often tempered though with the imperatives of funding agencies, academia, and other bureaucracies which demand a prescribed set of criteria for research. This conflict presents a tension that community researchers often negotiate with difficulty and frustration, constantly feeling the need to justify the methodologies they employ.

The idea for this issue came directly from our experiences – between us, we teach/have taught research to psychology, behavioural science, and health science students, and both of us engage/have engaged in various research projects, yet we found that research is often taught and reported in a sterile and 'clean' manner, which we didn't think reflected the 'true' process of research. Instead, we wanted to read about the process of research directly from other researchers that engage in applied, community-based research, and we wanted to provide a forum for this to occur.

As such, we decided to dedicate a special issue of *The Australian Community Psychologist* devoted to showcasing applied and innovative methodologies and their use in, or relevance to, community psychology. We sought papers that provided quality examples of applied approaches and methodologies that are directly relevant to community psychology research and practice. In particular, we were interested in manuscripts that demonstrated the specific character and processes of applied research and practice, rather than examples of polished research. We encouraged authors to reflect upon and demystify the applied research and practice they have been or are currently engaged in, provide alternatives to commonly (and often uncritically) accepted methodologies, explore alternative methodologies and new forms of enquiry.

The call for papers was distributed nationally and internationally through community psychology email listserves, including Commpsych (Australia), Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA, United States), and COMMUNITYPSYCHUK (United Kingdom). We were inundated with emails, telephone calls, and manuscripts from around the world. In all, 18 manuscripts were selected for the review process and 14 of these are included in this issue. In addition, potential contributors commended us for taking a "really interesting angle" (a professor from the United Kingdom) and for attempting to produce an issue that "will be of great interest and very useful for my classes here" (a professor from Canada).

The number of manuscripts submitted for consideration was a first for an issue of ACP and for each of the 18 selected for review we had to find two reviewers who were willing and able to review them within a short space of time. We would like to acknowledge and thank these reviewers for their time and efforts. They (in alphabetical order) were – Brian Bishop, Diane Broderick, Ali Browne, Lynne Cohen, Ann Dadich, Catherine D'Arcy, Neil Drew, Maria Fernandez, Adrian Fisher, Colleen Fisher, David Fryer, Darrin Hodgetts, Vicky Hovane, Elizabeth Kaczmarek, Bridgette Masters-Awatere, Wendy Nolan, Moira O'Connor, Amiee-Jade Pereira, Julie Ann Pooley, Rosemary Pynor, Harriet Rademacher, Rob Ranzijn**,** Anne Sibbel, Meg Smith, Christopher Sonn, Sasha Stumpers, Margot Trinder, and Eleanor Wertheim. In addition, we would like to acknowledge and

thank Anne Sibbel for her assistance and expertise in producing the Journal each time.

We have organized the surviving papers into three themes. First, we present two manuscripts that are primarily about the *'thinking'* processes that are required before the researcher embarks on the research; these provide the foundation for applied and innovative research methodologies and for this special issue. Second, we present the manuscripts that are primarily about *'doing'* the research; that is they are exemplary illustrations of applied research methodologies. Finally, we include the manuscripts that are primarily about *'reflecting'* on the process of conducting applied and innovative community-based research. While we recognise the somewhat arbitrary nature of this categorisation as there are many ways in which the papers might have been organised, this structure allowed us to emphasise the key components within the research process. Naturally we recognise the fact that this form of categorisation misrepresents the complexity of the research process as the thinking, doing and reflecting rarely occur in such a simple and linear manner: Indeed they often occur at the same time! We also realise that many of these papers would just as easily fit across more than one of these categories so we ask the forgiveness of the authors if they feel that our structure inadequately positions their work.

The special issue opens with a paper from Brian Bishop identifying the values and worldview inherent in qualitative research and the ways in which researchers attempting to utilise them might experience the 'pull' and dominance of positivism. This theme is continued by Dawn Darlaston-Jones as she draws on her PhD research exploring student experiences in higher education to illustrate the relationships between epistemology and methodology and the connection with the researcher's worldview.

The next set of papers describe research initiatives that are illustrations of applied research methodologies, and all focus at one level or another on the value of researching *with* the community of interest. The first of these by Mary Hampton, Kim McKay-McNabb, Bonnie Jeffery, and Barb McWatters discusses a research partnership with Aboriginal youth in Canada designed to strengthen sexual health. Rachel Reilly, Joyce Doyle, and Kevin Rowley describe the partnerships between researchers and the community to promote health in the Goulburn Valley. Julie Morsillo and Adrian Fisher present their work with a group of year 10 high school students in a socially-disadvantaged area of Melbourne. Harriet Radermacher and Christopher Sonn focus on their use of participatory action research with a disability advocacy organisation in Melbourne and highlight the complexity of implementing empowerment practices. Cyndi Brannen, Kathy Petite, Deborah Norris, Cheryl Baldwin, Barbara Corbett, and Donna Harding illustrate the importance of working with communities that don't fit the traditional profile of 'disadvantage' to promote wellbeing through policy change in Canada. Jacqui Akhurst's paper draws on Activity Theory to develop a model of evaluating the Nkosinathi Community Project in South Africa. Julie van den Eynde and Art Veno discuss their research with outlaw motorcycle club women and explicate the process of attempting to collaborate with and/or investigate potentially dangerous subcultures and criminalised groups.

These 'doing' papers demonstrate the complexities and effectiveness of community-generated and/or community-directed research projects and the manner in which these can strengthen identity and community connectedness. The importance of researchers working in a genuinely collaborative manner with their communities of interest and for the knowledge to reside with the community is highlighted. This relationship between the researcher and the community is one of the distinguishing characteristics of community collaboration research and emphasises the critical importance of reflexivity on the part of the researcher(s).

The 'reflection' section of the issue includes papers that illustrate the nexus between the 'doing' and the 'reflecting' processes of research and illustrate the overlap between these categorisations. It also illustrates the cyclical nature of research with the emphasis on reflexivity with the researcher examining his or her role and position within the research process. Even in a collaborative research partnership there

is a power differential that the research must acknowledge and negotiate. The first of these papers by Katherine Johnson reflects upon the methodological and ethical issues of exploring suicide among the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community in the United Kingdom. Brian Bishop and Alison Browne examine the complex set of relationships related to natural resource management, and argue that, with the growing national and global concern on natural resources, it is critical that social science research is included in the debate. Bernard and Pauline Guerin draw on examples from their long term work with refugees to illustrate the shortcomings of many of the methodologies employed in racism and discrimination research. Pauline and Bernard's second paper expands this idea by giving examples, again from their own experiences, of how to engage in participatory processes. They discuss the challenges they faced in developing appropriate methodologies and the iterative nature of the *doing* and *reflecting* involved in getting it right, or at least attempting to do so. The final paper in the issue is a reflection from Lauren Breen on negotiating the insider/outsider dichotomy in her PhD study. She describes herself as being 'in the middle' rather than as an insider or outsider to her research and considers the ways in which this positioning influenced the topic, scope, and methodology employed in the study.

We conclude this special issue with a review of Ian Parker's book, "Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research" by David Fryer, Adele Laing, and Rachael Fox. The reviewers describe the book as "…a devastating critique of the quantitatively dominated discipline of psychology." Parker doesn't limit his critique of research to the quantitative paradigm; he challenges the lack of critical thought applied to much of the research conducted within psychology regardless of the methodological 'flavour', and consequently, the review compliments the papers included in this special issue.

The articles in this special issue describe elements of the process of conducting applied and innovative community-based research, using examples from around the globe. In these papers, the context(s) of the research is delicate and consequences of error can be profound. The research techniques described by the contributors require a great deal of time and consideration prior to and during implementation. However, rather that arguing that these research methodologies are perhaps best reserved for the more experienced investigator, we believe that it's not so much the prior experience of the researcher that matters, but that sensitivity to the context and issues at hand that is important. We hope that this special issue achieves our aim of providing a forum for the emergence of a conversation around the methodologies we employ and the epistemological roots underpinning them. We invite critique and commentary on these papers and encourage the continued sharing of ideas and debate. Developing this special issue over the past six months has been a rewarding, and at times exhausting, experience. It has been gratifying to realise that other researchers around the world shared our enthusiasm for the project and were willing to contribute their work to the journal.

Address correspondence to
Lauren Breen
l.breen@ecu.edu.au
Dawn Darlaston-Jones
ddarlaston-jones@nd.edu.au

Methodology, values and quantitative world-views in qualitative research in community psychology

Brian J. Bishop
Curtin University of Technology, Australia

The re-emergence of qualitative research methodologies has great potential in community psychology. As community psychology is historically steeped in the quantitative methods, it is not surprising that the thinking that underlies the positivistic approaches in mainstream psychology is reflected in the way in which qualitative methods have been operationalised. In this article a number of issues are identified as conceptual residues from positivism, such as qualitative approaches to validity and developing substantive theory. Unlike quantitative methods where technical sophistication of method and statistics are the hallmark of good research, qualitative researchers need reflective skills, and flexibility of method and theorising. Qualitative research requires the researcher to adapt their methods to reflect the context, and to allow the context to determine questions, rather than apriorilly decided theoretical issues.

Qualitative methodologies are looked on in mainstream psychology as being less 'objective' and less able to reveal scientific 'truths' (Flick, 2002). Community psychology, on the other hand, "has had a longstanding interest in approaching research in ways that differ from much of mainstream research" (Langhout, 2003, p. 229) and this was reflected in a special edition of the American Journal of Community Psychology on qualitative research in 1998.

Methodologies such as participatory action research (PAR) require that community psychologists address issues such as empowerment and developing social capacities, and reflect the core values of the discipline (Banyard & Miller, 1998). In general terms, qualitative research is more context dependent and less technique driven than quantitative research, which leads to a great array of qualitative methods (Shank, 2006). My comments are related mainly to those approaches that help us make meaning of people's experiences, such as ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology and the like, that are the more context dependent. Langhout (2003) made the point that "in our articulation of our values and subsequent move away from conventional epistemology, we have not seemed to challenge some underlying methods assumptions" (p. 229). In this paper I will discuss a number of issues relating to the adoption of qualitative methods as part of our research strategies, and some of the pitfalls that come from the historical dominance of quantitative, positivistic psychology. This legacy of this history leads to the belief that any methodology can be understood in the abstract and decontextualised from our research questions, as reflected in mainstream psychology research methods textbooks (Shank). My aim here is to argue that the most difficult aspect of research is deriving questions and the methodological considerations should arise from the analysis of the context of the research questions. In doing this, the complexity of research design is simplified and becomes more transparent than when questions are derived from decontextualised theory. This does not make research easier, as considerable conceptual effort is required, but that effort is more wisely put in to identifying our research questions.

What's New in Psychology?

A colleague of mine reported that she attended a qualitative symposium in which the presenter was extolling the virtue of photovoice as a new methodology designed to empower our participants in research. She argued with the presenter saying that she had been taught the use of video and still photography in research while undertaking a social work course in the late 1970s. The presenter could not believe that this new 'psychological' methodology of photovoice had been used in other disciplines before psychology discovered empowerment and started treating their objects of study not as subjects (which is a term borrowed from medicine that

was used to refer to cadavers; Danziger, 2002) but as participants, through methodologies such as photovoice.

Similarly, the emergence of qualitative methods in psychological research reflects a re-emergence of procedures such as introspection, interview, observation and phenomenology that have been used in Western psychology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and continued in Europe, Flick, 2002). The battles that were fought to bring methods from the social sciences and humanities into psychology reflected a maturing of psychology from a time when it had been attempting to define itself as a science (Chalmers, 1990), suffering from 'physics envy' (Leahey, 1992), to one in which there was enough self-confidence for the discipline to engage in what had become non-traditional methodologies for the discipline.

Philosophical Roots Revisited

One of the by-products of the fight for the recognition of qualitative methodology has been the need to justify research designs in terms of the underpinning philosophy. This has resulted in levels of intellectual and philosophical awareness, and sophistication, not generally seen in mainstream psychology, where positivism remained relatively unquestioned. Even severe criticisms such as the impact of demand characteristics and experimenter effects (Orne, 1962; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1968; Rosnow, 1981), the crisis of relevance (Elms, 1975, where the value of experimentally based psychological knowledge for human wellbeing and social change was challenged), the overly individualistic nature of psychology (Burr, 2002; Hayes, 2002; Sampson, 1989; Sarason, 1981) and the impacts of values (Sarason; Prilleltensky, 1989; 1994) did not shake the central belief in quantitative methods. Long-term change in quantitative methodologies in psychology was not evident, even though positivistic research methods (especially those in social and clinical areas) were being shown to be fundamentally flawed. Just as the discipline 'forgot' or did not recognise that photographic images had been used as powerful tools in the social sciences, psychology has dealt with the critical commentaries with denial.

Community psychology was born during the period of questioning of mainstream psychology, its methodology and its philosophical underpinnings. The crises over experimental methodology and relevance created a generational change (Rogler, 2002) that was characterised by questioning of assumptions, values, of critical awareness and postmodernism. While mainstream research was generally unquestioningly based in positivism, those embracing alternative methodologies (Langhout, 2003) generally needed to examine the concomitant philosophical assumptions. Social constructionism (e.g., Burr, 2002) and postmodernism (Kvale, 1992) were based on notions of different ontologies and epistemologies. The 'certain' world gave way to uncertainty. Relativism versus realism became a common controversy. Typologies of methodology such as those of Altman and Rogoff (1984), Dewey and Bentley (1949), Dokecki (1992) and Pepper (1942) alerted us to the fact that there was not 'one royal road to wisdom' (Dokecki, 1996). For example, Stephen Pepper (1942, 1966) wrote of four world hypotheses, being Formism, Mechanism, Organicism and Contextualism (he later added Selectivism, but it is not essential for debate presented here). These modes of thinking parallel four ontological and epistemological lines of inquiry in psychology; individual differences, positivism, systems analysis, and cultural and worldview studies, respectively. Pepper made the important point that each world theory has its own guiding principle, or what he termed as root metaphor. Formism's root metaphor is 'similarities and differences'; Mechanism is 'the machine', Organicism 'harmonious unity' and contextualism 'the act in context'. Not only do the root metaphors of each world theory differ, the philosophical assumptions are different. Altman and Rogoff further articulated these differences by integrating the world hypotheses with Dewey and Bentley's typology of psychological agency of self-action (emergent action), interaction (cause and effect) and transaction. What the discussion of these world theories did was to increase understanding of the research questions being asked, and those needed to be asked, in the emerging discipline of community psychology. For example the difficult concept of transaction is somewhat counter intuitive, but is essential for understanding

complex communities. Altman and Rogoff stated:

The *transaction* approach assumes an inseparability of context, temporal factors, and physical and psychological phenomena. Unlike interaction approaches [of positivism], where phenomena interact with and are influenced by contexts, transaction orientations treat context, time, and processes as aspects of an integrated unity. Thus one is not dealing with separate elements of a system. Instead, a transaction approach defines aspects of phenomena in terms of their mutual functioning. Persons, processes, and environments are conceived of as aspects of a whole, not as independent components that combine additively to make up the whole (p. 9).

Invoking concepts like transaction meant that a return to simplistic positivism would be difficult. Transaction precludes the researcher from treating aspects of the social world as separate and discrete elements necessary for reductionistic positivism. The discipline of community psychology has long recognised the importance of understanding context, as the notion of social ecology was fundamental to the conceptual base of the emerging discipline (e.g., Bennett et al, 1966; Rappaport, 1977). How the 'context' and the social world were to be understood has been less well developed. The approaches of Linney (2000), Shin and Toohey (2003), and Tebes (2005) to operationalize context represent considerable advances in dealing with more complex contexts, but these approaches imply that systems can be treated as bounded entities. The implication of transaction is that contexts are unbounded. For example, in her doctoral research Katie Thomas (2004) looked at empowerment and depowerment in a large government organisation. She realised that to study empowerment purely at a local level did not allow for a full understanding of why empowerment programs ended up as disempowering programs. Only in the broader context of national and international affairs could the local situation be best understood.

Dokecki (1996) also developed a typology of research methodologies. He created a two by two methodology matrix by contrasting micro and macro levels of analysis with qualitative and quantitative methods. In this matrix he located methodologies such as experimental (micro-quantitative), systems-analytic (macro-quantitative), interpretive (micro-qualitative) and world-view (macro-qualitative). He argued that the experimental studies dominated psychological research and not enough attention had been paid to the other domains, particularly world-view analytic studies. The dominance of the experimental studies is based in the historical development of the field, and also in the mechanistic mindset of researchers. Dokecki argued that there was a need for a shift to more world-view research as world-views are inherent to understanding context. He also argued that how researchers frame our questions is dependent on our style of thinking about research. Not only should world-view analytic studies be undertaken more frequently, they can also be a preparatory process for research in which we ask why we want to study a particular phenomenon. Questions such as: Who benefits and what are we responsible for? (O'Neil, 1989); Does the research recreate the status quo? (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Prilleltensky, 1994), and will we be complicit in maintaining conservative values by blaming individuals for social ills? (O'Neil, 2005) are part of such a preparatory world-view analysis. Some of the advantages of undertaking a world-view analysis is that it assists in addressing issues of ethics and our value systems, and also helps to locate the research in the broader social contexts.

Including the Macro Context

Moving to a broader understanding of context is difficult, but as Gergen (1990) pointed out, once you have tasted the 'sweet poison of enlightenment', there is no going back. Recognising that there were other frameworks for basing methodology on, other than positivism, created freedom from the sterile research world of mainstream psychology (Hayes, 2002). This 'brave new world' allowed 'experiment' (in the sense of novelty, rather than technical constraints), to be reintroduced into what Kelly (2003) called adventuresome research: it allowed us to ask complex questions and not to know the outcomes before the research in undertaken. The adoption of these alternative methodologies offered liberation from the tyranny of abstracted and reductionistic theory, which Sarason (1982) argued had befuddled US psychology. He made the comment that: "If anybody ever asked me

wherein my thinking has any distinctiveness, I would say it is in taking the obvious seriously. American Psychology has had trouble recognising the obvious, perhaps because so much attention has been given to the distractions of theory." (p. 132)

Gergen (1990) argued that the adoption of post-modernism theory and methodology led to significant changes:

> Within the modernist era, the scientist was largely polishers of mirrors. It was essentially his/her task to hold a well honed mirror to nature. If others wished to use the results of such efforts, well it was their concern. However, for the post-modernist, such a role is pale and passive. Post-modernism asks the scientist to join in the hurly-burly of culture life- to become an active participant in the construction of the culture. For as we have seen, the primary result of most scholarly inquiry is discourse itself. And, rather than simply repeating the taken for granted assumptions of the culture, the psychologist is in the optimal role to transform this discourse. Rather than "telling as it is" the challenge for the post-modern psychologist is to "tell it as it may become". Needed are scholars willing to be audacious, to break the barriers of common senses by offering new forms of theory, of interpretation, of intelligibility. (p. 33)

Making the leap to examining the obvious more closely and going beyond the limitations of reductionistic positivism, allows the researcher engagement in the world in an active or generative fashion (Bishop, Sonn, Drew & Contos; 2002; Dokecki, 1992; Moghaddom, 1990). It also involves changing our understanding of the outcomes of research. In a complex world where community psychologists engage in social change, there is little that is fixed or immutable. The products of research need to be seen as knowledge claims, claims to be refuted, or as Polkinghorne (1983) wrote, 'assertoric knowledge'. Polkinghorne saw our knowledge claims as being rhetoric to be made in the public arena for others to dispute or agree with. Seeing knowledge as scientific consensus means that the process of developing a knowledge base must be recognised as a social process in which the understanding of social dynamics and human values are fundamental.

Positivism in mainstream psychology led to the belief that research can result in certainty about an uncertain world (Buss, 2002; Sarason, 1981). Accepting that our research models will lead to uncertain knowledge claims about uncertain phenomena represents a conceptual shift that was flagged over a century ago by Charles Peirce. Peirce (1955) developed the notion of 'abductive reasoning' in which knowledge claims are speculated by drawing inferences from logical combinations of more and less certain information. He saw this as a model for the social sciences and life in general. Abductive reasoning allows the generation of theories of community life that reflect temporal and spatial relativities. Abduction is a useful meta-research tool for interacting with data and theory in dynamic social situations. It subjectifies the research process, which is seen as mixing the researcher with data.

Researcher Reflexivity as an Over arching Concept

We begin to see the researcher as central to the nature of the research process, as the *bricoleur* in creating a *bricolage* (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). "A *bricoleur* is a 'Jack of all trades or a do-it-yourself person' (Levi-Srauss , 1966, p. 17). The *bricoleur* produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem …" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 3). The bricolage is created from what is often seen as not being valuable, not having great meaning, or being obvious, especially by the participants in some social action. The importance of values in positivistic research began to be recognised in social psychology in the 1970s (e.g., Buss, 1975; Gergen; 1973; Sarason, 1981). In qualitative research, the reflexivity of the researcher is a fundamental tool (e.g., Bishop et al., 2002; Denzin, 2000; Flick, 2002). 'Participant conceptualising', (Bennett et al, 1966; Bishop et al., 2002; Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007), for example, involves the researcher participating

in, and reflecting upon, the ongoing social dynamics in an evolving fashion, in which "knowledge is constructed through action" (Dalton, et al., p. 16). The reflexive and action orientation is based on Dewey's (1929) criticism of the separation of knowledge and action, and later reflected upon by Gergen (1990, as previously quoted), and Argyris and Schön (1974). Schön (1983) distinguished between professional knowledge and conceptual knowledge, the latter being based on traditional theory and research, and the former being based on reflection on action. He argued that professionals, be they researchers or practitioners, should be able to integrate both to make sense and operate in the world. Argyris and Schön developed models of professional action based on their concept of double loop learning in which the researcher is seen as an active part of the research process. They are required to actively reflect on information and readjust their research questions in the light of this reflection. Bishop et al., Denzin and Lincoln, and Dokecki (1996) saw this as an incremental approach to developing knowledge whereby questions are raised, tested, reflected upon, revised and retested, and so on until a satisfactory picture is reached.

The approach that Bishop et al (2002) referred to as 'iterative-reflective-generative practice' raises three fundamental questions relating to 'validity' and research process. As most researchers in community psychology have been grounded in quantitative methodology before developing qualitative skills, they tend to have unexamined aspects of the mechanistic or positivistic world theories. One of these is the basic assumption of experimental fidelity, in which all subjects receive the same treatment in a particular treatment condition. Randomisation of subjects, control of extraneous variables and effective manipulation of the independent variables are signs of good quantitative research. In the iterative reflective approaches, information gathered from participants, is analysed in an ongoing fashion, and thus the nature of the research questions change. The 'failure' to maintain the same interview schedules is a characteristic of good research. Participants may even be engaged in the process of reflecting on outcomes and developing the understandings mutually (e.g., Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Reason, 1998). In a contextual qualitative research design, as in an interpretive ethnography (Denzin, 1997), the research questions change with the context and with the understanding being developed throughout the process. If a researcher is new to a context, the first questions that need to be asked will be broad and naïve. As more is learned about the context, the sophistication of the questions, the analysis and the understandings becomes greater, and therefore the methodology changes.

A focus on issues of sample size and representativeness also reflect an inheritance from quantitative methodological values. In quantitative studies, representative samples need to be large enough to allow specified effect sizes to be identified and to allow generalisations to be made. The salience of those quantitative values to criteria to judge qualitative research is found among qualitative researchers, when, for example, they express some 'embarrassment' about the small samples they obtain. This reflects assumptions that representativeness of people is important, rather than representativeness of concepts and issues. Obviously, qualitative research can be used to gain representative data, but it can be useful in the process of 'filling in the gaps between correlations' with rich and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Taking a post-modern perspective, multiple realities are possible which can be local and specific (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Gergen, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 2003), both in place and time (Gergen, 1973). The number of participants will be dependent on the nature of questions being asked. For example, in doing a case study of an organisation, it is not feasible to get a representative sample of CEOs as there will be only one. Similarly, people are often interviewed because of their position, rather than as a representative of the human race. The number of participants should be determined by the questions being asked and the nature of the information collected.

Allowing the nature of the information determine the number of participants often requires recruiting people until saturation of themes and theoretical categories is reached, or until little new information is being discovered (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

For example, in a study of Indigenous Australian sense of community it was found saturation was reached after the second interview (Bishop, Colquhoun & Johnson, 2006). Sense of community was a concept common to all Indigenous people and thus only a few interviews were required. The initial design of the study, with a much larger sample size reflected our naiveté, and the fact that some aspects of culture are so well understood by the community that large sample sizes are not only not required, but reflect a lack of understanding of the phenomena being studied.

Another hangover from positivistic research is the notion of pure vs. applied research. This distinction reflects issues from psychology which "… tacitly assumed that physics constitutes the paradigm of good science to which all other sciences should aspire." (Chalmers, 1990, p. 19). In the physical sciences pure research and applied research have quite separate meanings. In psychology, the distinction is really more one of decontextualised research versus grounded, pragmatic or substantive research (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Dewey, 1900; Wicker & August, 2000, respectively). In community psychology these distinctions are less important as research is necessarily attempted with the community and in the community. The concepts of pure vs. applied needs to give way to the concept of applicable research, which arrises from the experience of a community and is 'ground truthed' in the community (to borrow a hard science term for the process of establishing external validity). Wicker and August's approach of emphasising 'substantive theorising' recognises the need to understand local contexts and to embed our research in those contexts. Participatory action research, and action research in general, reflects Dewey's notions of pragmatics and undertaking research that has meaning and relevance in specific contexts.

Validity is an issue that has been brought from positivistic psychology to qualitative research. Terms such as trustworthiness, enhancing truth value, transference, dependability, confirmability, verifiability and reproducability are used to give parallels to validity and reliability of quantitative methods (e.g., Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 2002; Patton, 2002; Punch, 2005). The clearest parallel can be seen in the following:

The question of validity can be summarized as 'a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees…. Basically, three errors may occur; to see a relation, principle etc. where they are not correct (type 1 error); to reject them when they are indeed correct (type 2 error); and finally to ask the wrong questions (type 3 error) (Flick, 2002, pp. 221-222).

The imposition of the quantitative language and concepts onto qualitative methods has meant that psychology has not been free to develop more appropriate procedures for assessing the appropriateness and effectiveness of qualitative methodology. While there have been moves towards more qualitative specific approaches such as the use of audit trails (Punch, 2005), the assumption that qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible is conceptually flawed, as they are embedded in different ontologies and epistemologies (Pepper, 1942; Guba & Lincoln, 1998). What is essential in developing evaluative test for qualitative research (internally, while the research is ongoing, and externally) is the development of procedures that are based on the questions being asked.

Pepper (1942, 1964) suggested that a major criterion is that the research outcomes make sense; that they have the 'look and feel' of how social systems operate. Does the research make sense to us as researchers and the communities we work with? Increasing community participation in setting research agenda, methods and conduct of research allows for more opportunity to ensure fair representation of the community's issues. The better representation of community issues generally increases the complexity of the research. Increased complexity of psychological methodologies reflects the fact that social systems are complex by their nature and that people in those systems see things differently from their respective vantage points. Sarason (1982) wrote of a rabbi who is approached by a member of his community who complains bitterly about her husband. The rabbi listens to her story and agrees she has a legitimate complaint. The next day the husband approaches him and gives his version of the conflict, and the rabbi agrees with him. The rabbi's wife, who has heard both people,

remonstrates with the rabbi, saying "First you said the wife was correct, and then you agreed with the husband. How can you do this? They can't both be right!" The rabbi thinks for a while and then says "Yes, you know, you are right". Just as the rabbi could contain contradictions, communities will hold multiple truths, and they can maintain those truths while there is little conflict or forums in which the differences occur become visible (Bishop & Syme, 1996). Researchers need to recognise that they must be able to cope with the complexity and the uncertainty and ambiguity of community life. Clarity and simplicity need to be hallmarks of how questions are framed, and why those questions are being asked. If this can be achieved, the community and the broader society will reveal the complexity of the interplay of social structures and action.

In conclusion, qualitative research can be a powerful tool for community psychologists, both as a means of understanding how people make meaning of their world, and as it involves philosophical and procedural aspects that require that we examine ourselves as actors in broader contexts. The centrality of the researcher overtly brings subjectivity into the research process and creates the need to tolerate uncertainty. Research models and processes based on strategies such as abductive reasoning and iterative-reflective-generative practice addresses uncertainty by recognising that reality is uncertain, relative and changeable.

Adopting either mixed or purely qualitative methodologies can allow people to be seen in complex contexts. Complexity needs to be anticipated and mirrored in community psychological research. The generative nature of creating a bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) or using an iterative-reflective methodology (Bishop et al., 2002; Dokecki, 1996) means that theory is expansive rather than reductionistic. Our theories are strengthened through the awareness and inclusion of complexity. Recognising the possibility of multiple truths and the historically, culturally and chronological specificity of phenomena requires an appreciation that knowledge claims need to be asserted, not as ends in themselves, but as a means of dialogue with other researchers. By taking away the appearance of the grandeur of theory and seeing knowledge as consensual (Polkinghorne, 1983), contextualised theory can emerge from observations grounded in community's experiences and the outcomes related back to the community.

Qualitative methodology helps us focus on preparatory worldview analyses of research context at micro and macro levels as part of scoping. The worldview analysis also helps us ask questions about the questions we are asking, such as: Why are we engaging in the research? How will this research benefit those who participate? Does the research maintain or recreate dominant social structures? Asking these questions is fundamental to the principle of developing ethical research, as was advocated by the founders of community psychology at Swampscott in 1966.

References

Altman, I., & Rogoff, B. (1984). World views in psychology: Trait, interactional, organismic, and transactional perspectives. In D. Stokals and I. Altman (Eds.), *Handbook of Environmental Psychology* (Vol.1, pp1-40). New York: Wiley.

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Banyard, V. L. & Miller, K. E. (1998). The powerful potential of qualitative research for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26,* 485-505.

Bennett, C. C., Anderson, J. S., Cooper, S., Hassol, L., Klein, D. C., Rosenblum, G. (Eds.) (1966). *Community psychology: A report of the Boston conference on the education of psychologists for community mental health.* Boston: University Press.

Bishop, B. J., Colquhoun, S. D. & Johnson, J. (2006). Psychological sense of community: An Australian Aboriginal experience. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34,* 1-7.

Bishop, B. J., Sonn, C.S., Drew, N. M. & Contos, N. E. (2002). The evolution of epistemology and concepts in an iterative‐generative reflective practice: The importance of small differences. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30,* 493‐510.

Bishop, B. J., & Syme, G. J. (1996). Social change in rural settings: Lessons for community change agents. In D. R. Thomas & A. Veno (Eds.), *Community Psychology and social change: Australian and New Zealand perspectives* (pp. 157-181). Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press.

Burgess-Limmerick, T., & Burgess-Limmerick, R. (1998). Conversational interviews and multiple-case Research in psychology. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 50,* 63-70.

Burr, V. (2002). *The person in social psychology*. Hove, East Sussex: Psychology Press.

Buss, A. R. (1975). The emerging field of the sociology of psychological knowledge. *American Psychologist, 30,* 988-1002.

Chalmers, A. F. (1990). *Science and its fabrication*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dalton, J., Elias, M., & Wandersman, A. (2007). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities* (2ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.-

Danziger, K. (2002). The origins of the psychological experiment as a social institution. In W.E. Pickren & D. A. Dewsbury (Eds.), *Evolving perspectives on the history of psychology* (pp. 169-183). Washington, D. C.: American Psychological Association.

Denzin, N. K. (1997). Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (2000). The practices and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2ed.), (pp. 897-992). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Introduction: In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry*, (pp. 1-34). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dewey, J. (1900). Psychology and social practice. *Psychological Review, 7,* 105-124.

Dewey, J. (1929). *Experience and nature*. New York: Dover

Dewey, J., & Bentley, A., (1949). *Knowing and the known*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Dokecki, P. (1992). On knowing the community of caring persons: a methodological basis for the reflective generative practice of community psychology. *Journal of Community Psychology, 20,* 26-35.

Dokecki, P. R. (1996). *The tragi-comic professional: Basic considerations for ethical reflective-generative practice.* Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press.

Elms, A. (1975). The crisis of confidence in social psychology. *American Psychologist, 30,* 967-976.

Flick, U. (2002). *An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Gergen, K. (1973). Social psychology as history. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 26,* 309-320.

Gergen, K. J. (1990). Toward a postmodern psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 18,* 23-34.

Gergen, K. J. (2001). Psychological Science in a postmodern context. *American Psychologist, 56,* 803-813.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, *The landscape of qualitative research* (pp. 195-220). London: Sage.

Hayes, N. (2002). *Psychology in perspective* (2ed.). London: Sage

Kelly, J. G. (2003). Science and community psychology: social norms for pluralistic inquiry. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31,* 213-217.

Kvale, S. (1992). Introduction: from the archaeology of the psyche to the architecture of cultural landscapes. In S. Kvale (Ed). *Psychology and postmodernism*. (pp. 1-16). London: Sage.

Langhout, R. D. (2003). Reconceptualising quantitative and qualitative methods: a case study dealing with place as an exemplar. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 32,* 229-244.

Leahey, T.H.(1992). *A history of psychology:*

main currents in psychological thought. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba. E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* London: Sage.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba. E. G. (2003). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2ed., pp. 253-291). London: Sage.
Linney, J. A. (2000). Assessing ecological constructs and community context. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 647-668). NY: Klumer Academic/Plenum.
Moghaddam, F. (1990). Modulative and generative orientations in psychology: Implications for psychology in the third world. *Journal of Social Issues, 56,* 21-41.
Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being.* New York: Palgrave McMillan.
O'Neil, P. (1989). Responsible to whom? Responsible for what? *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17,* 323-341.
O'Neil, P. (2005). The ethics of problem definition. *Canadian Psychology, 46,* 13-20.
Orne, M. T. (1962). On the social psychology of the psychological experiment: With particular reference to demand characteristics and their implication. *American Psychologist, 17,* 776-783.
Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3ed.). London: Sage.
Peirce, C. S. (1955). *Philosophical writings of Peirce: selected papers*. New York: Dover Publications.
Pepper S. C. (1942). *World hypotheses.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
Pepper, S.C. (1966). *Concept and quality: A world hypothesis.* Illinois: Open Court.
Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: systems of inquiry*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Prilleltensky, I. (1989). Psychology and the status quo. *American Psychologist, 44,* 795-802.
Prilleltensky, I. (1994). *The morals and politics of psychology: psychological discourse and the status quo*. New York: State University of New York.
Punch, K. F. (2005). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*: London: Sage.
Rappaport, J. (1977). *Community psychology: Values, research and action*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
Reason, P. (1998). Three approaches to participatory inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y S. Lincoln (Eds.), Strategies of qualitative inquiry, (pp. 261-291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Rogler, L. H. (2002). Historical generations and psychology: the case of the Great Depression and World War II. *American Psychologist, 57,* 1013-1023.
Rosenthal, R. & Rosnow, R. L. (Eds.). (1968). *Artifact in behavioural research*. New York: Academic Press.
Rosnow, R. (1981). *Paradigms in transition: The methodology of social inquiry.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Sampson, E. E. (1989). The deconstruction of the self. In J. Shotter & K. J. Gergen, *Texts of identity* (pp. 1‑19). London: Sage.
Sarason, S. B. (1981). *Psychology misdirected.* New York: Free Press.
Sarason, S. B. (1982). *Psychology and social action: Selected papers*. New York: Praeger.
Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. USA: Basic Books.
Shank, G. D. (2006). *Qualitative research: a personal skills approach*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.
Shinn, M., & Toohey, S. M. (2003). Community contexts of human welfare. *Annual Review of Psychology, 54,* 427-259.
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2 ed.). London: Sage.
Tebes, J. K. (2005). Community science, philosophy of science, and the practice of research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35,* 213-230.
Thomas, K. E. (2004). *An exploratory and*

contextual analysis of empowerment processes. Unpublished PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology, Perth.

Wicker, A. W., & August, R. A. (2000). Working lives in context: Engaging the views of participants and analysts. In W. B. Walsh, K. H. Craik, & R. H. Price. *Person-environment psychology: New directions and perspectives* (2ed.) (pp. 197-232). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the two anonymous reviewers for their thorough and detailed comments. I need also to acknowledge the insightful and helpful comments made by Alison Browne.

Address correspondence to

Brian Bishop
School of Psychology
Curtin University of Technology
PO Box U1987
Perth 6845
Email: b.bishop@curtin.edu.au

Making connections: The relationship between epistemology and research methods

Dawn Darlaston-Jones
University of Notre Dame, Australia

The ability to identify the relationship between the epistemological foundation of research and the methods employed in conducting it is critical in order for research to be truly meaningful. Unfortunately this connection is often not taught in the research methods classes that most psychology students experience. Indeed the very names of these units emphasises the focus on methods and consequently the epistemology, theoretical frameworks and methodologies that influence the choice of methods remain 'hidden' from view. This paper brings into focus these hidden (or often overlooked and ignored) elements of research and illustrates the importance and relevance by drawing on example from the author's research into the student experience of higher education.

The relationship between epistemology and method is rarely articulated through our formal coursework education either at undergraduate or postgraduate level; certainly this is true in many psychology programmes. Nowhere during my formal education was the connection between epistemology and method clearly explained, indeed the entire notion of a philosophical foundation to research was missing. The Australian Psychological Accreditation Council (APAC) guidelines do not require the epistemological foundations of science to be explicated at either the undergraduate or postgraduate level. In fact the only reference to 'philosophy' in the 2005 documentation is a requirement for the "history and philosophy of psychology" (APAC, 2005, p.23) to be included somewhere during the undergraduate degree. The various research units I studied throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate education were all titled *Research Methods* (with or without various suffixes attached) which served to emphasise the focus onto the *methods* employed instead of the entire construction of the research process. It was only when I was struggling to write my PhD thesis that I realised that this gap in my knowledge and understanding existed and that I needed to rectify it before I continued with the writing. But in embarking on this journey I discovered as much about me as I did about how the methods I employed sat within a social constructionist worldview.

In this paper I will describe why it is important to be explicit about the epistemological foundations of our work and how identifying our orientation can help frame our research design. I begin by outlining the constructionist view and differentiating this from the positivist stance. I do this for two reasons; first, to demonstrate the dominance of the positivist perspective in psychology students education and second, because I personally subscribe to a constructionist worldview and this influenced my choice of research topic, and the methodology I employed. Having done this I then demonstrate how this epistemological view shaped my study and was able to cast new light on the experience of undergraduate students that challenges the accepted knowledge on this topic.

Epistemological Roots

The basic contention of the constructionist argument is that reality is socially constructed by and between the persons who experience it (Gergen, 1999). It is a consequence of the context in which the action occurs and is shaped by the cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time: And that reality can be different for each of us based on our unique understandings of the world and our experience of it (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Reality in this case is completely subjective and need not be something that can be shared by anyone else but at the same time it is independent of the person living it.

In contrast, empiricism, which is the foundation of positivism, views reality as universal, objective, and quantifiable. Therefore from this perspective, it is argued that reality is the same for you as it is for me and through the application of science we can identify and 'see'

that shared reality. By adopting the positivist orientation, psychology has reduced the individual to the status of a passive receptacle. There is little notion of the person as the *perceiver* of his or her world and even less thought seems to be afforded to the possibility of the person as a *conceiver* or *constructor* of his or her world (Ashworth, 2003). Social constructionism (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Gergen, 1999, 2001a, 2001b) on the other hand views the individual as a *sense maker* in that each of us seeks to understand or make sense of our world as we see and experience it.

The fact that science is situated within empiricism is in fact to locate it within an epistemology. Because this is the dominant discourse of science it becomes the taken-for-granted norm that is above question and by extension is not subjected to critique. So while science, and psychology in particular, believes that scientific endeavour is objective and value free it fails to realise that these assumptions are in fact a statement about the nature of knowledge and therefore is in fact an epistemology. In adopting the belief that a single universal reality exists for all of us and that this reality can be discovered via systematically controlled investigation science/psychology fails to recognise the ability of the human person to *interpret* and *make sense* of his or her world.

Social constructionism provides a different perspective with which to view the world that allows the unique differences of individuals to come into focus while at the same time permitting the essential *sameness* that unites human beings to be identified (Ashworth, 2003). This means that it is not necessary for any of us to share the views of others but at the same time none of us can change or alter *our* reality simply because we might wish to. In this manner each individual reality is true for the person because he or she experiences it but it is independent of that person due to his or her inability to alter it (Gergen, 1999).

Relevance to Research on Retention in Higher Education

To illustrate how these two worldviews differ I refer to my PhD thesis which explored the issue of retention in higher education; why do some students complete their undergraduate degree and others do not? Most of the literature in this area speaks of the role of the student in terms of motivation, commitment and ability as if these are isolated constructs that occur independently of the person or the context in which the person exists. The reality is that each of us has very complex reasons for studying and these decisions are influenced by the type of person we are, our experiences, culture, background, social, and economic status. So imagine if you will a student who comes to university from a privileged background; both her parents are university graduates, she attended a well resourced high school that facilitated her social and academic ability. She was encouraged by her teachers and family to explore her potential in every area and university was regarded as the natural progression in her postsecondary development. Contrast this experience to the student who is the first in her family to attend university; her family and teachers are equally supportive and encouraging of her achieving her potential but the nature of her experience is fundamentally different from the advantaged student. In the first instance the student regards her university experience as "more of the same" in that she is continuing a family tradition almost. The second student though is experiencing university as a life changing challenge. She sees university not simply as a natural progression but as an opportunity for her to help her family and to become a role model for others in her neighbourhood (Ostrove, 2003; Ostrove & Cole, 2003; Paulsen & St John, 2002; Walker, Matthew, & Black, 2004).

These two students share the same experience at a surface level in that they both attended university from high school, they are the same age and gender, and both are committed to completing their degree. Therefore as far as the attrition literature is concerned both have the same opportunity to succeed. This position is supported by a plethora of eminent researchers in the area all of whom employed quantitative methodologies to examine completion and non-completion among undergraduate students (see for example: Abbott-Chapman, Hughes, & Wyld, 1992; Clark & Ramsay, 1990; Owen, 2003; Shah & Burke, 1996). The approach adopted by these studies was to assume that students enter university on an equal level and to track them

over the course of their degree (or more commonly for the first semester or first year). A range of demographic data (age, ethnicity, gender, financial resources etc) is gathered on these students and then depending on their status at the end of the study (still enrolled, graduated, or withdrawn) various conclusions are drawn to 'explain' non-completion.

However, the realities of students are in fact vastly different as a result of their prior experiences, the socialisation process they were subject to, and the cultural differences resulting from their different economic positions. In the examples I presented earlier, neither student can change her view of what university represents to her or her family nor is she in a position to immediately see the world of the other. So from the constructionist perspective each of them has a separate and unique reality and each is independent of her interpretation of that reality. Simply sitting in the same classroom for the same lessons does not make their experience of university identical. Consequently, trying to explain their experience of university and the fact that one of them might withdraw by looking solely at demographic data cannot hope to succeed in capturing the unique reality of the individual, and as a researcher one is poorly placed to claim any degree of 'understanding' of her experience. One has to look at the question differently and employ a different approach to the research process for any real understanding to emerge.

Therefore, accepting the constructionist definition of reality calls for a change in how we view science and scientific enquiry. If my reality is created out of my subjective view of the world then it does not lend itself to objective analysis or scrutiny because no-one can see the world in exactly the same way I do. All that an observer can do is *interpret* my actions through his or her understanding of what he or she *thinks* my world is like. Therefore, as researchers we must instead utilise methods of enquiry that accept and value the role of the subjective rather than the objective in our attempts to understand phenomena from the idiographic perspective. This requires a major epistemological shift away from empiricism towards constructionism and the development of different parameters of investigation. Arriving at this understanding whilst trying to make sense of my research caused me several weeks of anxiety which was reinforced when I was asked (by a significant person) why I was discussing philosophical positions instead of focussing on *psychology* (after all I was a psychology student!). This left me in a quandary of self doubt that called into question not only my interpretation of the data but my whole understanding of what I was trying to achieve with the research and the legitimacy (and therefore validity) of the approach I had taken. After lengthy conversations with some of my peers and reading (again) Gergen's (1999) *Invitation to Social Construction* I was able to understand that it was the dominance of positivism that prevented this person (and many others with whom I have discussed research) from seeing the strength of the constructionist perspective. This realisation emphasised to me the power of the empiricist perspective and the manner in which it controlled what was viewed as scientific and showed me that a shift in perspective does not negate the rigour involved in the scientific pursuit of knowledge; rather it requires a broader definition of what constitutes science and scientific endeavour (Gergen, 2001b).

Scientific Rigour

The rules of scientific research state that it must be conducted systematically, sceptically, and ethically (Robson, 2002) and that it must be based on empirical data. Within the positivist paradigm this has come to mean, controlled, objective, value free (or value neutral) and able to be generalised to a broader population. However, deeper scrutiny of these rules allows for a much broader scope to scientific investigations.

Let me illustrate each of these three points from a constructionism perspective with examples drawn from my own study. The first point *systematic investigation* requires giving serious thought to *why* we are interested in investigating a particular issue or domain as well as deciding how we might proceed (Robson, 2002). This scrutiny includes the role of the researcher in the investigation, his or her values base and how this might interact with the research process, and what drives or motivates that interest as well as which methods of enquiry best meet the objectives of the study.

My interest in retention was triggered by my own experience of being an undergraduate student. I found the whole experience challenging, not simply from the academic perspective but more so in relation to the processes adopted by the university and the content of the degree I studied. The thought of not continuing occurred to me many times over the years as it did to some of my peers, and I began to wonder what it was that contributed to our dissatisfaction with the experience and what factors motivated us to continue. I wondered why some of my cohort seemed so able to accept the tenets of psychology while I constantly wanted to question and challenge them. As a postgraduate student I began to formulate a research design that would allow the different voices to emerge from the study and demonstrate that students could share the same surface experience but the meaning attributed to that experience and the effect it had on the individual could be very different. The fact that I arrived at this approach to the research *before* I had read any literature that explained the constructionist perspective indicates that it was my personal worldview that was dictating the orientation that the study should follow. Once I discovered the literature, (with grateful thanks to two of my lecturers) I discovered a language that allowed me to put my research design into a legitimate framework and identified the specific research methods employed.

Using recursive interview techniques allowed me to explore the experiences of the respondents in my study and uncover the meaning that the experiences had for them (the subjective interpretation). But as part of that process I was able to scrutinise my role in the interview process, and challenge how my own experience as a student and my views and biases might be interacting with the student narratives to create my understanding and interpretation of those narratives. This reflexivity is not a normal part of research conducted within the positivist paradigm because of the assumption that the researcher is separate from, or objective to, the research process. Therefore within the positivist view the researcher has no means of scrutinising his or her perspective to see how or to what extent his or her personal views might be affecting the interpretation of the data. In contrast, recursive interviewing offers a deeper scrutiny of the research process and the role of the researcher and as such increases the rigour of the study.

The second point, *being sceptical* means allowing scrutiny of our ideas, observations and conclusions by peers and includes the role of the researcher not just the data in that scrutiny (Robson, 2002). It could be argued that all researchers subject their work to scrutiny because the process of peer review conducted by journal editors and conference committees requires at least two reviewers to examine the work before it is accepted for publication or inclusion in the programme. However, I would suggest that this scrutiny needs to occur long before the publication or presentation phase; it should occur throughout the entire research process. Talking with others about our research provides the opportunity to explore areas and ideas that we might not have considered in isolation.

Throughout my research process I shared my ideas and concerns not only with my supervisors but also with my fellow postgraduate students, other lecturers and people I met through attending academic conferences. This can be quite a challenging process because it exposes one to the critique of peers, and to work successfully the process needs to be founded on trust, honesty, and reciprocity. But the benefits associated with adopting this approach are incalculable in my view. There is a note of caution to add here though in relation to discussing our interpretation of the interview data. While scrutiny of these interpretations by peers is beneficial, there will be times when we as the researcher differ from them in our understanding of what was said and intended by the participant. In these situations it is necessary to revisit the raw data and any notes we made at the time of the interview, listen to the nuances of what was said and explore why we interpreted the information the way we did (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 1997). You might also speak with the participant to discuss your interpretation with him or her. If the difference of opinion still remains after this process it is critical to trust our own instincts because it is the interviewer who was present with the participant during the interview and therefore the researcher is the only person who experienced the entirety of the

interview, the body language, intonation, hesitation etc that occurred and that can contribute to meaning and understanding of the whole experience. It is as a result of the conversation between that *particular* respondent and the *particular* researcher that resulted in the co-construction of meaning that emerged. Consequently it is the judgement of the researcher that must take precedence over the perspective of our peers and colleagues with whom we might discuss our interpretations of the data (Crotty, 1998). While some researchers would take exception to this perspective I think their objections reflect the pull of positivism and therefore indicate the dominance of the traditions within psychology rather than a genuine understanding of the argument.

The final issue of *working ethically* requires more than following a code of conduct; it requires that we examine our motives and scrutinise our actions and our research processes for foreseeable and perhaps unforeseeable consequences that might affect our participants or have even broader repercussions to society (O'Neill, 1989; O'Neill & Trickett, 1982; Robson, 2002). During the data collection phase I was a member of staff in the school of psychology and I was interviewing psychology students about their experience of the school. The potential for harm to the participants was particularly relevant in this context and required additional vigilance to ensure that the participants felt safe enough to discuss their experiences openly and were protected from identification both during the research process and afterwards. To this end I insisted that no-one other than me knew who the participants were and I presented interview data as a series of composite narratives (Gutierrez De Soladatenko, 2002; Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; Rourke, et al. 2000) that represented the issues raised by the students but which could not identify any individual.

Adopting a broader definition of scientific enquiry allows for much greater flexibility in methodology and deeper understanding of the unique characteristics of a domain and the individuals who comprise it. It allows for the examination of human agency and thought and the relationship between this and the context in which it occurs (Berger & Luckman, 1966). With this view we see a re-emergence of the notion of consciousness and the intentionality of human existence receives valence within the research context. But social constructionism moves beyond this modernist view of self with agency at its core and embraces the postmodernist view that incorporates the role of context in the construction of identity (Gergen, 2001b). Multiple perspectives on an issue or topic provide the researcher with a varied understanding of how that issue appears to different people as a result of their different interpretations of the issue. In this manner one might argue we are able to see more of the 'truth' associated with that issue (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and this is reflected in our interpretation and conclusion.

The modernist view of the individual is based on the binary notion of self/other and has resulted in individualism dominating our construction of society. A good example of this is seen in our educational systems where we place high commitment on the development of individual thought and achievement. The prospectuses sent out to prospective students state an emphasis on, and commitment to, individual goals and personal development. Inherent in these statements is the absence of communal responsibility and the manner in which individual development can contribute to societal wellbeing. In essence, the value we place on the individual is defined by the absence of an equal commitment to the collective. Students are positioned as individuals who must be 'independent' and 'self-reliant' and can potentially isolate students within the learning environment: We become what Gergen (1999) describes as *isolated souls* doomed to enter and leave the world as *self* with everyone else defined as *other* and therefore different and separate from.

Viewing the person as a relational being rather than one half of the self-other dyad changes the focus of the debate. Once again drawing on Gergen's (1999) analogy, we focus on the game of chess rather than the component pieces. The game is played by moving the individual pieces across the board, but the pieces gain relevance from the game. As individuals we are at the same time constructed by, and constituents of society; we understand ourselves and find meaning and relevance from our roles

and place within the collective, while at the same time society is constructed by the individuals that comprise it. In this way social constructionism values the role of the person in contributing to the whole but recognises the influence of the collective in creating the individual. There is a synergistic relationship between the collective and the person without which both cease to have meaning and relevance (Gergen, 1999, 2001b). This relationship is played out in the separateness that some students feel within university and the struggle they have in finding meaning in their role of 'student' as well as in their course. It is also manifest in the research process with each party in the interview setting contributing something to the shared understanding of the issue. The participant and the interviewer are each individual 'pieces' playing the specific culturally defined roles of 'researcher' and 'respondent'. The process of the interview allows both the emergence of the individual experience and the creation of a combined understanding of the phenomenon.

The Relevance of Language

In discussing a socially constructed world one needs to examine the role of language because it is via language that we communicate, create and share the socially constructed norms and values that permit engagement and participation in a collective (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Shotter, 1993) and it is through language that society and the individual come into being. Therefore, we cannot understand either the collective society or our role as an individual without understanding the way each is constructed by the language we choose to describe them and this is particularly so when looking at the experience of students. For instance, the term 'student' brings with it certain assumptions and rules: As a student we are to 'learn' which assumes a degree of 'ability' to learn and 'commitment' to do so. To some degree the term 'student' implies novice or unknowing and consequently, consciously or unconsciously academic staff can ignore the fact that students often have a vast wealth of experience that they bring to the classroom. If this knowledge were valued and included in the discussion and debate within the learning context it would not only enhance the learning but would validate the individuals within that context. The role of student also presupposes the role of 'teacher' as someone from whom we can learn and therefore each is constructed by the other as a function of the definitions we apply to the roles.

However, each of these roles also undergoes transformation as a function of our gender, age, ethnicity and the different cultural norms of each society. For a traditional Asian student the role of student is passive and the teacher is viewed in high esteem as a person of knowledge to be respected. In this reality it is inappropriate for the student to question or debate the teacher. For some it is even disrespectful to ask a question in order to clarify understanding for to do so implies that the teacher has failed to impart knowledge adequately and therefore is not competent. This interpretation of the roles does not hold in most Western schools and certainly not once we get to university. The notion of questioning and debating ideas and perspectives is desired and often encouraged at all levels of education. Therefore, it is possible for different interpretations to be made as a function of these differing norms; the Australian academic who wants student to debate and challenge these perspectives might be confronted by the International student who constantly defers to her judgement and reiterates her every utterance. It might lead the lecturer to assume the student lacks the capacity for critical thought and thus lead her to be overly judgemental or harsh with this student. The student too is likely to feel the dissatisfaction of the teacher and strive harder to please, resulting in discontent for both. It is within these dynamically constructed relationships that we develop a shared meaning of what we come to understand as reality. With different constructions, meanings, and understandings being possible from the same utterances, the role and power of language takes a position of greater importance in society. Therefore research conducted within a social constructionist epistemology is more likely to involve a heavy reliance on the spoken word through conversation, interviews, narrative, and similar (Gergen, 2001b; Padgett, 2004).

By accepting the social constructionist view of the world that reality is constrained by the socio-cultural-historical-temporal space in which it occurs and by the persons involved in it

we are required to use research methodologies that are able to extract the degree of detail often obscured by more traditional methods. Qualitative methodologies provide the means to seek a deeper understanding and to explore the nuances of experiences not available through quantification. By utilising these methodologies we are able to expand on the '*what*' questions of human existence asked by positivism to include the '*why'* and '*how'* questions asked by constructionism. Positivism emphasises the individual as the sole creator of his or her destiny and the binary notion of self/other is reinforced, whereas qualitative methodologies accept the person and society as co-constructors of his or her reality and the synergy of person and society is recognised.

Consequently, it can be argued that the use of qualitative methodologies is predicated upon social constructionism and the adherence to a social constructionist philosophy requires the use of qualitative research methods. In this manner we see a natural relationship between interview techniques as a data collection method and a social constructionist epistemology. This is a very different situation than the positivist researcher who might employ qualitative methods to collect some data; this is not qualitative research. Understanding the relationship between philosophy and methodologies makes the selection of appropriate methods easier because we understand the foundation upon which that choice is predicated. It also identifies our role in the research process as co-constructors of the reality that is the research process. We bring to our research our worldviews complete with bias and prejudice – it is not possible to separate the *me* from the research. The research process then becomes one of co-construction: In partnership with our respondents we create an interpretation of his or her reality. The importance of language in the process and the power of language to shape and determine our understanding of that reality is self-evident and so too is the use of interviews in understanding that construction.

Conclusion

At a personal level, understanding the relationship between my view of reality (ontology) and the meaning I ascribed to knowledge and its creation (epistemology) was fundamental in being able to articulate the rationale for my research design and methodology. Once I saw the clear relationship between my epistemology and my methods the entire study made much more sense. The fact that I intuitively knew the only way to explore the issue of retention was to understand the individual and highly diverse experiences of students from their perspective highlights that my worldview is a deep seated integral part of who I am as a person and as a researcher. The fact that I now have the intellectual understanding of why these relationships exist simply provides me with the language to legitimise my perspective to a scientific audience; it does not change the essential components of *me*. It is somewhat ironic though that having survived my journey of personal and intellectual discovery and constructing a chapter in my thesis that explained the relationships between these components I was advised that a 'theoretical perspective' was unnecessary and I should remove the whole chapter. Not only did I reject this advice on my thesis I reject it as a philosophy. I believe it is essential for researchers to understand who they are, what they hold true, and to understand the inherent bias and prejudice that we are all subject to as a function of our context: And it is critical that we understand these relationships before we embark on our research. One cannot ignore the role of the person in the research process and this is equally true of the researcher as it is of the participant.

I don't regret a single moment of the struggle and frustration that I experienced in trying to understand the relationship between epistemology and methodology because I emerged from the experience with a greater degree of clarity about who I am and the researcher I can become. I am also genuinely grateful to the opposition I received from the person who told me it was irrelevant to understand these relationships – had I not experienced this I might not have examined my belief system and its connections to the research process quite so deeply.

References

Abbott-Chapman, J., Hughes, P., & Wyld, C. (1992). *Monitoring students progress. A framework for improving student performance and reducing attrition in*

higher education. Hobart, Tasmania: University of Tasmania.
Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (2005). Standards for accreditation of Australian psychology programs. Melbourne: APAC
Ashworth, P. (2003). The origins of qualitative psychology. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Berger, P., & Luckman, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.
Clark, E., & Ramsay, W. (1990). Bridging the gulf: Secondary student expectations and tertiary study reality. *Catholic School Studies, 63*(1), 16-20.
Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* St Leonards, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
Gergen, K. (1999). *An invitation to social construction.* London: Sage.
Gergen, K. (2001a). Construction in contention: Toward consequential resolutions. *Theory and Psychology, 11* (3), 419-432.
Gergen, K. (2001b). Psychological science in a postmodern context. *American Psychologist, 56*(10), 803-813.
Gutierrez De Soladatenko, M. (2002). ILGWU Labor organizers: Chicana and Latina leadership in the Los Angeles garment industry. *Frontiers, 23*(1), 46-60.
Hanninen, V., & Koski-Jannes, A. (1999). Narratives of recovery from addictive behaviours. *Addiction, 94*(12), 1837-1848.
O'Neill, P. (1989). Responsible to whom? Responsible for what? Some ethical issues in community intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17*(3), 323-341.
O'Neill, P., & Trickett, E. (1982). *Community consultation.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Ostrove, J. (2003). Belonging and wanting: Meanings of social class background for women's constructions of their college experience. *Journal of Social Issues, 59* (4), 771-785.
Ostrove, J., & Cole, E. (2003). Privileging class: Toward a critical psychology of social class in the context of education. *Journal of Social Issues, 59*(4), 677-693.
Owen, T. (2003). Retention implications of a relationship between age and GPA. *College Students Journal, 37*(2), 181.
Padgett, D. (Ed.). (2004). *The Qualitative Research Experience* (Vol. Wadsworth/ Thompson Learning). Belmont, CA.
Paulsen, M., & St John, E. (2002). Social class and college costs: Examining the financial nexus between college choice and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*(2), 189-236.
Robson, C. (2002). *Real world research* (2nd ed.). Malkden, MA: Blackwell.
Rourke, J., Morin, L., Whiteside, C., Rainsbury, P., O'Maonaigh, C., Tepper, J., *et al.* (2000). Rural patient stories: Physician management narratives 2: Mental health care. *Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine, 5*(2), 80-82.
Shah, C., & Burke, G. (1996). *Student flows in Australian higher education.* Canberra: AGPS.
Shotter, J. (1993). *Cultural politics of everyday life: Social constructionism, rhetoric and knowing of the third kind*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Grounded theory in practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Walker, L., Matthew, B., & Black, F. (2004). Widening access and student non-completion: an inevitable link? Evaluating the effects of the Top-Up Programme on student completion. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 23*(1), 43-59.

Address correspondence to
Dr. Dawn Darlaston-Jones
School of Arts & Sciences
University of Notre Dame
PO Box 1225
FREMANTLE 6959
Ph: (08) 9433 0567
Email: ddarlaston-jones@nd.edu.au

Building research partnerships to strengthen sexual health of Aboriginal youth in Canada

Mary Rucklos Hampton
Kim McKay-McNabb
Bonnie Jeffery
Barb McWatters

The article describes the process of building research partnerships between university researchers, community-based organizations, and Aboriginal communities to improve sexual health of Aboriginal youth in an urban Canadian centre. Sexual health of Indigenous youth is a high-priority research topic globally; however, sexual health of Aboriginal youth in Canada has seen little attention. The authors worked with a guiding Elder and eleven Aboriginal community-based organizations over a five-year period to define our research questions and to collect and analyze data that would be relevant for Aboriginal communities. Community Action Research describes our method; five principles for developing effective community research partnerships provide the framework for our discussion (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001). Several key lessons for partnership-building are highlighted including a developmental period devoted exclusively to collaboratively generating a research project; "power to name" in the hands of the community; and inclusion of Elders in the research process. We suggest that topics of study and research methods may differ, but reliance on the principles of partnership-building is fundamental to establishing and sustaining the collective action component of effective community-based research.

The purpose of this article is to describe the process of building research partnerships between university researchers, community-based organizations, and Aboriginal[1] communities. We united in our desire to strengthen sexual health among Aboriginal youth in our Canadian urban centre. The authors first came together as a team when the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Regina (McWatters) approached university researchers to conduct a program evaluation of her agency. One aspect of this evaluation was a survey of Grade 10/12 high school students in our city (Hampton, Smith, Jeffery & McWatters, 2001). Following completion of our program evaluation, we presented findings based on analysis of youth surveys to various community groups, including school boards and health authorities; however, these groups were not interested in acting on some of our disturbing findings regarding the sexual health of youth in our city. We analyzed these data by ethnicity and discovered that Aboriginal youth in our community experience more sexual health risk factors than non-Aboriginal youth (Smith, Hampton, Jeffery & McWatters, 2001). For example, significantly more *Métis* (see Bourassa, McKay-McNabb & Hampton, 2004) students than other students reported being physically forced to have intercourse. We presented these findings to Aboriginal community-based agencies who were eager to learn what they could do to better meet the health needs of their youth. The authors embarked on a research journey to develop partnerships with community-based organizations and create knowledge that would assist them to meet their needs.

The Topic: Sexual Health of Aboriginal Youth

Sexual health of Indigenous youth is a high-priority research topic globally (Aguilera & Plasencia, 2005; Eng & Butler, 1997; Foley, et al., 2005). However, sexual health of Aboriginal youth in Canada has seen little attention. We include here an overview of research findings that suggest Aboriginal youth in Canada deserve improved sexual health care services. Researchers suggest that unplanned pregnancies are problematic for Aboriginal

youth and young adults (Anderson, 2002; Wadhera & Millar, 1997). The AIDS epidemic is leveling off in the general population, but rapidly increasing in Aboriginal populations (Marsden, Clement & Schneider, 2000; Vernon, 2001). As many as 20% of people infected with HIV/AIDS in Canada are Aboriginal; newly-infected Aboriginal individuals are considerably younger than non-Aboriginal individuals (Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network). Aboriginal women, Aboriginal youth and two-spirited people are at increased risk due to high-risk sexual behavior and alcohol and drug use (Goldstone, et. al, 2000; LeDuigou, 2000; McKay-McNabb, 2006; Ship & Norton, 2000). Healthy pregnancies and births are identified as a high priority in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples consultation since, for example in Saskatchewan, the most common reason for hospitalization among Aboriginal Peoples is complications of pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium (Regina Health District, 2000; RCAP, 1998). Cervical cancer is preventable when sexually active women receive regular PAPs and follow-up treatment, yet recent statistics show that mortality from cervical cancer is up to twice as high in North American Aboriginal women as non-Aboriginal women (Lanier & Kelly, 1999). These findings supplement information from the few studies that have included statistics on Aboriginal youth, and suggest that this group is in need of improved sexual health services (Anderson, 2002; Bertolli, McNaughton, Campsmith, Lee, et al., 2004; Foley, Duran, Morris, Lucero, Jiang, et al., 2005).

Sexual health of Aboriginal youth is also important because this is a growing population in Canada and a group that has culturally unique health care needs. Demographic profiles of Canadian population growth indicate that the Aboriginal population has been increasing at about twice the rate of the general Canadian population (Frideres, 1998; Tkach, 2003). The Aboriginal population also comprises a young population of childbearing age, with one-third younger than 15 and over half younger than 25 (Statistics Canada, 2001; 2002). These demographic trends combined with the long-term positive impact of early intervention suggest that sexual health care needs of Aboriginal youth should be a priority service delivery issue (Rew, 1997; Rotheram-Borus & Koopman, 1991; Rotheram-Borus & Futterman, 2000). Some researchers are attempting to understand the influence of "culture" when delivering appropriate sexual health care (Amaro & Raj, 2000; Amaro, Raj, & Reed, 2001; Jemmott & Jemmott, 2000; Reid, 2000; Rew, 2001). Examples of sexual health services for Aboriginal youth that draw on cultural strengths are rare (Foley, et al., 2005). Effective programs that are targeted at Aboriginal or Native youth have been shown to incorporate historical teachings, interventions that aid healing from intergenerational trauma, and offer traditional cultural activities to counteract the negative effect of colonization (Aguilera & Plascenia, 2005).

The impact of colonialism on Aboriginal Peoples is important to acknowledge in health care services and in health research (Tuhiwihai Smith, 1999). The health disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples in Canada can be directly traced back to colonization; access to culturally appropriate health care continues to disadvantage First Nations today (Foley, et al., 2005; Young, 1994; 1998). Examples of colonial policies such as residential schools not only interrupted and denigrated transmission of traditional Aboriginal knowledge, but also created a legacy of sexual and spiritual abuse which has had a negative impact on the generation of youth today (Aboriginal Healing Foundation; Anderson, 2000; Hanson & Hampton, 2000). We focused our research efforts on the sexual health care needs of Aboriginal youth as a high priority topic, but also as a response to the initial interest expressed by Aboriginal community-based agencies.

The Method: Community Action Research

Our overall research method is best described as Community Action Research, which includes and privileges voices of Aboriginal youth, community workers, and Elders (Senge & Scharmer, 2001). The Community Action Research method differs from traditional action research in that it "rests on a basic pattern of interdependency, the continuing cycle of linking research, capacity-building and practice: the ongoing creation of new theory, tools, & practical know-how" (Senge & Scharmer, 2001, p. 248).

This methodology focuses on fostering relationships and collaboration among diverse organizations and individuals, creating settings for collective reflection, and leveraging programs collectively to sustain transformative change. We worked with a guiding Elder and eleven community-based organizations that serve Aboriginal youth over a five-year period to define our initial research questions, and to collect and analyze data that would be relevant for Aboriginal communities. Community capacity-building has been generically defined as a community group's ability to define, analyze and act on health (or any other) concerns of importance to their members (Hawe, Noort, King & Jordens, 1997; Smith, Bagh-Littlejohns, & Thompson, 2001). Key elements of capacity building are: promoting problem-solving capability of organizations and communities; taking an asset rather than deficit-driven perspective; and nurturing collaborative community relationships (Hawe, et al., 1997; Kretzman & McKnight, 1993). Our continued research goal is to develop theory and interventions that link individuals with the community and build capacity of both to enhance sexual health of Aboriginal youth and young adults. The capacity-building framework may be particularly well suited for Aboriginal communities who are creating culturally distinct health care systems that are based on an Indigenous Knowledge paradigm rather than International Science paradigm (Grenier, 1998).

The Process: Community Research Partnership Building

We describe here our process of building partnerships and use as a framework the five principles of community research partnerships described by Dalton, Elias & Wandersman (2001). They suggest that research topics and methodologies differ, but principles that guide effective partnership building between academics and communities have remained consistent over decades of research in the field of community psychology (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger & Wandersman, 1984; Kelly, 1986; Price & Cherniss, 1977).

Principle 1: Community Research is Stimulated by Community Needs.

We had heard from members of Aboriginal community-based agencies that many of the youth they serve would not have been represented in the Grade 10/12 survey we conducted in high schools since their youth would not have been in school for three consecutive days or been likely to have returned parental consent forms. We wanted to include those agencies who expressed initial interest in our research partnership, but we also wanted to include others we had not yet heard from. In order to create a comprehensive research network, we engaged in a "developmental" phase that would help us identify existing assets in our community -- those agencies that were delivering effective services to this group of "invisible" Aboriginal youth. We conducted an assets inventory that identified community-based service agencies that are “providers of choice” for “invisible”/ marginalized Aboriginal youth with a goal of starting with what works rather than deficits in the community (Hampton, Jeffery & McWatters, 2001). The method for conducting an assets inventory is described by Kretzman & McKnight (1993) and generates a mapping of associations (Institute for Public Policy Research, 1997). The assets interviews were conducted by the second author (McKay-McNabb), an Aboriginal scholar who has extensive community ties and had established credibility and respect in our community. Based on her personal experience, she knew the devastating impact that colonialism has had on the sexual health of her People and she cared deeply about the topic. The authors identified eleven community-based agencies who we designated as "providers-of-choice" for marginalized Aboriginal youth and who expressed interested in a research collaboration. The community-based research partners identified in this developmental stage were not necessarily the agencies who are publicly recognized with awards or media attention. However, we learned, through talking with youth, community members, and service providers that they work effectively with Aboriginal youth who are "invisible -- that is, youth who are not historically represented in medical and psychological literature (Anderson, 2000; Kingsley & Mark, 2000; McKay, 2000). These are the ones the

youth trust. We also looked for agencies and service providers who exhibited an attitude of sharing, synergy and collaboration during the assets interview rather than a sense of competition for scarce resources.

We invited representatives from these eleven agencies to participate in our research project; the goal of this developmental phase was to design a research project that would have relevance for their work. About half of the community agencies/service providers who became our research partners are Aboriginal; most of those who attended our gatherings were directors of the agencies who brought with them a youth service worker or youth client. Regular community meetings offered opportunities to accomplish the goals articulated in community action research (Senge & Scharmer, 2001). We asked an Aboriginal Elder to join our team to guide us in the research process and to open and close every meeting with prayer. Appropriate protocol was followed each time we asked for Elder assistance. The authors facilitated the meetings and took "process notes" that were immediately shared with the group as a research project took shape. As we moved toward defining our research questions, several versions of the questions were edited and discussed in the meetings until we arrived at a consensus. For choice of research method, the large research team (approximately 30 people at each meeting) decided that "numbers are helpful", so we agreed to adapt our Grade 10/12 youth survey for culturally appropriateness and add items that were relevant for the community. A task force consisting of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academic and community representatives was appointed for this task. This team met regularly over the next year to adapt our survey instrument for cultural appropriateness and relevance. Some of the most productive discussions we had during these meetings were defining "Aboriginal" for our objective survey as well as defining such terms as "two-spirited" and deconstructing the colonial legacy of these terms that have defined Aboriginal membership. We designed a survey instrument that consisted of 64 items and 6 standardized scales (Shercliffe, Hampton, McKay-McNabb & Jeffer, in press). The research team wished to combine these objective data with focus group data collected with Aboriginal youth, Elders, and service providers to generate a model which would guide effective service delivery for this group.

While developing the research questions, a key moment occurred during two team meetings: this was "naming" the project. By consensus (and partly by democratic vote), the entire group had a voice in naming our project "Strengthening and Building Sexual Health of Aboriginal Youth and Young Adults." Discussions around "naming" emerged as an important aspect of the capacity-building, empowerment, and owning the research by the community (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). One of our research assistants (McNabb) designed a beautiful logo depicting an Aboriginal individual and eagle within a braid of sweet grass that conveys inspiration and cultural relevance for our project. This logo ties together all of our work.

Principle 2: Community Research is an Exchange of Resources.

All research partners attended regular team meetings, collaborated in approving the re-design of our sexual health youth survey for culture appropriateness, facilitated recruitment of youth participants, and assisted with data analysis. The collective experience of each individual was essential. Academics combined knowledge of research design with service providers' direct experience with youth and Elders' knowledge of history and protocol. Youth partners were particularly helpful giving feedback on appropriate youth terminology for questionnaires. The meetings were lively affairs, held with a lunch, that offered research partners an opportunity to reflect on the issues with others who are doing similar work, to share resources and information, and generally benefit from a synergy that continued during our collaboration (Senge & Scharmer, 2001). Data collection at the site where our research partners work as well as collaborative analysis and interpretation of data are key aspects of our research strategy.

Data collection would have been impossible without the full participation of members of the research team. The participants

we wanted to include are hard-to-reach and marginalized youth. Service providers described our participants as those youth who are "invisible". To them this meant that, although society saw them as problematic, the larger community does not see the beauty and potential in this group of youth and therefore chooses to "not see" their needs. Review of the literature suggested that this was indeed an important group to include in our knowledge of sexual health of youth. In a review of recent trends in sexual health research, Wellings and Cleland (2001) stated that "socially stigmatized groups" are missing from existing sexual health databases making general population surveys inappropriate and misleading. McKay (2000) describes the importance of sexual health research with hard-to-reach, vulnerable populations in Canada such as street youth. These recommendations are similar to consensus in our community meetings (Hampton, et al., 2001) that "invisible" Aboriginal youth should be the focus of study.

The term "invisible" is used informally in Aboriginal communities to describe those youth and young adults who live on the margins of mainstream society; therefore, their needs are not "seen" and they do not receive the benefits given by dominant society to mainstream youth. For purposes of our research, "invisible" Aboriginal youth are operationally-defined as youth and young adults who: are not attending public or private schools; are homeless or live on the street (Dematteo, et al., 1999; Rew, 2001; Walters, 1999); are in foster care or group homes (Noel, et al., 2001); are in correctional centres; are sex trade workers (Kingsley & Mark, 2001); are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (Travers & Paoletti, 1999); are segregated in ways that leave them unconnected to any services; are in alternative educational programs; or use needle exchange programs due to drug addiction (Lawless, et al., 1996). These parameters helped us articulate our sampling strategy to look for youth who are at high risk and typically underserved. Two Aboriginal research assistants visited research partner sites where our partners recruited appropriate youth participants for our study. These youth would not have volunteered for such a study if it were not for the trust that the service providers (our research partners) had earned from them.

Principle 3: Community Research is a Tool for Social Action.

One specific example of social action resulting from our research partnerships is the focus group with Elders that led to a dialogue between Elders and youth (Hampton, McKay-McNabb, Farrell Racette & Byrd, in press). Our guiding elder (who has developed relationships of care with other Elders in our community) verbally invited the network of Elders in our area who are active in healing work to a focus group. We used the definition of "Elder" provided by Steckley (2001): those individuals who have significant wisdom in areas of traditional Aboriginal knowledge; are recognized as having that wisdom by their community and Nation; and have the capacity to transmit this knowledge to others. Their communities, Aboriginal organizations, and their nations have recognized all seven Elders who participated in our research as meeting these criteria. Our research team reserved space for the focus group at a local Aboriginal gathering place and generated a hard copy invitation to these Elders. The guiding Elder for our research delivered these invitations to each individual Elder and asked them to participate if they were interested. It was through the respect given our guiding Elder and the trust that exists between this community of Elders that our research team was able to be a part of this gathering of Elders. The Elders asked for a second focus group with youth, which we facilitated. During this dialogue, youth came to understand the power of these Elders and asked their schools to invite them to be part of the school community. These schools now have Elders-in-residence to guide students.

Principle 4: Evaluation of Social Action is an Ethical Imperative.

Throughout our research process, we attempted to open the "ethical space" described by Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery (2004). We attempted to create environments in our gatherings that demonstrate respect and commitment that moves people to share their hearts. The continued presence over five years

of our research partners at meetings and during data collection and analysis, suggests to us that we made progress in this regard. We also learned things along the way that caused us to re-evaluate our strategies, our definitions, and our actions. For example, we learned from the youth that they do not see themselves as "invisible" and do not like that term. As researchers we learned from the stories told by youth in focus groups and have adjusted the term from "invisible" youth to "community" youth. We also gave feedback to our funding agency that their funding initiatives may have to change from "Increasing Access to Appropriate Services for Marginalized Groups" to something more active. We learned that we cannot open our doors and wait until these youth find their way to us. We need to go to the youth, where they are, when they are accessible. Many of our research partners are using this strategy through street van services in the middle of the night; we validated the effectiveness of this approach through our findings. Another on-going learning presented itself to three of the authors who are non-Aboriginal researchers. The listening and learning demanded of us was considerable, yet enjoyable (Bishop, Vicary, Andrews & Pearson, 2006; Gerrett-Magee, 2006). We most likely fell short many times and thank our Aboriginal partners for their tolerance and respect.

Principle 5: Community Research Yields Products Useful to the Community.

Following completion of the developmental, partnership-building phase, we received funding to conduct our study and generated usable findings for our partners. Results of our survey generated a profile of the health care needs of Aboriginal youth in our city; our research partners have used these findings to validate their current services, to improve services, and to apply for funding for targetted programs. They asked that statistics be presented in "user-friendly" fact sheets. We created nineteen colorful Fact Sheets (including a "How to Use These Fact Sheets" fact sheet), bound and distributed booklets to our partners, and downloaded them onto our Community Psychology Research Team website (http://uregina.ca/hamptoma/).

We met our objective to gain a better understanding of sexual health knowledge, behaviors, health service utilization, and service needs of 201 "invisible" (Community) Aboriginal youth who are not adequately represented in existing databases (Amaro, et al., 2001; Jemmott & Jemmott, 2000; Rew, 2001). These data were compared with results from a previous sample of 1875 non-Aboriginal and 241 Aboriginal Grade 10 and 12 high school students in Regina. Our findings indicate that Community Aboriginal youth in our urban setting are more at risk for sexual health problems than non-Aboriginal youth or Aboriginal youth who are regularly attending high school. Behavioral risk factors include early sexual debut with older partners as well as multiple lifetime sexual partners. Community Aboriginal youth are more likely to use no method of contraception at first intercourse and are less knowledgeable about effectiveness of various methods of contraception. We found that this group is also at increased risk for long-term health problems (i.e., no PAP or STI testing). Environmental risk factors for Aboriginal youth include higher levels of sexual violence than non-Aboriginal youth, lower awareness of health services, reliance on community-based service providers for access to health care, as well as multi-dimensional barriers to accessing health care such as poverty, racism, and dysfunctional families due to residential school legacy. We generated a model of culturally competent sexual health care for this group that is guiding service delivery by our partners.

Lessons Learned

We conclude that a developmental period devoted exclusively to partnership-building that follows the principles of effective community research partnerships described over decades of community psychology is essential for research that results in transformative community action. The process described here occurred over an 18-month period -- from beginning our assets inventory, holding team meetings where we defined our research questions, naming the project, adapting the survey instrument, to receipt of funding. Our submission to the national funding body resulted in a successful

application that was ranked number one in its competition; the research project generated products that are useful to the community. Our conclusions are that this developmental, partnership-building process is fundamental to laying the groundwork for successful community-based research. We have developed a program of research that has resulted in several iterations of funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Our research partnerships continue to result in innovative research projects. Many of our community partners are aware that Aboriginal peoples have been "researched to death" and often deny access to researchers who will use them for their own personal advancement. However, this experience demystified research for many of our partners who have gone on to secure research funding for their agencies and conduct research that is under their control. We have successfully used our method of developing partnerships and defining research questions for other research projects (Baydala, Placsko, Hampton, Bourassa & McKay-McNabb, 2006).

One important process finding that we wish to highlight is the "power to name". Indigenous Peoples across the world have been labeled as a method of control; most have been restricted to use of land on reservations after being labeled. It is imperative that Indigenous Peoples have the power to control all aspects of the research process, particularly when it comes to generating categories of response (i.e., who is "Aboriginal"; where did the term "two-spirited" come from; what is the title of this project). This imperative has been institutionalized in many ethical guidelines across our country in the form of OCAP principles: ownership, control, access, and possession (Schnarch, 2004). Another unique lesson is the importance of including Elders throughout. Elders teach a world-view based on the knowledge that all things are governed by natural law and are related in a sacred manner. This teaching comprises "wisdom," which is the realm of Elders. Traditionally, Elders maintain Tribal memories of the stories and social structures that ensured the "good life" of the community, through the spirit (Cajete, 1994). Elders' roles are to share their wisdom, to offer a spiritual dialogue that informs proper behavior (Stiegelbauer, 1996). In other words, they can guide researchers and community members to a place of respect.

There are also areas for improvement in our research process. One area in which we failed was developing a youth advisory group. While we conducted focus groups with youth and included youth representation at our team meetings, our formal attempts to create an advisory group of Community Aboriginal youth did not get off the ground. We have also been criticized for bounding our research to one Canadian urban centre and questioned about the generalizability of our findings. Our response is that our research findings corroborate results found in international research suggesting Indigenous youth are at higher risk of sexual health problems than non-Indigenous youth. But we have added an "action" component through our method that ensures improved service delivery informed by evidence. The research partners are members of the community who are utilizing results of this research in sustainable, health-promoting ways. The literature indicates that local community and cultural norms about sexual health practices differ, so a solid understanding of these norms in one geographical area must be collected prior to planning any intervention (McKay, 2000). This may be particularly important when working with the diversity that exists among First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples. Saskatchewan has the second highest proportion of Aboriginal people in Canada at 13.52%, so interventions occurring in our province will make a difference (Tkach, 2003) Saskatchewan's median age for population reporting North American Indian identity is the youngest in Canada suggesting that youth in our province are in need of immediate attention (Statistics Canada, 2001). The slogan, "think globally, act locally" makes sense to us. We believe that the content of our findings may not be generalizable, but the process is. The five principle for building effective community research partnerships continue to hold up (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2001).

References

Aboriginal Healing Foundation. http://

www.ahf.ca/english/newsletter_sept_000pdf.

Amaro, H., Raj, A. & Reed, E. (2001). Women's sexual health: The need for feminist analysis in public health in the Decade of Behavior. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 25,* 324-334.

Amaro, H. & Raj, A. (2000). On the margin: Power and women's HIV risk reduction strategies. *Sex Roles, 42*(7), 723-748.

Anderson, K. (The Write Circle) (2002). *Tenuous connections: Urban Aboriginal youth sexual health and pregnancy.* Toronto, ON: The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres.

Anderson, K. (2000). A recognition of being: A reconstruction of Native womanhood. Toronto: Second Story Press.

Aguilera, S. & Plasencia, A.V. (2005). Culturally appropriate HIV/AIDS and substance abuse prevention programs for urban Native youth. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs,* 37, 299-304.

Baydala, A., Placsko, C., Hampton, M., Bourassa, C. & McKay-McNabb, K. (2006). A narrative of research with, by, and for Aboriginal Peoples. *Pimatisiwin, 4*(1), 47-65.

Bertolli, J., McNaughten, A.D., Campsmith, M., Lee, L.M., Leman, R., Bryan, R.T. & Buehler, J.W. (2004). Surveillance systems monitoring HIV/AIDS and HIV risk behaviors among American Indians and Alaska Natives. *AIDS Education and Prevention,* 16, 218-237.

Bishop, B.J., Vicary, D.A., Andrews, H. & Pearson, G. (2006). Towards a culturally appropriate mental health research process for Indigenous Australians. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 18,* 31-41.

Bourassa, C., McKay-McNabb, K. & Hampton, M. (2004). Racism, sexism, and colonialism. *Canadian Woman Studies, 24*(1), 23-29.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education.*

Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network: http://www.caan.ca/english/links.htm.

Dalton, J.H., Elias, M.J. & Wandersman, A. (2001). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities.* Australia/Canada: Wadsworth, Thomson Learning.

Dematteo, D, Major, C., Block, B., et al. (1999). Toronto street youth & HIV/AIDS: Prevalence, demographics, and risks. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 25,* 358-366.

Eng, T.R. & Butler, W.T. (Eds.) (1997). *The hidden epidemic: Confronting sexually transmitted diseases: Report of the Institute of Medicine.* Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Ermine, W., Sinclair, R. & Jeffery, B. (2004). *The ethics of research involving Indigenous Peoples: Report of the Indigenous People's Health Research Centre to the Intragency Panel on Research Ethics.* Saskatoon, SK: Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre.

Foley, K., Duran, B., Morris, P., Lucero, J., Jiang, Y., Baxter, B., Harrison, M., et al. (2005). Using motivational interviewing to promote HIV testing at an American Indian substance abuse treatment facility. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs,* 37, 321-329.

Gerrett-Magee, R. (2006). Discomfort: The university student and Indigenous peoples. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 18,* 28-39

Grenier, L. (1998). *Working with indigenous knowledge: A guide for researchers.* Ottawa: International Developmental Research Centre.

Goldstone, I., Albert, R., Churchill, K., Schilder, A., Perry, T., Markowski, S., Hogg, R.S. & McLeod, W.A. (2000). HIV injection drug use amongst First Nations in Vancouver: Outcomes of care and neglect. *Native Social Work Journal, 3*(1), 145-163.

Hampton, M.R., Smith, P. Jeffery, B. & McWatters, B. (2001). Sexual experience, contraception, and STI prevention among high school students: Results from a Canadian urban center. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 10*(3-4), 111-126.

Hampton, M.R., Jeffery, B. & McWatters, M. (2001). *Strengthening the Community's*

Capacity to Deliver Sexual Health Services to First Nations' Youth in Regina. Saskatchewan: Health Services Utilization and Research Commission.

Hampton, M.R., McKay-McNabb, K., Farrell Racette, S. & Byrd, N.J. (in press). Aboriginal elders as healers: Saskatchewan elders speak about sexual health. In: J. Pappas, W. Smythe, & A. Baydala (Eds.). *Cultural healing and belief systems.* New York: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Hanson, I. & Hampton, M.R. (2000). Being Indian: Strengths sustaining First Nations peoples in residential schools. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 19* (1), 127-142.

Hawe, P., Noort, M., King, L. & Jodens, C. (1997). Multiplying health gains: the critical role of capacity-building within health promotion programs. *Health Policy, 39*, 29-42.

Heller, K., Price, R.H., Reinharz, S., Riger, S. & Wandersman, A. (1984). *Psychology and community change: Challenges of the future.* Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press/ Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth.

Institute for Public Policy Research (1997). *A guide to capacity inventories: Mobilizing the community skills of local residents.* Northwestern University: ACTA Publications.

Jemmott, J.B. & Jemmott, L.S. (2000). HIV behavioral interventions for adolescents in community settings. In J.L. Peterson & R.J. DiClemente (Eds.). *Handbook of HIV prevention,* pp. 103-124. New York: Plenum Publishers.

Kelly, J.G. (1986). Context and process: An ecological view of the interdependence of practice and research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 13* 581-605.

Kingsley, C. & Mark, M. (2000). *Sacred lives: Aboriginal children and youth speak out about sexual exploitation.* Vancouver: Save The Children Canada.

Kretzman, J. P. & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out.* Northwestern University: ACTA Publications.

Lanier, A.P. & Kelly, J.L. (1999). Knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of Alaska Native women regarding cervical and breast cancer. In: D. Weiner (Ed.). *Preventing and controlling cancer in North America: A cross-cultural perspective,* pp. 71-83. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

Lawless, S. & Kippex, S. & Crawford, J. (1996). Dirty, diseased, and undeserving: The positioning of HIV-positive women. *Social Science & Medicine, 43*, 1371-1372.

LeDuigou, C. (2000). A historical overview of Two-spirited people: A context for social work and HIV/AIDS services in the Aboriginal community. *Native Social Work Journal, 3*(1), 195-214.

Marsden, N. (2002). *An overview of models for community-based Aboriginal HIV/AIDS research.* Vancouver, B.C.: Healing our Spirit, BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society.

Marsden, N., Clement, K. & Schneider, D. (2000). "Honouring and caring for Aboriginal people and communities in the fight against HIV/AIDS" Healing our Spirit BC First Nations AIDS Society – providing prevention, care, treatment and support services for Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia. *Native Social Work Journal, 3* (1), 127-141.

McKay, M. (2000). Prevention of sexually transmitted infections in different populations: A review of behaviourally effective and cost-effective interventions. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 9*(2, 95-120.

McKay-McNabb, K. (2006). Life experience of Aboriginal and living with HIV/AIDS. *Canadian Journal of Aboriginal Community-Based HIV/AIDS Research, 1*, 5-28

Price, R. & Cherniss, C. (1977). Training for a new profession: Research as social action. *Professional Psychology, 8*, 222-231.

Regina Health District (2000). *Aboriginal Health Initiative Report.* Regina, Saskatchewan.

Regina Health District (2000). *Aboriginal Profile: Regina Health District.* Regina, Saskatchewan.

Reid, P.T. (2000). Women, ethnicity, and AIDS: What's love got to do with it? *Sex Roles, 42* (7/8), 709-723.

Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1998). Ottawa: Canada

Communications Group.
Rew, L. (2001). Sexual health practices of homeless youth: A model for intervention. *Issues in Comprehensive Pediatric Nursing, 124,* 1-18.
Rotheram-Borus, M.J. & Koopman, C. (1991). HIV and adolescents. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 12*(1), 65-82.
Rotheram-Borus, M.J. & Futterman, D. (2000). Promoting early detection of human immunodeficiency virus infection among adolescents. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 154*(5), 435-441.
Senge, P. & Scharme, O. (2001). Community action research: Learning as a community of practitioners, consultants, and researchers. In: P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice,* pp. 238-249. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
Shercliffe, R., Hampton, M., McKay-McNabb, K. & Jeffery, B. (in press). Cognitive and demographic factors that predict self efficacy to use condoms in vulnerable and marginalized Aboriginal youth. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality.*
Smith, N., Baugh-Littlejohns, L. & Thompson, D. (2001). Shaking out the cobwebs: insights into community capacity and its relation to health outcomes. *Community Development Journal, 36(1),* 30-4l.
Smith, P., Daniel, J., Hampton, M.R., Jacques, M., Jeffery, B., McWatters, B. (2001). *Renewing partnerships and commitment: Community sexual health, services, education, and recommendations.* University of Regina: Sample Survey & Data Bank Research supported by Health Canada, HTFSK 334.
Steckley, J.L. & Cummins, B.D. (2001). *Full circle: Canada's First Nations.* Toronto: Prentice Hall.
Stiegelbauer, S.M. (1996). What is an elder? What do Elders do? First Nation Elders as teachers in culture-based urban organizations. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, XVI,* 37-66.
Statistics Canada (2002). *Health of the off-reserve Aboriginal population.* 83-003-SIE.
Statistics Canada (2001). *Aboriginal peoples of Canada: A demographic profile.* Catalogue no. 6F0030XIE2001007.
Tkach, M. (2003). *Aboriginal Census Information: Impact and Implications or Saskatchewan.* Statistics Canada: Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs.
Travers, R. & Paoletti, D. (1999). The lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth program (LGBYP): a model for communities seeking to improve quality of life for lesbians, gay, and bisexual youth. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 8* (4), 293-303.
Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
Vernon, I. (2001). *Killing us quietly. Native Americans and HIV/AIDS.* Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
Wadhera, S. & Strachan, J. (1991). Teenage pregnancies in Canada, 1975-1989. *Health Reports, 3*(4), 327-347. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
Walters, A. (1999). HIV prevention in street youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 25,* 187-198.
Wellings, K. & Cleland, J. (2001). Surveys on sexual health: Recent developments and future directions. *Sexually Transmitted Infections, 77*(4), 238-242.
Young, T.K. (1994). *The health of Native American: Toward a bicultural epidemiology.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Notes

[1] Aboriginal is defined in the Constitution of Canada and refers to all Peoples of Indian, Inuit and Metis heritage, including non-status Indians. Other terms such as "Indigenous" or "Native" are also used to refer to First Peoples or Original Residents of a Land.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported with funding from the CIHR HIV/AIDS Research Program (#HHP56967; #HSM6239), a component of the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS and by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. We

acknowledge co-researchers Elder Norma Jean Byrd, Aboriginal Family Services, AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan, All Nations Hope, Cornwall Alternative School, Indian Metis Christian Fellowship (IMCF), Mobile Crisis Unit/Safety Services, Peyakowak, Rainbow Youth Centre, Regina Friendship Centre, Street Culture Kidz, and Street Workers Advocacy Project (SWAP).

Biography of Authors

Dr. Mary Hampton is a Professor of Psychology at Luther College, University of Regina and a faculty researcher with the Saskatchewan Population Health Evaluation Research Unit.. Her research interests include Aboriginal youth sexual health, Aboriginal end of life health care, and violence against women.

Kim Mckay-McNabb, M.A. is a Cree woman originally from Sakimay First Nation. She is the mother of four children and a wife. She is currently an Assistant Professor at the First Nations University of Canada in the Department of Science. As well she is completing her PhD in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Regina. Her research interests include: end of life health care, HIV/AIDS with Aboriginal communities, sexual health with Aborignal youth and she is a community based researcher. Her interests always tie back to her Aboriginal community to assit with the journey to healing.

Dr. Bonnie Jeffery is a Professor of Social Work at the University of Regina and Director of the Saskatchewan Population Health Evaluation Research Unit. She conducts community-based research with Northern Aboriginal communities.

Barb McWaters is the Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Regina's Sexual Health Centre. She has received numerous national awards for delivering innovative programs.

Address correspondence to

Dr. Mary Hampton
Luther College, University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S 0A2 Canada
Ph: 306-585-4826
Fax: 306-585-5267
email: Mary.Hampton@uregina.ca

Koori community-directed health promotion in the Goulburn Valley

Rachel Reilly
Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, University of Melbourne
Joyce Doyle
Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Mooroopna, Victoria
Kevin Rowley
Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit, University of Melbourne
On behalf of the Heart Health Project Steering Committee

This paper describes a health promotion program conducted within the Koori community of the Goulburn-Murray region of northern Victoria, Australia. The program was community-directed, state-funded and involved university researchers. The program comprised three separate but related activities devised and carried out within a Participatory Action Research framework with the aim of promoting nutrition and physical exercise. Although the activities did not always meet all their intended aims and problems arose with the evaluation of some activities, they were nonetheless deemed to have made a valuable and sometimes unexpected contribution to health promotion in the community. Principles of participation and collaboration were central to the program's success. Challenges and benefits of working in genuine partnership are discussed.

For many years now Aboriginal people have been calling for an end to 'the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff approach to health' and greater emphasis on support for Aboriginal communities to 'look after their own' using culturally appropriate, community-directed prevention strategies (Appo & Mohamed, 2002; Bamblett & Lewis, 2006). This paper describes a state-funded health promotion program conducted within the Koori community of the Goulburn-Murray Region of Northern Victoria (South Eastern Australia) that attempted to promote nutrition and physical activity, within a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework. The program comprised a number of intervention strategies that were devised as a partnership between members of the Koori community in the Goulburn-Murray region of northern Victoria and non-Aboriginal university researchers. Rather than a detailed presentation of research findings, this paper focuses on the process and some of the challenges and rewards of applying principles of collaboration when engaging with Indigenous communities.

The Koori community of the Goulburn-Murray region constitutes the largest Aboriginal population in Victoria outside the state's capital, Melbourne. The population is estimated to be 6000 according to a recent community census (The Department of Rural Health, 2001), although Australian Bureau of Statistics figures are much lower than this (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Members of the community come from all parts of Australia and are resident on the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta, Bangerang and other nations (Barwick, 1972). The population is mainly spread across three regional centres and an Aboriginal township, Cummeragunja, on the New South Wales side of the Murray River. Although the region is relatively wealthy and supports a number of established industries, the burden of ill-health and socio-economic disadvantage suffered by the Koori community follows similar patterns and is of similar proportions to that carried by Aboriginal communities in less well-resourced regions of Australia (Appo & Mohamed, 2002; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005).

The pattern of ill-health within the Aboriginal community, and the community's response to it, are best understood in their historical context. From the mid-1800s, Aboriginal communities in the south of Australia were subjected to large-scale relocation and forced re-settlement onto missions and managed stations (Barwick, 1972; Saggers & Gray, 1991). Government policies imposed control over fundamental aspects of the lives of Aboriginal

people including marriage, personal finances, movement, social welfare and education (Saggers & Gray, 1991; Tatz, 1999). These policies dismantled Aboriginal social structures and traditional health practices (Saggers & Gray, 1991). The Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) operating in the Goulburn Valley are a product of Aboriginal resistance to these oppressive laws and now provide a range of essential health and welfare services to the community, as well as providing settings for cultural expression and cohesion (Newton, 2004; Reilly, 2005; Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, 2003).

These ACCOs have not traditionally focused on health promotion *per se* due to the necessity of directing resources towards crisis intervention and acute service provision (Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, 2003). However, more recently many ACCOs have directed resources into prevention strategies. This is considered especially important given the primary health problems faced in this community, as in other Australian Aboriginal communities, are preventable - namely obesity, diabetes, metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular disease (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1995, 2004, 2005). In particular, the Rumbalara Football Netball Club has been well positioned to promote wellbeing through sporting and other health promotion activities, such as *The Healthy Lifestyles Program*, which targets the fitness of the whole community by providing a range of exercise and nutrition programs (The Department of Rural Health, 2001).

The work described in this report is part of a broader, ongoing program of collaborative work which has collectively come under the banner of *The Heart Health Project*, a local, ongoing cardiovascular screening and intervention program carried out since 2002 (Reilly, 2005; The Heart Health Project Steering Committee, 2007). Preliminary findings from *The Heart Health Project* found that community members were not eating fruit and vegetables or exercising at levels recommended in the dietary Guidelines for Australians (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the National Health and Medical Research Council, 2006) and the National Physical Activity guidelines for Australian Adults (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 1999). Qualitative findings also indicated that the determinants of health and health behaviour in this community were broader than conventional risk factors (eg. socio-economic status) and included history, the quality of relationship to the wider mainstream community, connectedness to community members and land, opportunities for cultural expression and issues relating to personal and community control (Reilly, 2005). On the basis of these findings it was recommended that community-directed, culturally aligned programs be devised to promote positive changes in community health behaviours, in particular nutrition and physical exercise (The Heart Health Project Steering Committee, 2007).

The program began with two aims: first, the specific aim of evaluating the government-produced nutrition and physical activity guidelines from the perspective of Aboriginal community members with a view to creating guidelines that were more relevant to Kooris, and second, the more general aim of devising relevant health promotion interventions to improve nutrition and fitness. An over-arching objective of the program was to develop the capacity of local Koori researchers to carry out and evaluate health promotion interventions.

Methods and Results

Acknowledging that research ‘on’ Indigenous communities has frequently been carried out without permission, adequate reciprocation or compensation (Anderson, 2000; O'Neil, Reading, & Leader, 1998; Smith, 1999), issues of collaboration and community-direction were considered paramount in the development of this health promotion project. The project was devised within a PAR framework, which “… hinges on a power shift: outside professionals no longer attempt to control the development process solely on their own terms” (Mohan & Stokke, 2000). Instead, PAR involves researchers engaging with community in a way that empowers the community to take control of the research process, and which values and defers to local knowledge (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). It is a dynamic process in which researchers and participants develop goals, devise

methods and participate in data analysis in iterative cycles of reflection and action with the ultimate goal of promoting changes in the lives of the participating group or community, that are in the direction and control of the community (Kidd & Kral, 2005; Stringer & Genat, 2004). Rather than a prescriptive method, PAR has been described as "the creation of a context in which knowledge development and change might occur" (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p.187). PAR may incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The project was overseen by a steering committee comprising senior community and university representatives, and was bound by an earlier memorandum of understanding between participating organisations that stipulated rules for community ownership and storage of data. The university researchers worked closely with Koori researchers who coordinated the development and delivery of the program. It was agreed at the outset that university researchers would take on a supportive role, offering advice and suggestions but only participating directly in planning and design of project components when requested.

Trust between the university researchers and the Koori community had been established over many years as a result of dialogue and collaboration on previous projects. As reported elsewhere (The Heart Health Project Steering Committee, 2007), the Steering Committee was established with representation from each of the partner organisations. Program development proceeded in a manner that ensured all partners' interests and aspirations were considered, and activities were implemented only with agreement from all partner organisations. Overly invasive evaluation tools were avoided. In the spirit of reciprocity and engagement, University researchers participated in community activities such as those at RFNC. For the current work, the Victorian Government Department of Human Services was also represented on the Steering Committee and a Memorandum of Understanding developed that respected Aboriginal community control and allowed each partner organisation to achieve their goals from the work.

The overall project comprised a number of separate but related intervention strategies. Intervention strategies were devised in response to each of the above aims following dialogue between participating parties and reflection on previous findings and experiences. The cycle of dialogue, reflection and action is ongoing. Given the emergent nature of the development of each intervention strategy, the methods and key outcomes of each intervention are described in chronological order.

Researcher Training

Three Koori researchers attended a 'Health Summer School' where they workshopped a number of ideas for health promotion programs with others working in Aboriginal health promotion. The participants were struck by the commonality of problems across vastly different community settings and found that sharing information increased their awareness of their own expertise thereby being both empowering and practically useful (J.Doyle, personal communication). In particular, the realisation that the Rumbalara Football Netball Club (RFNC) provided a forum and ready audience for intervention led to the development of the 'Hungry for Victory' program, described below.

Hungry for Victory

This program targeted a group of 40 Under 17 years and Under 14 years footballers at the RFNC who participated in a series of nutrition workshops, a mentoring program for younger players and a breakfast program (players and opposition teams were provided with a healthy breakfast prior to matches). They also received T-shirts and drink bottles bearing the Hungry for Victory logo. The underlying strategy of the program was to promote healthy eating in the context of improving sporting performance. The effect of the program was to be measured by assessing changes in attitudes and behaviour via a questionnaire administered at the beginning and end of the program. The program ran for the duration of the 2006 football season (April-August). Unfortunately the intended participation of the netballers was delayed until the end of the season due to changes in the netball competition and managerial problems attributed to the demands and responsibilities already faced by women in the community.

Four nutrition workshops were conducted

following football training throughout the football season. Workshops were facilitated by a Koori researcher and football coach and involved at least 30 participants. During the workshops participants received information about nutrition and were encouraged to tailor their eating habits towards maximising performance on the football field. The mentoring program was established following a suggestion from a participant. The older players were encouraged to bring a younger player along to have a healthy breakfast then to maintain contact in order to pass on knowledge and encourage positive behaviour. While not all players participated, those who did benefited and the concept will be carried through to future programs.

Baseline data regarding eating habits were collected from a proportion of participants (response rate approximately 25%). The collection of follow-up data to assess changes in health behaviours at the end of the season was abandoned due to a lack of support for the survey as will be discussed below. At the time of writing, the club intended to run the program again in 2007, beginning with a barbecue at which participants would be encouraged to discuss their experiences and lessons from the 2006 program and offer suggestions for the 2007 program. The netballers have also accepted an invitation to participate for the duration of the 2007 season.

Evaluation of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines Focus Groups

The proposal for this aspect of the program was developed primarily by university researchers in consultation with the Koori researchers. The aim of the focus groups was to gauge responses to the dietary Guidelines for Australians (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the National Health and Medical Research Council, 2006) and the National Physical Activity guidelines for Australian Adults (Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 1999), compare these to Aboriginal-specific guidelines created in other communities and devise new, Koori-focused guidelines for promotion within the target community. Four focus groups were conducted, involving a total of 27 participants (11 men and 16 women) ranging in age from 18 to 85 years. Participants were volunteers recruited via local ACCOs and social networks (snowball sampling). Groups were conducted at the community settings outlined above over a period of three months and ran for approximately one hour. Focus groups were facilitated by a Koori researcher and focused on food choices, barriers and facilitators of healthy eating and exercise. A university researcher co-facilitated and took audio recordings of each focus group. Recordings were transcribed and data were collated according to six dominant themes, as summarised in Table 1..

Results suggested that while community members were generally familiar with the guidelines presented to them, they were less certain about the content of the message. Most claimed to know what they should be eating but expressed that it is too difficult to increase fruit and vegetable intake or decrease fat intake in the context of a tight budget, busy household and full schedule. In other words, the existence of the guidelines was deemed extraneous by some participants. Others suggested the use of Koori artwork rather than words would make the guidelines more accessible. Participants suggested a number of alternatives to guidelines including the creation of a Koori cookbook, a community garden and an educational video using local talent as a resource for schools. These suggestions are now under consideration by community leaders and health workers.

Cummeragunja Women's Health and Wellbeing Group

Women living in Cummeragunja declined the invitation to participate in a focus group but advocated for a different sort of group- one that did not focus on health problems but rather focused on drawing support from one another through social interaction. The women also stated that issues of nutrition and physical activity were of interest to them and they would be interested in learning about these topics in a social setting. It was considered inappropriate within a participatory framework to insist that participants discussed nutrition guidelines. Although this required a departure from the planned research agenda, project facilitators welcomed the departure as an opportunity to engage with participatory principles. The manager of *The*

Table 1
Dominant Themes of Focus Groups

Theme	Summary
1. Budget	Food choices are dictated by finances rather than nutrition and it is difficult to eat healthily on a tight budget
2. Convenience/Access	Access to healthy foods may be limited due to transport or other logistical issues. Fast foods are easy to access.
3. Busy Lifestyle	Eating healthily and exercising are important but other things more pressing, such as family commitments.
4. Household	Large households and mixed preferences in the house were highlighted as a barrier to changing eating habits.
5. Health and Fitness	Some participants were motivated to eat more nutritious foods for the sake of their health (eg to self-manage diabetes), or in order to play sport.
6. Knowledge	Lack of nutritional knowledge resulting in part from hearing conflicting information was a barrier to eating according to the guidelines for some people.

Healthy Lifestyles Program (an existing community fitness program) at RFNC and a project facilitator from this program were recruited to assist the women to learn about nutrition and health, without disrupting the essentially social nature of the group. The program ran over 4 weeks and responded to specific concerns raised by participants such as barriers to exercising and access to healthy foods.

Activities included walking using a pedometer, collecting bush tucker, crafts and discussions about topics selected by the women. Each group was attended by approximately 25 participants, although they were not the same participants each week. New participants each week had heard about the program through word of mouth. Participants appeared motivated and program facilitators observed participants engaging in friendly rivalry with one another.

Evaluation and Reflection

The activities described in this report were largely designed by local community members to fit a specific local context. They may or may not be appropriate for implementation in other communities. However, the issues leading to the need for this project are likely to be common to many areas and there may be generalisable principles and activities suitable for other communities. The lack of systematic evaluation processes limits our ability to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project in a formal manner. This has been highlighted as a problem common to many projects concerned with Aboriginal health promotion and points to a need for greater emphasis on evaluation - carried out using methods acceptable to the participants - as an integral part of project design (Gray, Sputore, & Walker, 1998).

Although the intended outcome measures for Hungry for Victory were not collected via the re-administration of the questionnaire at the end of the season, data from other sources was acquired for the purpose of evaluation for all the intervention strategies. Throughout the program, the Koori researchers completed evaluation surveys for each intervention strategy indicating the degree to which it met its objectives and identifying barriers and facilitators to its success. This survey data will contribute to a systematic evaluation of this project using ecological methods (Richard, Potvin, Kishchuk, Prlic, & Green, 1995). Detailed reporting of the outcome of the ecological evaluation is beyond the scope of this paper however this discussion draws on some information from the surveys in addition to

qualitative feedback gathered via informal interviews with project facilitators and participants.

Some of the stated objectives of the intervention strategies were not met, such as the afore mentioned quantitative evaluation, or development of Koori-specific nutrition and physical activity guidelines. However, qualitative feedback indicated that from the perspective of Koori community members, the program had met many of its objectives and was a success overall. The nutrition workshops were well-attended and according to feedback communicated to project facilitators by participants, were popular. The popularity of breakfasts was evidenced by consistent high levels of attendance and demand. Project facilitators observed that the breakfasts also provided an opportunity for building rapport with visiting teams. This was deemed to be particularly significant in light of findings from *The Heart Health Project* indicating that 'relationship with mainstream' is one determinant of Indigenous wellbeing in this community.

Participants reported that the mentoring program helped to enhance club cohesion by fostering links between younger and older players, and assisted the development of leadership skills amongst the older players of RFNC. The focus groups have led to a number of ideas for promoting nutrition and food security, and participants in the Cummeragunja Women's Health and Wellbeing Group have expressed a desire to lobby for continued funding for the program.

Overall, the degree to which each project intervention was deemed 'successful' by project facilitators and participants (that is, had a high level of community participation and impacted positively on the health of the participants) correlated with the degree to which it was perceived as being organised within a Koori cultural framework. That is, positive outcomes depended on how well the program components used the knowledge of the local community and valued existing social structures and systems. For example, Hungry for Victory was well-received because the mode of delivery (group workshops and breakfasts) fostered opportunities for social connectedness, respected and valued Koori identity and knowledge though its association with RFNC, being led by Koori facilitators and the use of content that reflected community needs. The breakfasts also provided opportunities for a positive interaction with non-Aboriginal people.

In contrast, the collection of data via questionnaire was mostly unsuccessful, largely because it was viewed by project facilitators as invasive and one-sided. Consequently the program facilitators lost interest in pursuing the activity and it was ultimately abandoned. A more culturally appropriate method of feedback and evaluation was then decided upon- namely an opportunity for dialogue at a social gathering at the beginning of next season.

Similarly the departure of the focus groups from their stated aim, namely the evaluation and development of guidelines, may be largely attributed to the imposition of a western concept to a Koori setting. This aim did not reflect the needs or desires of participants, who ultimately shifted the conversation to topics they considered more relevant such as financial and time constraints on healthy eating. These issues relate more closely to 'food security' than nutritional knowledge (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2006). Interestingly, this project component appeared to depart furthest from its stated aims and was also the one that involved the university researchers most heavily in its design and content. Fortunately, focus groups allow for flexibility and the incorporation of new information. The focus group format was also viewed by the Koori researchers as consistent with cultural principles of reciprocity, openness and collectivism as outlined in the National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party (1989).

The Cummeragunja Women's Health and Wellbeing Group was arguably the most participatory of all the intervention strategies in that it was conceived by the participants themselves, and has been embraced enthusiastically by participants, who are now lobbying on their own behalf for the continuation of the group and the provision of appropriate resources. This activity arose spontaneously and it was fortunate that the Koori researchers were able to respond in a timely and appropriate manner, and had the capacity to be flexible in their roles.

Conclusion

Despite the lack of systematic data allowing a formal evaluation, the health promotion interventions described here offer support for collaborative, participatory approaches to research and health promotion with Aboriginal communities. The examples illustrated here show that where power and control of processes had successfully been transferred to community members, the outcome was, not surprisingly, of greater benefit, and perceived as such by community members, than in those situations where either the problem or solution were defined or imposed by those outside the community. While the intention at the outset was that control should be wholly in the hands of community members, it is clear in practice that this was not achieved perfectly. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the existing power imbalance between an established university department with the capacity to negotiate with funding bodies, and a relatively small community group. However, PAR and other approaches with a focus on participation and capacity exchange provide a framework within which communities can be empowered to advocate on their own behalf to understand and improve their health and universities and funding bodies can respond to community needs as partners, rather than leaders in the process.

References

Anderson, I. (2000). *We Don't Like Research - But in Koori Hands it Could Make a Difference - workshop proceedings* (No. 0 7340 2987 2). Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative, Shepparton, Victoria: VicHealth Koori Health Reserach and Community Development Unit.

Appo, A., & Mohamed, J. (2002). *Ending the 'ambulance at the bottom of the cliff' approach to health: an Indigenous approach in the Goulburn Valley.* Paper presented at the World Rural Health International Conference, Melbourne.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (1995). *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey 1994. Detailed findings.* Canberra.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2004, Embargo: 11:30am (Canberra Time) 23/06/2004). *New Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander statistics for Victoria*. Retrieved May 12th, 2005

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005). *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Canberra.

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. (1999). *An Active Way to Better Health: Physical Activity Guidelines for Australian Adults*: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the National Health and Medical Research Council. (2006). *Food for Health: Dietary Guidelines for Australians, A Guide for Healthy Eating*: Australian Government: Department of Health and Ageing.

Bamblett, M., & Lewis, P. (2006). *Creating a Culturally Competent Service System for Prevention and Early Intervention: The SNAICC Perspective and the Victorian Experiment*. Retrieved 10th April, 2007

Barwick, D. E. (1972). Coranderrk & Cumeroogunga: Pioneers & Policy. In T. S. Epstein & D. H. Penny (Eds.), *Opportunity & Response: Case Studies in Economic Development* (pp. 10-68). London: C. Hurst.

Baum, F., MacDougall, C., & Smith, D. (2006). Participatory Action Research. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 60*, 854-857.

Gray, D., Sputore, B., & Walker, J. (1998). Evaluation of an Aboriginal Health Promotion Program: A Case Study form Karalundi. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 8*(1), 24-28.

Kidd, S., & Kral, M. J. (2005). Practising Participatory Action Research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 187-195.

Mohan, G., & Stokke, K. (2000). Participatory development and empowerment: the dangers of localism. *Third World Quarterly, 21*(2), 247-268.

National Aboriginal Health Strategy Working Party. (1989). *A National Aboriginal Health Strategy: Report of the National Health Strategy Working Party*: Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Newton, K. (2004). *Rumbalara Football Netball Club: More than just a sporting club*. Shepparton.

O'Neil, J., Reading, J., & Leader, A. (1998). Changing the relations of surveillance: The development of a discourse of resistance in Aboriginal epidemiology. *Human Organization, 57*(2), 230-238.

Reilly, R. (2005). *Identifying Psychosocial Determinants of Indigenous Health (doctoral thesis).* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

Richard, L., Potvin, L., Kishchuk, N., Prlic, H., & Green, L. (1995). Assessment of the Integration of the Ecological Approach in Health Promotion Programs. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 10*(4), 318-328.

Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative. (2003). *Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative Services Information* (Information provided by Rumba co-op). Mooroopna: Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative.

Saggers, S., & Gray, D. (1991). *Aboriginal Health and Society: The Traditional and Contemporary Struggle for Better Health*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Stringer, E., & Genat, W. (2004). *Action Research in Health*. New Jersey: Pearson Merril Prentice Hall.

Tatz, C. (1999). Genocide in Australia. *AIATSIS Research Discussion Papers, 8*.

The Department of Rural Health. (2001). *Evaluation of the Healthy Lifestyles Program of the Rumbalara Football Netball Club (unpublished).* Shepparton: University of Melbourne.

The Heart Health Project Steering Committee. (2007). A collaborative cardiovascular health program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Goulburn-Murray region: development and risk factor screening at Indigenous Community Organisations. *Australian Journal of Primary Health, 13*, 9-17.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. (2006). *Food Security*. Melbourne: VicHealth.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the important contributions to this work of Bradley Firebrace, Gemma van den Tol (Rumbalara Football Netball Club), Jess Cooper, Denise Morgan-Bulled (Viney Morgan AMS), and the Heart Health Project Steering Committee members: Paul Briggs (Rumbalara Football Netball Club), Sharon Charles (Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative), Rochelle Paten, Julie Calleja (Viney Morgan AMS), Sharon Lawrence, Roland Watson (Department of Human Services Victoria); Associate Investigators Michael Tynan and Vicki Atkinson. We thank the Academy of Sport Health and Education for their support. This work was funded by a grant from the Department of Human Services Victoria Public Health Research program and we thank them for their support and patience. KR was supported by a VicHealth Public Health Research Fellowship, RR is supported by NHMRC Program Grant #320860.

Address correspondence to

Dr. Rachel Reilly
Onemda VicHealth Koori Health Unit
Centre for Health and Society
School of Population Health
The University of Melbourne
Level 4, 207 Bouverie St
Carlton Victoria 3010 Australia
Ph: (03) 8344 9387
Fax: (03) 8344 0824
Email: rachel@unimelb.edu.au

Appreciative inquiry with youth to create meaningful community projects

Julie Morsillo
Adrian Fisher
Victoria University, Australia

Working in partnership with a community agency in a socially disadvantaged area of Melbourne, this research used an appreciative inquiry approach incorporating action research principles. Year 10 school students designed and successfully undertook community-building projects as part of a school subject, but with student control. Participants had previously reported a sense of alienation from their neighbourhoods and were in danger of disengaging from school. However, through the process of appreciating their identity and successfully creating community projects, the participants reported feelings of positive identity affirmation and being able to make a difference in their communities. Participants began a social transformation process of developing new positive narratives for an improved sense of community connectedness.

This paper describes the use of an appreciative inquiry methodology, incorporating action research principles, to work with potentially marginalised Year 10 school students in Melbourne's north-western suburbs. It facilitated the creation of meaningful community projects of the students' choice to meet school requirements.

Much of the social project work with young people is school-based and teacher directed, with projects often being minor, having little social impact or social awareness raising for the participants (Holdsworth, 2004; Pittman, Yohalem, & Tolman, 2003). Curricula imperatives need to be met, and project content often does not engage or extend the students. Assessment and evaluation are usually based on academic criteria, with some social measures such as school retention included.

Appreciative inquiry methodology is practised in organisational psychology and is drawn from positive psychology principles (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). It is used to develop new ways of engaging the participants, as well as assessing the impacts and outcomes of the projects. Action research means that the learning from the successes of one project is fed into the subsequent projects. The positive effects of a strengths-based cyclic approach are the empowering benefits to the participants of personal affirmation and social connectedness, rather than school marks (Holdsworth, 2004).

This project provided participants with an opportunity to explore their hopes, celebrate their social identity and address their community concerns by creating participant-designed and participant-led community building and social action projects (Morsillo, 2003, 2005; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, in press).

Working Community Program

Educationalists were concerned with the low retention rates of students, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Atweh, Christensen, & Dornan, 1998; Australian Centre for Equity through Education, 2001; Holdsworth, 2004). They were also concerned with the lack of alternative educational and employment opportunities, and the high rates of youth suicide, particularly in these marginalised areas.

Piloting programs that actively involve students in making connections with their local communities were seen as a way of retaining youth in schools (Curriculum Corporation, 2002; Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002). By extending student programs beyond the academic school environment into the local community, students could gain a sense of connectedness with their local community. They also could gain vital teamwork, leadership and communication skills that would benefit future relationships and career prospects. A community-building project approach gives students a positive opportunity to contribute to the real world as active citizens.

The Working Community Pilot Program was a five-phase structured program that enabled secondary school students to develop their key competencies and enterprise skills, sense of personal and social responsibility, and their understanding of the world of work (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002). It was promoted by Turner and Baker (2000) who had developed citizenship programs for secondary students in the United Kingdom. The program was targeted to young people aged 15-16 years old, who were making the transition to adulthood as they moved from compulsory education (Year 10) to a world of greater choice and uncertainty. Students were able to develop their skills in the compulsory middle school stages before making choices related to possible future career pathways. Turner and Baker structured the phased nature of the program so that it mirrored many of the characteristics of this transition. The program moved away from activities that are organised by adults to the concept of young person-led projects. The community projects phase translates the values, ideas and aspirations of young people into practical projects that contribute to both their own learning and to the quality of life of their communities. This supportive structure and process was designed by Turner and Baker to engage a wide range of young people, including those who are underachieving and also those students who are at risk of social and economic exclusion (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002; Turner, 2002)

In the pilot Working Community Program, schools worked in partnership with community agencies and employers to support youth to engage with their community and take increasing responsibility and autonomy during the learning processes. The philosophy of the program was congruent with that of the current research. The learning outcomes included: (1) a set of personal and transferable skills categorised as TLC (Teamwork, Leadership and Communication); (2) developed an understanding of community roles; and (3) a developed appreciation of how students can support each other as peers, in their learning and in navigating their transition into non-compulsory school and other choices (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002).

The program targeted those youth considered at risk of disengagement from school, but included other students as well. It offered an opportunity for an improved sense of connectedness with their local community and a chance to participate to build resilience and feel an improved sense of well-being. By participating in this program, it was envisioned that the students would gain valuable teamwork and leadership skills in real-life community settings that would provide them work experience to improve their future employment prospects (Turner, 2002). However, school projects are typically teacher designed and controlled to meet educational demands and contain the activities to manageable levels.

The current research was developed from within a school program, but incorporated a series of principles and activities designed to develop participation, planning and decision-making by the students. This moved the activities and data gathering to a different realm.

Participation Principles

Youth have the potential to be more than non-citizen participants, more than being treated as only clients or consumers. Given opportunities they have the potential to more fully participate as citizens in the community. Youth do have ideas on what can be done to improve the community, if society is prepared to listen (Miles, 2002).

Participation principles for youth were developed by de Kort (1999), and include: (1) maximised control by youth to enable ownership and influence; (2) benefit to youth by providing tangible outcomes; (3) recognising and respecting the contribution of all by providing for access, equity, inclusiveness and diversity; and (4) involving real challenges and development by being of recognised value, reflective and responsive to needs. These principles extol the value of recognising and respecting the contribution youth can make given challenging opportunities for freedom of expression.

Recent research in Australia (Wierenga, Wood, Trenbath, Kelly, & Vidakovic, 2003) has shown that meaningful participation is important for young people in decision-making

Table 1
Components of the Code of Informality

Dimension	Definition	Impact	Project application
Voluntarism	A relatively constraint-free pattern of choice (of goals, means, affiliations) in which the cost of changing one's mind is minimal.	Developed a deep commitment to what has been elected and enhances the bargaining power of youth vis-a-vis adults.	*Participants chose to be involved with the group to do community projects of their choice and developed a strong commitment to the venture*
Multiplexity	A wide spectrum of activities that are more or less equivalent in value.	Enabled the participants with different abilities to optimise their potential thus fostering a positive self-image, multi-track personal mobility, and organic solidarity based on mutual dependence.	*Participant groups designed own community activities based on own social identity and concerns for the local community and worked as a supportive peer group to reach their goals*
Symmetry	A balanced reciprocal relationship based on equivalence of resources and mutual coordination of principles and expectations, in which no party can impose his or her rules on another.	Promoted the acceptance of universal values, such as "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you."	*Project choices and planning decisions were made mutually as a group with agreed mission statements and goals, with each person acting as part of the supportive team effort*
Dualism	The simultaneous existence of different orientations, such as ascription and achievement, competition and cooperation.	Offered the possibility of experimentation with contradictory patterns of behaviour.	*Communal projects needed high levels of co-operation within the group with some confrontational experiences of problem-solving teamwork in the process*
Moratorium	A temporary delay of duties and decisions that allows for trial and error within wide institutional boundaries.	Permitted experimentation with a wide variety of roles and assignments and an examination of different "truths."	*Participants initiate, plan, implement and reflect on their projects in experimental ways that might be successful*
Modularity	The eclectic construction of activity sets according to changing interests and circumstances.	Developed entrepreneurship and the ability to improvise and take advantage of situational opportunities.	*Participants become entrepreneurial in designing and implementing their own projects based on their social and cultural identity explorations*
Expressive Instrument-alism	A combination of activities that are performed both for their own sake and as a means of achieving future goals.	Enhanced the attraction and influences of activities and promotes the ability to postpone gratification.	*Participants develop new skills for their own personal benefit as well as that of the group and the local community*
Pragmatic Symbolism	The attribution of symbolic significance to deeds and/or conversion of symbols into deeds.	Extended the meaning of symbols and behaviour and makes them objects of identification.	*Participants consider own interests and concerns for the community to transform these into actions for the community*

Adpated from Kahane & Rapoport, 1997, p.26.

roles, with three key elements of: (1) meaning – doing something that has a bigger purpose and therefore that 'I believe in'; (2) control – making decisions, being heard and thus also having the skills to see the task through and do it well; (3) connectedness – working with others and being part of something bigger.

Unlike the typical classroom, youth participation requires an informal open approach (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997). It requires an openness to be flexible, to encourage engagement and freedom of expression. Kahane and Rapoport developed a code of informality (see Table 1) based on the assumptions that: (a) youth seek authentic meaning to their lives, that is, maximum self-expression by individuals and groups; (b) it is difficult to establish meaning in contemporary society, where change is so rapid; (c) certain social frameworks, such as community-based groups, encourage the creation of meaning by offering opportunities to interpret and construct experience; and (d) there are infinite ways of interpreting experience, but most individuals will choose more or less rationally (from their point of view) those interpretations that have the highest degree of authentic meaning for them. According to Kahane and Rapoport, participants need to feel that they can freely express themselves to contribute to a meaningful process for a meaningful outcome.

Meaningful participation with freedom of expression and freedom to pursue their own identity and have a voice as active citizens is what youth need to explore. By using the code of informality concepts (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997), participants can freely participate in meaningful ways, decide their own directions and goals, thus experiencing full participation. Appreciative inquiry uses these participation principles.

Why Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative inquiry focuses on asking an unconditional positive question to discover the best of what is, to explore ways to create positive transformations within a group or community (Barrett, 1995; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001). It provides a process from the concept of positive psychology. Positive psychology suggests that rather than focusing on the illness and pathology to repair the damage, we seek to identify what is best in human beings, in rigorous pursuit of optimal human functioning and the building of a field focusing on human strengths and virtues (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Appreciative inquiry theory has been developed as a way of encouraging positive critical thinking by participants to transform human systems (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). It refers to the power of the unconditional positive to ignite transformative dialogue and action within human systems (Barrett, 1995). Appreciative inquiry can be a way to approach organisational life inquiries, as other problem-based approaches to organisational life were finding that participants were de-energised and discouraged from the process (Barrett, 1995; Zemke, 1999).

Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Steps of the appreciative inquiry approach typically include selecting a positive topic: (1) to discover and appreciate the best of what is; (2) to dream and envision what could be; (3) to design and co-construct what should be; and (4) a destiny to sustain what will be (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001).

The aim in this current research was for participants to explore ways to make a meaningful contribution to their local community and experience an enhanced sense of community connectedness. A four-dimensional (4D) appreciative inquiry technique was adapted with each participant group to: Discover the best of what is; dream of what could be; design what should be; and a destiny of creating what will be. Activities to achieve these steps included: (1) identity affirmation discovery with a passion game activity; (2) dreaming of community improvements with positive well-being questions and transformative learning discussions and activities; (3) designing and creating community projects with cycles of planning, action and reflection; and (4) designing a destiny of successful community projects for improved sustainable narratives. Table 2 sets out the phases of appreciative inquiry, with an added column on its application for youth participation in the current research.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of a class of 24 Year 10 students, with 12 females and 12 males, being

Table 2
Phases of appreciative inquiry

Base	Action	Youth Participation
1. Discovery	Appreciating *the best of what is*	Identity affirmation with *passion game*
2. Dream	Envisioning *what could be*	Community *visions* for improvement with positive well-being quest and transformative learning discussions
3. Design	Co-constructing *what should be*	Creating community *projects* with cycles of planning, acting and reflecting
4. Destiny	Sustaning *what will be*	Enhanced *narratives* of community connectedness

15 to 16 years old. They came from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting that of the local community, including Anglo-Saxon, Indian, Italian, Greek, Macedonian, Maltese, Spanish and Vietnamese (Victorian Government, 2000). The students and their parents each agreed that the students could participant in the research, with formal consent forms signed by parents, with full approval having been obtained from the Victoria University Ethics Committee and the Victorian Department of Education.

Procedure

A school in the pilot Working Community Program contacted the partner agency of this research, for assistance with the initial group of students. The researchers gave some assistance, and offered to work closely with the next class of students. They were eager for assistance to further develop the Working Community Program with the next group of students.

The program consisted of the researcher (first author) working closely with the class teacher for three sessions weekly, including a whole afternoon each week, with a total of four hours per week for 12 weeks, plus two full school days of six hours each. This gave 60 hours contact with the students. The program, while having a number of weekly classes, also included a full day introductory session and a full day celebratory session at the end of the program.

The school students designed and successfully undertook community building projects in community arts, including: a drug-free underage dance party (8 students), a community theatre group (3), a student battle of the bands (2), children's activities in a cultural festival for refugees (7), and designing an Aboriginal public garden (4).

The students had two months to plan and complete their projects. They used class times, for which they had school and parental consent to leave the school grounds to organise their projects, as necessary. During one session per week the groups reported to the whole class on progress and discussed issues arising with their classmates. Thus, the students were encouraged to continually self-evaluate during the process, as part of the planning, action and reflection cycles of action research.

Each group worked autonomously to plan and undertake their project. Support was provided by the teacher and the researcher to assist them to clarify the issues and consider their options. However, the projects were student-led and student-designed, with the students taking responsibility for their own choices and actions. Each student group completed their project, or at least undertook a significant step towards the goal of their project.

To introduce the appreciative enquiry process and gather data in an action research

framework, a series of structured activities was developed in class times. These reflect a 4D approach to establishing meaningful, student led projects.

1D Discover the best of who we are

As youth actively explore their identities with their peers in their various youth subcultures (Miles, 2002; Watts, 1993), the first phase had the participants exploring their own identity, to discover and appreciate the best of what is (Ludema et al., 2001). Participants expressed their identity, explored common interests and shared values within the safety of a peer group. They appreciated the space to discuss identity when they felt emotionally safe to express issues, using the code of informality concepts to plan their own projects (Kahane & Rapoport, 1997).

A passion game was a way to explore personal passions and interests and find out the common identity interests of the participants. This game was adapted from a traditional getting-to-know you exercise, to elicit the participants' interests and passions around their identity. The game involved asking participants a series of questions based on Do you feel passionate about this particular activity? Participants moved to one side of the room if they were passionate about that activity and to the other side if they definitely were not interested and stayed in the middle if they didn't care or had a mild interest. The questions covered interests in sport, fitness, outdoor activities, thrill–seeking activities, the arts, music, dancing, drama, performing, cooking, eating foods from other cultures, environmental issues, and topical issues such a concern for refugees. For each question those who moved to the passionate side were asked their specific interest (e.g., actual sport, type of music). This helped each participant to think about their own passions and identify others with similar interests, offering the potential to consider working together on a project of mutual interest.

Subsequent discussions on participant interests can reveal further mutual identity issues and engender enthusiasm to pursue and celebrate these issues. Exploring a common group identity is a preliminary step to planning and implementing community projects (Giroux, 1988; Stringer, 1999).

2D Dream of what we could do

The next phase of the appreciative inquiry approach involved participants dreaming and envisioning what could be improved in the community (Barrett & Peterson, 2000; Frantz, 1998). Participants explored social justice issues using critical thinking or critical inquiry as part of the process of transformative learning (Prilleltensky, 2003). Participants shared community concerns and values through discussion and a passion chart, to dream of: Guided group discussions and activities were undertaken to explore mutual community concerns, including questions like: "If I were the mayor with a million dollars to improve this place for young people I would . . ."

Participants used transformative learning techniques of brainstorming and discussing their visions, their dreams, to experience an improved local community. Group discussions explored what was needed for survival in the community and to enhance the community. Questions were raised, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1971). Basic questions included: What are our basic survival needs? and What do you need to feel a sense of well-being?

The passion chart activity, with participants in pairs or small groups, is a way of developing their dreams and visions. For example, poster paper and coloured pens were provided for participants to draw and write up their own passions, interests, beliefs and concerns. Passion charts were also used to enable participants to start to dream of creative ideas for community projects and to begin to address their mutual interests and concerns.

3D Design a project of what could be

Designing community action projects was the next phase of appreciative inquiry, where action research steps of planning, implementing and reflecting came into play. In self-chosen small groups of common interest, participants planned creative celebratory projects with supportive local community partners, to design how: "We will make a difference in our community by . . ." The

participants critically assessed their own needs, planned their own interventions, and implemented specific actions, with cycles of evaluation throughout the process. This resulted in youth-led and youth-designed community projects (Finn & Checkoway, 1998; Headley, 2002; Holdsworth, 2003).

Planning community projects involved identifying issues and designing "what should be". Through participation in the community, participants defined themselves and developed a new belief in their ability to change aspects of their personal and social environments (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988).

Participants actively designed their own community projects. They identified an issue they wished to pursue, explored ways to pursue the issue, developed a vision with a mission statement of what they wanted to create and developed goals to achieve their visions of a community action project to improve their local community.

Action research by participants empowered them to implement the projects they designed and created. Participants developed problem-solving skills, to organise and manage projects (Lewis, 1998; Westhorp, 1987); and they gained experience in taking on adult responsibilities of citizenship (Wyn, 1995). They were not treated just as children or passive students, but took on meaningful tasks that they managed themselves. In the process the participants developed teamwork, leadership and communication skills (TLC) (Department of Education and Training Victoria, 2002). Participants developed personal skills for social life, career prospects, community involvement, and local activism. They also developed cultural interests and ways to improve personal and community well-being, with participants expressing pride in their achievements.

4D Destiny of a meaningful project of what will be

The final phase was the destiny of participants undertaking their community projects and evaluating the benefits of their own involvement, for a destiny of: "We have learnt from this project that . . ." Planning, implementation and critical reflection was learned in action research cycles through the development of their projects. This was documented from verbal self-reports, written evaluations of personal experiences -- both during and at the end of the process.

Each student group worked autonomously to plan and undertake their respective community projects. Support was provided by the teacher and the researcher to assist them to clarify the issues and consider their options. However, the projects were student-led and student-designed, with the students taking responsibility for their own choices and actions.

Results

This section reflects upon a series of different levels of results that were achieved in this research. Firstly, it briefly deals with the outcomes experienced by the students and the program itself. The section then reviews the impact of the appreciative inquiry methodology and its applicability to this type of research.

Each student group completed their chosen project, or at least undertook a significant step towards the goal of their project. The public underage dance party; the school battle of the bands; and the refugee cultural festival children's activities groups completed their projects with the events specified in their mission statements. The other two groups were able to undertake the design phase of their projects within the timeframe: the community theatre company proposal group with an initial grant application and a one-off promotion performance; and the Aboriginal public garden group developed a draft garden design in collaboration with an Aboriginal park ranger.

The students were each involved in evaluating their group projects throughout the process (with verbal reports to the class each week) and completed verbal and written evaluations at the conclusion of their respective projects. The students also took photographs of their projects that they added to their written evaluations. They mounted a selection of their photos onto poster cardboard to be included in a class video covering their projects and in oral evaluations. These images of lived experience provided another dimension to the evaluation process (Berger,

Mohr, & Philibert, 1982; Burgin, 1982; Tagg, 1988). Three groups completed their project, and two accomplished the planning stage.

Outcomes reported in the participants' written evaluations revealed a positive effect of the program. These responses can be summarised in the following themes reflecting individual, group and community level outcomes (see Table 3):

(1) Individual: Participants' evaluations reflected the freedom of expression experienced in the projects, with a sense of pride and hopefulness that they were trusted to act independently to discover and dream of their community projects – "The best part of the program would be the freedom to organise your own community event as you feel proud of your own achievement" (Mandy, Bands); and "The highlight of my experience would have been the satisfaction we all felt when the night that we had been planning, stressing over and having sleepless nights about became a rip roaring success. It was a real adrenalin rush for all of us" (Donald, Dance Party group).

(2) Group: Participants expressed a sense of confidence in developing leadership, organisational, and teamwork skills to design and problem-solve through control of their own projects – "the program helped me become independent and able to organise with my group an event with hardly any assistance" (Britany, Children) and "It is a great way to build skills, and give you a realisation of what YOU are capable of and what YOU can achieve when you put your mind to it. I am glad that I had the opportunity to build my skills in such a way that I have never experienced in school before. The fact that this one program can offer so much more is really something and I look forward to using the skills I have developed in all my subjects and even out of school." (Josie, Children, her emphasis).

(3) Community: Participants revealed an improved sense of community connectedness, appreciating the challenge to make a meaningful contribution to the community through community action projects – "a sense of satisfaction that you were able to put something back into the community for once" (Donald, Dance); and "It really opened my eyes and now I know I can still contribute

Table 3
Student participant outcomes

Level of Analysis	Self-reported Outcomes
Personal	*Freedom of Expression* • Social identity affirmation • Acting on enhanced socio-political awareness • Felt trusted to act independently leading to a sense of control • Sense of pride and hopefulness
Group	I*nfluence* • Sense of confidence and group solidarity • Development of leadership, organizational and teamwork skills • Independence and motivation with own project management, design and problem-solving
Community	*Community Connectedness* • Embraced challenge to make meaningful contribu-ti9on to community youth involvement • Created own community action projects • Created own sense of community connectedness

to the community, making a small difference which sums up with other people's efforts, to make a big difference overall" (Vin, Garden group).

The participants initially expressed alienation from their local communities. Youth living in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods can feel disaffected, with little sense of community and with few facilities or opportunities for involvement (Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Zimmerman, 1990). This has been shown to be linked with higher suicide rates (Carr-Gregg, 2003; Fuller, 1998).

Youth seeking a sense of community find it with peers who have a similar identity (Eckersley, 2004; Miles, 2002). However, they often do not find it in their local communities or the wider community. They feel particularly marginalised, often for the very reason that they are youth and not children or parents (Wyn & White, 1997). Through the appreciative inquiry process, the participants in the current research reported feelings of positive identity affirmation and being able to make a meaningful difference in their communities.

Participants began to develop new positive community narratives for an improved sense of community connectedness. Early in the group process students made such comments as: "What can we do? We are only kids; We don't have any connections". However, at the completion of their projects, comments included: "I learned a lot about how the world works", "it opened my eyes to the needs of our youth", "you get to interact with other people in the community, which is a thing you wouldn't normally do", "meetings with community service workers gave us the independence and presented us with problems that we had to tackle, not just as individuals, but as a group", and "I developed my awareness to community issues and helping out in the community".

Youth Identity Affirmation.

Social identity affirmation is important to develop a sense of community within the youth group, with peers who have shared values (Gibson, 1993; Pretty, 2002; Skoe & Lippe, 1998; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Early work with each group in this research involved positive affirmation of personal identity, interests and passions.

Positive evaluation comments reflected participants' welcoming the opportunity for self-expression and positive affirmation of their identity. The groups used an appreciative inquiry approach to explore their identity, with the first author facilitating each group. The researcher provided information, when asked, on possible community connections of interest for the participants to pursue. However, the participants themselves chose which connections to follow up and soon developed their own connections and initiatives. They shared common values and common interests, leading to a sense of community within each group.

Youth Community Concerns.

Youth community concerns were also pursued using the same process of identifying personal concerns and group concerns to explore common themes. Participants developed critical thinking, with transformation learning processes, through group discussions and various activities. Often group concerns were built on personal identity interests, or linked to form a community action project incorporating both identity and community concerns. For example, groups of students identifying music as their common interest, with one group organising Disc Jockey's for a dance party, another promoted their own community theatre with a musical performance.

Youth Hope for a Better World.

Participants in each group of this research regularly told of alienation in their local neighbourhoods (Burke, 2004; Greene, 1995; Miles, 2002). The students spoke of a lack of entertainment opportunities for self-expression, and suitable recreational facilities – this they saw as leading to drug abuse problems. Youth experienced forms of alienation from their local community, but engagement in realistic, meaningful projects through school could provide positive developments to overcome this.

The students' leadership and project management skills improved markedly when they realised that they were given free reign and full responsibility for their actions. Also, they made meaningful connections with the wider community sector, where the community workers reinforced the responsibility they had to follow correct procedures in relation to public expectations and rules and regulations for public

safety, and for the success of their projects. By creating something of value the students acquired the interest and skills for service learning and citizenship (Checkoway, 1998; Holdsworth, 2003; Turner & Baker, 2000).

Reflections on the Appreciative Inquiry Approach to Participation

Youth Participation

A participatory approach is valuable for working with marginalised youth (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Schwab, 1997). This participatory approach, using appreciative inquiry, incorporated concepts of: affirmation theory from organisational psychology; critical thinking or transformational learning, promoting social justice awareness and problem-solving skills from educational theories; and self-expressive community arts from creative arts applications (Ciofalo-Lagos, 1997; Greene, 1995; Mayo, 2000; Miles, 2002; Mulvey & Mandel, 2003; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996)

Youth Benefits

Youth participation was the focus of this research. Youth planned and implemented community action projects, thereby improving their own problem-solving skills. Arguably, this could lead to an improved sense of empowerment and well-being (Checkoway, Finn, & Pothukuchi, 1995; Headley, 2002). Participants reported benefiting from teamwork, leadership and communication (TLC) skills development. They learnt program management skills that could be of assistance in further study and future work.

Community Connectedness

Participants in this research reported significant improvement in their sense of community connectedness. Using a participatory research approach, they affirmed their sub-culture identities and explored their community concerns. By planning, implementing and reflecting on their own community action projects, the participants actively began to weave new, more positive narratives (Carroll, 2001; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Rappaport, 1995). Where there had previously been stories of alienation and disempowerment, narratives of mutual cultural identity began to form.

Lessons from Participation

Discovery of Best of Who You Are

Youth appreciate exploring their own identity to re-discover the best of who they are. Identity affirmation approaches are useful to build on the strengths and positive aspects of socially disadvantaged youth. They need to be able to freely express their identity including: cultural identity; sexual identity; and any other youth subculture identities. Youth celebrated their identities though their own choice of cultural arts and environmental projects. In a supportive safe environment youth can create their own sense of community connectedness. Taking time with participants to understand and appreciate the best of who they are is particularly important with youth who have suffered trauma or significant rejection in their lives.

Participation programmes to engage at-risk youth are becoming increasingly utilised in a variety of imaginative formats (Checkoway, Finn, & Pothukuchi, 1995; Foundation for Young Australians, 2001; Headley, 2002). The participants in such programmes experienced various levels of empowerment and accompanying levels of control within the program. Often, however, the program content is determined by program leaders, leaving the participants feeling constrained by the pre-determined directions.

In the current research, participants had the opportunity to consider their own identity with their peers to design their own projects, to connect in meaningful ways to their own local neighbourhoods, and to make a perceived difference. Participants who had felt alienated from their local neighbourhoods were able to work with their sub-cultural groups to affirm their identity and make new positive connections with their local communities.

An appreciative inquiry research approach allowed for reflection on the social structures with which youth interact. The sub-cultural aspects of youth are of interest in their own right, but they are of more interest as part of a symbiotic relationship with broader aspects of social change (Conger & Galambos, 1997; Mackay, 1999; Miles, 2002). In contrast to dominant cultural views (Calcutt, 1998), some argue that youth cultures do not reflect a relative rebelliousness, but rather reflect the creative ways in which youth interpret the structural and cultural changes that surround them (Calcutt, 1998; Furlong & Cartmet, 1997; Miles, 2002; White & Wyn, 1998; Wyn & White, 2000).

The research sought to work with these creative youth sub-cultures, to affirm their identity and self-identified lifestyle issues, and to provide participants with opportunities to explore ways to use this creative energy to design their own community action projects. Traditionally, youth cultural identities have been considered to simply be a reflection of more fundamental structural aspects of youth transitions (Cieslik & Pollock, 2002; Miles, 2000). Researchers argued that youth cultural experiences represent the actual area within which they seek to cope with, and at times defy, the ups and downs of structural change (Miles, 2002). The process of individuation represents a key aspect of the experience of social change for youth. Youth could be seen as rebelling from within. In an individualised society the opportunities to rebel are less obvious than they were in the past (Calcutt, 1998). Rather, youth call upon aspects of consumer culture, which they can use to construct their identities, while rejecting those aspects to which they do not relate (Eckersley, 2004; Ginwright & James, 2002; Mackay, 1999). Youth are not passive, even though they are not often politically vocal. They can use the resources provided for them by consumer culture to cope with the rapidity of social and structural change (Miles, 2002; White & Wyn, 1998).

Dreaming of What Could Be

Socially disadvantaged youth often lack conventional opportunities for self-expression. They can also lack opportunities and support to pursue suitable educational, recreational and employment pathways. However, youth can envision an improved community, appreciating opportunities to freely express their views and ideas of what could be. They appreciate the opportunity to explore their mutual community concerns and ideas for community improvements.

Designing What Should Be

Youth appreciate opportunities for practical self-expression to design their own community projects. This appreciative approach has the benefit of gathering the unique perspectives of each person, when combined with the perspectives of others, to create new possibilities for action that previously lay dormant or undiscovered (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Youth can express their ideas by actively designing and leading their own community action projects. Supported creative programs can be of benefit to marginalised youth who often have few opportunities to freely express their creativity within the wider community (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Schools can offer creative programs to support social identity explorations and provide opportunities for community connection programs to engage and retain their students. Peer support and mentoring programs, leadership and interpersonal skills programs, and community projects, can also assist with retention of youth at-risk of disengagement from school (Delgado, 1996; Fyson, 1999; Hedin & Eisikovits, 1982).

Destiny of What Will Be

Youth participating in this research created for themselves the beginnings of social transformation both for themselves and their local communities. They did so through affirmation, where youth had opportunities within a trusting environment to build on their own social, cultural and sexual identity to create community projects of their choice.

Conclusions

An appreciative inquiry approach, with full engagement and participation of youth and/or adults within their particular community, can be adapted and promoted for mutual benefit of the individuals involved and the whole community. It is adaptable to a variety of youth settings from schools to social and community focused groups to youth decision-making councils and bodies. The appreciative inquiry approach has also been shown to be of benefit to adult groups in various settings and could be further promoted within business corporations, community and government organisations to promote full participation of the members of any particular community. Each member of the community can feel appreciated and valued for their opinion and can participate in visioning exercises and in new initiatives to improve the particular environment within an organisation or a wider community initiative, for mutual benefit (Barrett & Fry, 2002; Barrett & Peterson, 2000; Cooperrider, Barrett, & Srivastva, 1995; Ludema, Wilmot, & Srivastva, 1997).

A grassroots, bottom-up approach to appreciative inquiry involves all participants in creative expression and practice It encourages

meaningful involvement and commitment to the process and outcomes associated with improving community and social transformation.

References

Atweh, B., Christensen, C., & Dornan, L. (1998). Students as action researchers: Partnerships for social justice. In B. Atweh, S. Kemmis & P. Weeks (Eds.), *Action research in practice: Partnership for social justice in education* (pp. 114-138). London: Routledge.

Australian Centre for Equity through Education. (2001). *Building relationships: Making education work – A report on the perspectives of young people.* Canberra: Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs with Australian Youth Research Centre.

Barrett, F., & Fry, R. (2002). Appreciative inquiry in action: The unfolding of a provocative invitation. In R. Fry & F. Barrett (Eds.), *Appreciative inquiry and organizational transformation: Reports from the field* (pp. 1-23). Westport, CO: Quorum Books.

Barrett, F. J. (1995). Creating appreciative learning cultures. *Organizational Dynamics*, 24, 36-49.

Barrett, F. J., & Peterson, R. (2000). Appreciative learning cultures: Developing competencies for global organizing. *Organization Development Journal*, 18(2), 10-21.

Berger, J., Mohr, J., & Philibert, N. (1982). *Another way of telling*. New York: Pantheon.

Bostock, J., & Freeman, J. (2003). 'No limits': Doing participatory action research with young people in Northumberland. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13, 464-473.

Burgin, V. (1982). *Thinking photography.* London: Macmillan.

Burke, A. (2004). Once upon a time ... The power of digital storytelling. *Educare News*, March, 50-51.

Calcutt, A. (1998). *Arrested development: Popular culture and the erosion of adulthood.* London: Cassell.

Carr-Gregg, M. (2003, April). Youth, schools and suicide. *In Psych: Bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd*, 25, 18-20.

Carroll, J. (2001). *The western dreaming: The western world is dying for want of a story*. Sydney: HarperCollins.

Checkoway, B. (1998). Involving young people in neighborhood development. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20, 765-795.

Checkoway, B., Finn, J. L., & Pothukuchi, K. (1995). Young people as community resources: New forms of participation. In P. Adams & K. Nelson (Eds.), *Reinventing human services: Community and family-centered practice* (pp. 189-202). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Cieslik, M., & Pollock, G. (2002). *Young people in risk society: The restructuring of youth identities and transitions in late modernity*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Ciofalo-Lagos, N. (1997). Community development initiated by the youth: An intergenerational and multicultural approach to community-based quality of life. *Dissertation-Abstracts-International:-Section-B:-The-Sciences-and-Engineering*, 57(11-B)(7273).

Conger, J. J., & Galambos, N. L. (1997). *Adolescence and youth: Psychological development in a changing world (5th ed.).* New York: Longman.

Cooperrider, D., Barrett, F., & Srivastva, S. (1995). Social construction and appreciative inquiry: A journey in organizational theory. In D. M. Hosking & H. P. Dachler (Eds.), *Management and organization: Relational alternatives to individualism* (pp. 157-200).

Cooperrider, D. L., & Whitney, D. (1999). *Collaborating for change: Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler Communications.

Curriculum Corporation. (2002). *MindMatters: A mental health promotion resource for secondary schools.* Retrieved 12 August, 2003, from http://online.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/resources/comm_matters.htm

Delgado, M. (1996). Community asset assessments by Latino youths. *Social Work in Education*, 18, 169-179.

Department of Education and Training Victoria.

(2002, Feb 2002). *Working Community online resource – Vocational education in schools*. Retrieved 12 July, 2003, from www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/voced/working_community/model/index.htm

Eckersley, R. (2004). Separate selves, tribal ties, and other stories: Making sense of different accounts of youth. *Family Matters*, 68, 36-43.

Finn, J. L., & Checkoway, B. (1998). Young people as competent community builders: A challenge to social work. *Social Work*, 43, 335-345.

Foundation for Young Australians. (2001). *Youth partnership and participation*. Retrieved 2 June 2002, from www.youngaustralians.org/

Frantz, T. G. (1998). Visioning the future of social systems: Evolutionary and discontinuous leap approaches. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 15, 173-183.

Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities* (1st ed.). New York: Norton.

Fuller, A. (1998). *From surviving to thriving: Promoting mental health in young people*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Furlong, A., & Cartmet, F. (1997). *Young people and social change: Individualization and risk in late modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fyson, S. J. (1999). Developing and applying concepts about community: Reflections from the field. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 347-365.

Gibson, C. M. (1993). Empowerment theory and practice with adolescents of color in the child welfare system. *Families in Society*, 74, 387-396.

Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New directions for youth development*, 96, 27-46.

Giroux, H. (1988). Critical theory and the politics of culture and voice: Rethinking the discourse of educational research. In R. R. Sherman & R. B. Webb (Eds.), *Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods* (pp. 190-210). New York: Falmer.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. New York: Jossey-Bass.

Headley, S. (2002). *Young people at the centre: Participation and social change*. London: York Publishing Services.

Hedin, D. P., & Eisikovits, R. A. (1982). School and community participation: A cross-cultural perspective. *Childhood Education*, 59, 87-94.

Holdsworth, R. (2003, October). *Youth participation.* Paper presented at the 2003 Local Government Youth Services Conference, City of Casey, Melbourne.

Holdsworth, R. (2004). *Real learning real futures: a brief evaluation and reflection - A Derwent District Partnership*. Hobart: Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Tasmanian Department of Education.

Kahane, R., & Rapoport, T. (1997). *The origins of postmodern youth: Informal youth movements in a comparative perspective*. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Lewis, B. (1998). *The kid's guide to social action: How to solve the social problems you choose and turn creative thinking into positive action*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.

Ludema, J., Cooperrider, D., & Barrett, F. (2001). Appreciative inquiry: The power of the unconditional positive question. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (pp. 189-199). London: Sage.

Ludema, J., Wilmot, T. B., & Srivastva, S. (1997). Organizational hope: Reaffirming the constructive task of social and organizational inquiry. *Human Relations*, 50, 1015-1052.

Mackay, H. (1999). *Turning point: Australians choosing their future*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). The farther reaches of human nature. New York: Viking Press.

Mayo, M. (2000). *Cultures, communities, identities: Cultural strategies for participation and empowerment*. New York: Palgrave.

Miles, S. (2000). *Youth lifestyles in a changing*

world. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Miles, S. (2002). Victims of risk? Young people and the construction of lifestyles. In M. Cieslik & G. Pollock (Eds.), *Young people in risk society: The restructuring of youth identities and transitions in late modernity* (pp. 58-73). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Morsillo, J. (2003). Social action with youth: A beginning to empowerment and well-being. In E. Martin & J. Booth (Eds.), *Courageous Research* (pp. 99-113). Melbourne: Common Ground Publishing and Victoria University.

Morsillo, J. (2005). Social action drama. *Narrative Network News*, March/April, 10-18.

Morsillo, J., & Prilleltensky, I. (in press). Social action with youth: Interventions, evaluation and psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*.

Mulvey, A., & Mandel, C. (2003). *Using cultural activism for local and global safety and democracy: UMass Lowell's College V-Day Campaign and The Laramie Project*. Paper presented at the Democracy Symposium 2003, University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Diversity and Pluralism.

Pittman, K. J., Yohalem, N., & Tolman, J. (2003). *When, where, what, and how youth learn: Blurring school and community boundaries*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pretty, G. (2002). Young people's development of the community-minded self: Considering community identity, community attachment and sense of community. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological sense of community: Research, applications, and implications* (pp. 183-204). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Prilleltensky, I. (2003). Understanding, resisting and overcoming oppression: Toward psychopolitical validity. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 31, 195-201.

Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23, 795-807.

Schwab, M. (1997). Sharing power: Participatory public health research with California teens. *Social Justice*, 24(3), 11-32.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.

Skoe, E., & Lippe, A. v. d. (Eds.). (1998). *Personality development in adolescence: A cross national and life span perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Stringer, E. T. (1999). *Action research: A handbook for practitioners (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tagg, J. (1988). *The burden of representation: Essays on photographies and histories*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.

Thomas, R. E., & Rappaport, J. (1996). Art as community narrative: A resource for social change. In M. B. Lykes & A. Banuazizi (Eds.), *Myths about the powerless: Contesting social inequalities* (pp. 317-336). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Turner, D. (2002). *Running on passion* (Unpublished draft). Melbourne: Department of Education and Training, Victoria.

Turner, D., & Baker, P. (2000). *Developing citizenship in secondary schools: A whole-school resource*. London: Kogan Page.

Victorian Government. (2000). *Suburbs in time.* Melbourne: Department of Infrastructure, Victorian Government.

Wallerstein, N., & Bernstein, E. (1988). Empowerment education: Friere's ideas adapted to health education. *Health Education Quarterly*, 15, 379-394.

Watts, R. (1993). Doing ethnography with young people: How and why? In R. White (Ed.), *Youth subcultures: Theory, history and the Australian experience* (pp. 124-135). Hobart, Australia: National Clearinghouse for youth studies.

Watts, R., Griffith, D. M., & Abdul-Adil, J. (1999). Sociopolitical development as an antidote for oppression: Theory and action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 255-271.

Westhorp, G. (1987). *Planning for youth participation: A resource kit*. Adelaide: Youth Sector Training, Council of SA.

White, R., & Wyn, J. (1998). Youth agency and social context. *Journal of Sociology*, 34, 314-327.
Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
Wierenga, A., Wood, A., Trenbath, G., Kelly, J., & Vidakovic, O. (2003). *Sharing a new story: Young people in decision-making*. Melbourne: Australian Youth Resource Centre, University of Melbourne for Foundation for Young Australians.
Wyn, J. (1995). 'Youth' and citizenship. *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 36, 45-63.
Wyn, J., & White, R. (1997). *Rethinking youth*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Wyn, J., & White, R. (2000). Negotiating social change: The paradox of youth. *Youth and Society*, 32, 165-183.
Yates, M., & Youniss, J. (1996). Community service and political-moral identity in adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 6, 271-284.
Zemke, R. (1999). Don't fix that company! Appreciative inquiry in organization development. *Training*, 36(6), 26-34.
Zimmerman, M. (1990). Toward a theory of learned hopefulness: A structural model analysis of participation and empowerment. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 24, 71-86.

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank the staff of our partner agency Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, St Albans, for all their support throughout the project. Also, a special thanks to the teacher Rick Hudson, who trusted the PhD researcher to work with him and his students, with such flexibility and good humour.

Address correspondence to
Julie Morsillo
PO Box 611 Pascoe Vale
Victoria 3044
Australia
Email: Julie.Morsillo@vu.edu.au

Towards getting it right: Participatory action research (PAR) with an advocacy organisation

Harriet Radermacher
Christopher Sonn
Victoria University, Australia

In this investigation, a participatory action research approach was employed to study and develop practices within an advocacy organisation. Participants' experiences were explored to assess the impact and value of this type of research approach in community settings for people with high support needs. Results of the study make an important contribution towards understanding the complexities surrounding the implementation of the rhetoric of empowerment and participation, and highlight implications of these complexities for community psychology research and intervention processes.

Introduction

Participatory action research (PAR) provides exciting opportunities to conduct research in new and different ways. While it is characterised as research that involves participants in setting the agenda, in gathering and analysing data and controlling the use of outcomes, PAR is significant not so much for its methodologies, but rather for its ability to develop an alternative system of knowledge production (Reason, 1994). PAR has the potential to produce knowledge and action that is of direct use to a community, as well as raising consciousness amongst those involved (Freire, 1970). Such methodologies are advocated because they have the potential to be transformative. As well as opening up possibilities, however, PAR can be difficult for a whole host of reasons.

In this paper, the authors explore the values that underpin PAR, and particularly its ability to lead to empowerment and social change. The concept of empowerment resonates at the core of the community psychology discipline, however, the term has been used to such an extent that it has almost lost any substantive meaning (Ife, 1995). This has many implications for researchers seeking to work in empowering ways, and demands that we critically reflect upon our actions to explore how they may also be experienced as disempowering.

Integral to this paper are the experiences of the first author (HR) of conducting a PAR project with an advocacy organisation (Radermacher, 2006). Illustrative examples taken from that project are used to provide some insight into the tensions and challenges that emerged in the process of translating principles of PAR into practice. In so doing, the authors attempt to demystify the research process and pave the way for more effective and empowering research practices. Whilst this paper predominantly draws on Harriet's field work experiences, both authors' were intimately involved in the study's conceptual interrogation and interpretation.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to document details of the study in depth, suffice to say that in accordance with a PAR approach, and in collaboration with Harriet, the organisation identified the need for a strategic plan. The subsequent planning activity became the vehicle for examining the value of PAR as an empowering research tool, which was also the focus of the study.

Participatory Action Research: Values and Principles

Four key values of PAR are empowerment, support and relationships, learning and social change (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin, & Lord, 1998; Whyte, 1991). These correspond closely to the ten values guiding community research and action that were identified by Fawcett (1991). These include the importance of building collaborative and anti-colonial relationships with participants, and Fawcett's (1991) assertion that research should contribute to change and that participants should be supported throughout the process. In

having such a strong value base, it is perhaps not surprising that community psychologists have been attracted by participatory approaches to community research (Bostock & Freeman, 2003; Duckett & Fryer, 1998).

The trend towards increasing the participation of disabled people in research can be linked with the development of user-involvement, citizenship and consumer participation (Zarb, 1995; cited in French & Swain, 2004). Conducting participatory research encourages participants to share the research process, and presents a way to overcome and address the exclusion that disabled people have faced in the past. Balcazar, Keys, Kaplan and Suarez-Balcazar (1998) outlined four principles of PAR when conducted in collaboration with disabled people: firstly, the active role of disabled people themselves in articulating, defining, analysing and solving an identified problem; secondly, disabled peoples' direct involvement in the research process which facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of their social reality; thirdly, the role of the research towards increasing disabled peoples' awareness of their own strengths and resources; and finally, the opportunities for improving the quality of life for disabled people. In summary, a participatory approach has been described as one where "the process is owned and shared by all participants, generates much more than just data; it brings about positive changes amongst individuals and groups as a whole" (Dockery, 2000, p. 109).

Others have also highlighted the benefits of a PAR philosophy. For example, it has been argued that PAR researchers and practitioners solve problems using local resources and participants (White, 2005), and it offers the flexibility necessary to adapt to particular situations and the different people involved (French, 1994). As well as the knowledge gained in the form of outcomes and findings, there are additional benefits gained from the process of the research, such as the relationships formed. These may be over and above what is learned from the research itself (Archer & Whitaker, 1994). Similarly, Speer, Jackson and Peterson (2001), noted how focusing "on participation within organisational and community contexts allows not only for opportunities to enhance empowerment but to support a sense of community or the connections between individuals so that a collective sense of trust, investment, and action can be developed" (p. 279).

Beyond the role of PAR in fostering learning and creating change is its ability to empower participants through building relationships and supportive structures. The appeal of PAR is that in claiming to 'empower' it has the potential to address the profound inequalities in power between the participants and the researcher. White (2005) noted how PAR changes the traditional research dynamics whereby the researcher becomes the learner, and the participants are experts due to their experience. Participatory research, then, attempts to change the social relations of the research process (French & Swain, 2004).

Power, and empowerment, are core concepts of community psychology (Serrano-Garcia, 1994) and the challenges that they pose in practice are innumerable. Reason (1994) wrote:

> As soon as we touch upon the question of participation we have to entertain and work with issues of power, of oppression, of gender; we are confronted with the limitations of our skill, with the rigidities of our own and others' behaviour patterns, with the other pressing demands on our limited time, with the hostility or indifference of our organizational contexts. We live out our contradictions, struggling to bridge the gap between our dreams and reality, to realize the values we espouse…. 'How do you actually do it?' It is as if many people feel intuitively that a participatory approach is right for their work and are hungry for stories and accounts that will provide models and exemplars. (p. 2)

In this account, Reason (1994) manages to convey the appeal of a participatory process as well as highlighting the many challenges of actually making it a reality. PAR and the notion

of participation carry strong positive connotations for many people, and yet while it is very easy to espouse participation, it can be incredibly difficult to practice 'genuinely.' However, while it is certainly hard, it is not impossible (Reason, 1994) and the challenge lies in doing it well. There is a need to be courageous enough to openly acknowledge the limitations and dangers of our research practices (Lennie, Hatcher, & Morgan, 2003). And by noting and addressing barriers along the way, in collaboration with participants, temporary obstacles can become vehicles to create new learning and strengthen partnerships (Reason, 1994).

It appears, therefore, that a participatory process is insufficient alone to ensure positive outcomes. Rather, a "thorough analysis of the dynamics of oppression" is the key to the process if one is to 'somehow get it right' (Whitmore, 1994, p. 98). Successful PAR is more than simply collaboration between researchers and participants. Central to its success is the ability of researchers to interrogate the dynamics of empowerment. "Empowerment is not a stable or global state of affairs. Some people feel empowered in some settings but not in others, whereas some people work to empower one group while oppressing others along the way" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 98). This relates to Riger's (1993) discussion about 'what's wrong with empowerment', where she suggests that with psychology's traditional focus on the individual, empowerment has often been regarded in terms of personal control. Having such an individual agenda may therefore compromise and conflict with more community orientated goals, such as collaboration and connections with others (Riger, 1993). While participation is integral to the empowerment process, Riger has emphasised the problem of equating empowerment with participation, cautioning against assuming that changing procedures will lead to changes in the distribution of resources. Importantly, Riger also highlights that a sense of empowerment at an individual level may have little effect on the actual distribution of power, particularly within organisational and political contexts.

Clearly, our goals for empowerment, and the ways we try to seek to empower, are shaped by what we understand empowerment to be, and the intersection between empowerment at both an individual and broader macro level. The next section explores some of the complexities involved in trying to promote an empowerment agenda in the context of PAR. The implications for researchers who have tried to promote empowerment by minimising the barriers created on account of their 'professional' status are explored. On closer inspection, our good intentions may not be quite as empowering as we anticipated and hoped for. Such revelations may demand that we search for ways to interweave critical reflexivity into our participatory research approaches.

Empowerment or Disempowerment

PAR can break down the power of professionalism, which helps to explain why some researchers feel that it is 'intuitively' right for their work (Reason, 1994). A fundamental aspect of PAR is its potential for empowering participants (Stone & Priestley, 1996). It is a tool for empowerment, and an empowering research practice (Duckett & Fryer, 1998). Indeed, Stewart and Bhagwanjee (1999) asserted that PAR promotes group empowerment and self-reliance among disabled people, shifting the balance of power and control over resources and decision-making. The aim of such a collaborative research practice is to demystify the research process to participants (Kerruish, 1995; Stewart & Bhagwanjee, 1999) and break down barriers created by expertise and professionalism. Whitmore (1994) recognised how her self-disclosure helped break down the barriers between herself and her participants. The underlying goal of this was to make the relationship between researcher and participants more equal and non-hierarchical (Reinhartz, 1992; cited in Lennie et al., 2003).

Despite these seemingly positive outcomes, however, involving community members in research, in particular disabled people, poses many challenges for community psychologists. Our values and issues around power remain critical factors to be continually aware of and reflect upon (Bostock & Freeman, 2003). Most importantly, it appears that using a participatory framework to alleviate historically entrenched power differentials caused by our professional status may not be working quite as we desired

(Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). As practitioners we need to recognise that our so-called 'empowering' practices may be somewhat paradoxical. For in attempting to be empowering to clients/participants, it might only serve to empower ourselves, and be central to the continued legitimacy of professionals and their interventions (French & Swain, 2004). Thus, empowering practices may also be disempowering.

In undertaking PAR, the researcher can assume that participants want or need to be empowered, and that the process is empowering (LeCompte, 1995; cited in Lennie et al., 2003). One of the reasons cited for developing relationships with participants (prior to and during research) is for its ability to empower them. However, developing relationships may have unintended negative consequences (Lennie et al., 2003). For example, it might make participants feel obligated to take part (Duckett & Fryer, 1998; Kerruish, 1995). Furthermore, initial negotiations with community leaders, or managers of organisations, may mean that participation by individuals becomes obligatory rather than voluntary (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). This can occur, for example, when a manager of an organisation thinks that the participation of her employees is so important that she makes it compulsory. Thus, in attempting to be empowering to participants, it may have the opposite effect.

Lennie et al. (2003) argued that empowerment and disempowerment can be viewed as intersecting discourses, which means that with empowering research it may also inevitably be disempowering. This multiplicity of discourses may relate to what Rappaport (1981) noted as the paradoxical nature of empowerment. It has been suggested that the relationship between researcher and participant may never be equal (Archer & Whitaker, 1994; Lennie et al., 2003) and that the drive to make the process participatory, equal and empowering is fraught with obstacles and contradictions (Lennie et al., 2003). To examine these contradictions in more detail, Lennie et al. (2003) looked at the different discourses used by researchers and the participants. These included the 'egalitarian', the 'academic expert' and the 'care and connection' discourses. They noted that while each discourse had both empowering and disempowering impacts, that certain empowering aspects of some discourses served to conflict with the empowering aspects of others. For example, an 'egalitarian' discourse was one where inclusive language and strategies were used to position researchers as non-experts and as 'equals' in the research relationship. This clearly conflicted with the 'academic expert' discourse that was used, for example, during the introductions and to describe the nature of the project. While the expert discourse was noted to have some disempowering effects (such that it emphasised the differences in power, knowledge and expertise between the researchers and the researched), it was also seen to be empowering in the way that it gave the project greater credibility and validity. The 'care and connection' discourse was illustrated by the desire to foster friendships, trust, mutual care and support, and this clearly became problematic when researchers had to assert their authority as facilitators.

Community psychologists, with a focus on the notion of empowerment, have been keen to emphasise the role of communities themselves in determining their own future (Webster, 1986; cited in Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). In their attempts to address oppression, community psychologists have employed a number of strategies to attempt to shift the balance in power. One such strategy was to 'give psychology away' (Miller, 1969) by disowning their expert status (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002) and essentially belittling their own knowledge and skills. Claims to 'know nothing' and enter a community with a 'blank slate' can lead to confusion for clients and the community, and create the illusion that they have no agenda (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). However, in reality community psychologists enter with a lot of assumptions, and while they try not to impose their own ideas on the communities within which they work, to some extent it is unavoidable. A researcher has a locus of expertise that they bring with them, and even if they contest to having no agenda, it is still an agenda.

There are numerous instances where authors have referred to the unavoidable inequities in power between workers, or 'professionals', and their clients (Fook, Ryan, & Hawkins, 2000; Healy, 2000; Rees, 1991). Hart, Jones and Bains (1997) provide an example of attempts to promote positive social change in a particularly disadvantaged community by way of a community consultation process. They noted the 'paradox' whereby service providers appeared to employ methods of empowerment that actually disempowered their consumers, resulting in paying 'lip service to the notion of empowerment'. Thus, "organisations are effectively creating a myth of empowerment by ignoring consumer demands; making closed decisions; not providing alternative choices; breaking promises; withholding information; not providing adequate support" (Hart et al., 1997, p. 197). Therefore, despite the desire of service providers to have local participation, the community's interest and belief in the process waned as they failed to see that their contribution was acknowledged or valued.

This discussion highlights that in pursuing the goal of equity it has become somewhat problematic, and may actually, unintentionally or otherwise, lead to disempowerment as opposed to empowerment. Emphasising the skills of the community and making assumptions that their knowledge is useful, for example, may put undue pressure on the community to perform and to solve their own problems (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). It seems that community psychologists may be unaware of the responsibility of professional knowledge (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002), and in relinquishing themselves of any responsibility, the community then has no avenue to criticise researcher involvement, rendering them more powerless. In this context, therefore, power is being equated with responsibility. In developing joint ownership of the research process, it can have the effect of reducing professional responsibilities of the researcher if it were to fail.

Through attempting to fix what seems, on the surface, to be quite explicit and transparent imbalances in power, community psychologists may have failed to ignore the subtle and complex dynamics at work. This may have served to conceal the power dynamics, making them even harder to address. Assumptions have been made that there is power in knowledge and that community psychologists have it to give away. In assuming there is power in knowledge certain strategies have been used to attempt to 'rearrange' knowledge, such as facilitation and raising awareness that a community's own knowledge can be powerful (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). Foucault (1997) argued, on the contrary, that power is dynamic and relational. Moreover, that it cannot be localised or held in one place, but rather that it is constantly being negotiated, and exists between people and between groups. Hence, such strategies to 'rearrange' knowledge may prove to be redundant. This has many implications for community psychologists who seek to work with a transformative agenda.

The body of literature to which we have referred draws upon some very important issues for community psychologists to consider in their work with communities, particularly relating to the complexities of power. These may have many implications for the ways in which community psychologists negotiate entry and develop relationships with a community. In the next section, Harriet's experiences of a research study are used to illustrate some of the tensions that emerged. In order to honour this, the following section is written from a first person perspective.

Background to the Study

With a desire to undertake some research with disabled people, I emailed an advocacy organisation in Melbourne, having found their details in a local library directory. The executive officer responded immediately with a warm welcome and encouragement to get involved. In anticipation that it would take several months alone to build up a relationship with the organisation and develop a research topic, this contact was made two years prior to the expected due date of the final research report.

To learn more about the organisation and discuss the logistics of working together, I initially met with the executive officer. Having established that it was my intention that disabled people themselves identify the focus of the research, I was invited to the next board meeting. The board of the organisation (all of whom were people with high support needs), the executive officer, and the administrative assistant all

attended this meeting. A space in the agenda was set aside for me to introduce myself, explain why I had contacted the organisation, and to gauge their interest in becoming involved.

The general consensus was that I was welcome, and that they were interested in getting involved. From this point forward, I became a regular fixture on the monthly board meeting agendas. There were two aims of this regular contact: 1) to establish and build a relationship and make myself known around the organisation; and 2) to inform them about the research process and to develop a research topic together. In addition to monthly board meetings, I met with a few of the board and staff members individually to discuss topics, ideas and areas of interest. Both members and I initiated this contact.

Based on my ongoing discussions with the organisation, I developed a list of potential research topics. This list was based on my own understanding of what some feasible research topics might look like. I presented these to the board at a board meeting six months after my initial contact. 'Strategic planning' was one of the six options for the research topic, as it was clear that staff and board members thought the organisation required more focus, and that there was a desire for change. While the organisation and I decided to embark on a strategic planning process, the six-hour planning activity that ensued as a result, over two days, may not have necessarily constituted 'strategic planning' as defined in the literature (as it is often a much more comprehensive and long-term activity). However, it was deemed appropriate to continue referring to it as 'strategic planning' as that was the preferred term as identified by the organisation.

Whilst assisting the organisation to develop a strategic plan had the potential to ensure that my involvement led to some tangible and useful outcomes for the organisation, it also served to compromise the participants' actual involvement in the research itself. Figure 1 provides a pictorial representation of how the strategic planning was placed in relation to the wider research process. The fact that strategic planning was an organisational activity meant that participants did not necessarily perceive it as a research process. Furthermore, whilst participants may have identified a focus for my involvement with the organisation, Chris and I actually developed the research question. In this way, the strategic planning process was used as a vehicle to explore the research question, which aimed to examine the value of participatory action research as a research tool for 'empowering' disabled people. I explored the experiences of participation (both of the participants and myself as the researcher) – in particular, the barriers to participation. This was based on the assumption that exploring the barriers to participation would reveal something about the empowering (or disempowering) nature of the research process.

I employed a purposive sampling technique whereby all 12 people actively involved in the organisation (five male and seven female) were invited and agreed to participate in the research. Six of the participants were active board members all with high support needs associated with physical impairments. The remaining six were current staff working full and part-time at the organisation (one executive officer, three advocates, one project worker, and one administrative officer). Participants' ages ranged between about 24 –50 years.

Participants were individually interviewed both prior to and after the strategic planning activities. All participants gave written and informed consent to be interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured which gave participants the opportunity to raise issues that were of importance to them. The initial interview broadly addressed two areas: firstly, the participants' understandings of strategic planning, and their views on the current and future direction of the organisation; secondly, how they perceived their roles, and the existing barriers to participation within the organisation. The follow-up interview focused on the participants' experiences of being involved in the strategic planning activities and the research process more broadly, and also their views regarding the strategic planning document (which was produced as a result of the planning process).

As part of the process, I also organised two sessions (one with staff and one with the board) for participants to respond to and make changes to the strategic planning document. Two years later, having submitted my thesis for examination, I also returned to the organisation to present the key findings of the research.

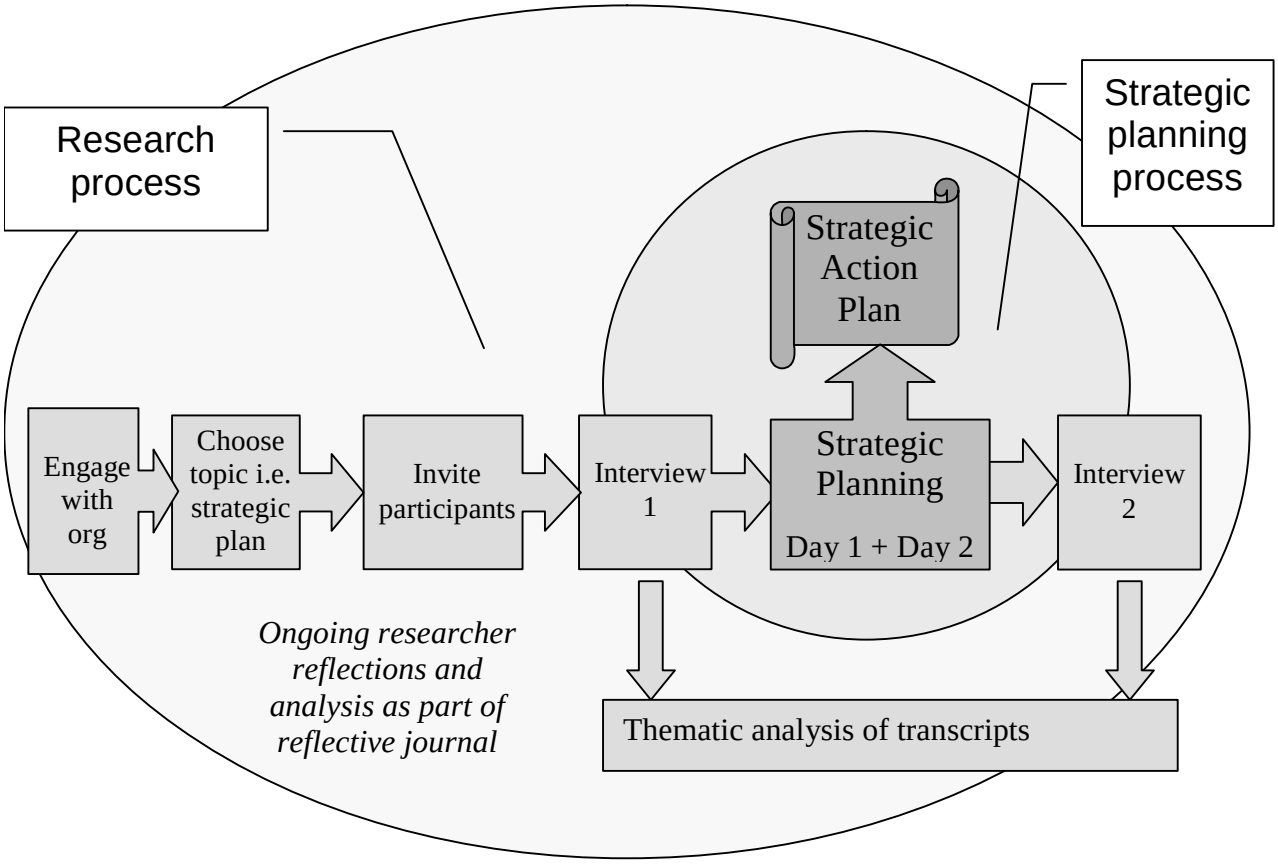

Figure 1. Strategic planning as part of the wider research process

Issues and Tensions: Illustrative Examples

Many aspects of the research process may have served to disempower as opposed to empower participants; three of which are illustrated here, as well as the broader role of decision-making. The first relates to my initial contact with the board of the organisation. In nearly all my initial addresses to the board, I emphasised my aims for the research, and what I wanted my role to be. I highlighted that in having a flexible agenda, my aim was for the board to identify what was of interest to them. I explained that in this way the research might be more meaningful than if I was to have come in and dictated what I, myself, wanted to research. In this way, the research issues would generate out of the lived experiences of disabled people themselves and address their own concerns (Balcazar et al., 1998).

My approach encouraged some people to raise their own topics of interest, and everyone present expressed at least one issue that they were interested in or, at the very least, they supported someone else's contribution. In some ways I felt that this was a very positive process. It allowed everyone to speak and to be heard, and it enabled everyone involved to establish a working relationship. However, while I could claim that the idea to develop a strategic plan for the organisation was generated through a lengthy participatory process, I was not convinced that the process was an entirely positive and empowering experience for participants.

In retrospect, I felt that a different approach may have led to more empowering outcomes. The following is an extract from my reflective journal:

If I was to do it again [the research], I would try and steer it from the beginning – give something for people to play with instead of an open slate. But it has taken this long to

realise that they [the board] don't work in that way [i.e. without a set agenda].

Reflective Journal (08-09-03)

My reflection illustrates two important points. The first relates to participants' expectations as to my role, and their level of knowledge, comfort and familiarity with the way in which I proposed to work. The second is that I believed that there was a certain culture within the organisation that determined how decisions were made, and this actually presented a barrier towards working in the way that I had envisaged. These two points are inter-related.

This first point relates to what Tomlinson and Swartz (2002) described as psychologists' need to be aware of the responsibility that their professional knowledge brings, and the problematic nature of claiming to have no agenda. On entering the organisation, and attempting to work with a 'blank' slate, I was also assuming that participants had a level of knowledge, comfort and familiarity about working in this particular way. However, I felt that participants were not prepared for, or given enough support to, work in such a way. This approach might well have served to overwhelm and disempower them, as Tomlinson and Swartz (2002) cautioned. Furthermore, I doubted my skills in facilitating and managing participants' responses. For example, when participants did proffer ideas and topics of interest, I felt that if I were better able to encapsulate those ideas and feed them back in a way in which everyone present could understand and work with, it might have been a more productive and empowering process for everyone. PAR assumes a certain level of skill in facilitation and coordination, and for this reason I believe that facilitation emerged as one of the most critical aspects for promoting meaningful and equitable participation, and the potential for empowerment.

This issue relates to the second point, that of organisational culture. Due to historical reasons, practices and procedures are done in certain ways at the organisation, and as an outsider it can be very difficult to introduce new ways of working and doing things. Participants identified historical organisational practices as presenting barriers to participation, and my own experience at the organisation concurred with this view. However, despite acknowledging that there may be inefficient procedures in effect (e.g. lack of clarity about procedures, ad hoc decision-making etc), they remain extremely difficult to change. Furthermore, in some cases, it is not clear in whose interests it is that they should change. For instance, at many points in my attempts to address the board and make a decision about which topic to choose, people got up to make coffee or leave the room for a cigarette. While I respected that this was the way things were done at the organisation, it did not make group decision-making easy, as not everybody was aware of the whole content of discussion. In this instance, it would probably have been inappropriate and destructive to enforce a situation whereby people had to remain in the room at all times. The tension that arose between wanting to respect the ways of the organisation (because they were probably there for good reason) and yet also recognising the inefficiency of certain procedures emerged continuously throughout the process. We highlighted this as a key issue for researchers who are attempting to work towards social change and yet who also value building partnerships.

Another point at which I tried to make the process more empowering for participants occurred, for example, in my attempts to keep participants informed. While the interviews may have provided a good opportunity to relate to participants, on a one-to-one basis, and directly address their concerns, outside of this space it proved to be more challenging. Throughout the process, I distributed information 'updates' to participants. Early on, this information consisted of preliminary ideas about the strategic planning structure, and planning dates. Towards the middle and end, this information was about the content of the strategic planning discussions, the strategic plan itself, and general information about the research process. However, I found that the delivery and format of the information that they received depended on each participant's role in the organisation, and their preferred methods of communication. For example, staff members usually received hard copies on their desks at work, while board members with email accounts received information electronically. I felt that board members without access to email could not participate and be kept informed in the same way. While I made an effort to fax one board member, and made specific arrangements to meet with another, I felt that in particular, these two

participants were the least engaged with the process, and consequently may have felt disempowered. Moreover, one board member had a visual impairment, which meant that he relied on verbally transmitted information.

The final illustration of a potential disruption to the empowerment process related to my preliminary contact with the executive officer. While this was an important and key relationship in the study, which enabled access to the organisation and ongoing support from them, it also may have served to undermine my relationships with other participants, and impact on what they were willing to share and contribute. And, as Tomlinson and Swartz (2002) alluded to, having the executive officers' approval may have meant that participants' involvement was motivated more out of an obligation than a voluntary desire. Furthermore, becoming a part-time employee within the organisation during the lifetime of the research may have also had a significant impact. It was interesting to hear from one participant that my status as an employee had impacted on how people responded to me. He noted that as an employee, I was now considered more of an insider, and with that, I was now perceived to be at the 'mercy' of the organisation's hierarchical forces. Specifically, this meant that my integrity and loyalty to other participants might have been compromised due to becoming answerable to the executive officer as were all the other staff participants.

The role of decision-making

Decision-making processes were clearly an integral and challenging part of this PAR study. If participants are given the opportunity to choose in which way they want to participate and how much decision-making power and responsibility they take on, then this may be when it has the most potential to be empowering. However, individual decisions were not necessarily supported at the collective level. Thus, the empowering experience of having the opportunity to make individual decisions may have been transformed into a disempowering experience when one's decisions were rejected at a group level. This relates to the tension that Riger (1993) noted whereby empowerment at an individual level does not necessarily lead to empowerment as a group or organisation.

Providing opportunities for people to participate and make decisions in this study raised many challenges for me, and certainly, there were several ways in which I may have maximised the possibility for more empowering outcomes. For example, establishing some guidelines with the organisation at the beginning of the process may have served to build a framework for the research process. These guidelines in turn may have identified what kind of information would be useful for participants to receive, how they would have liked to receive it and have their feedback managed, and what types of decisions needed to be made and by whom.

Balcazar et al. (1998) noted that one of the positive consequences of PAR is that all participants (researchers included) develop a more critical view of the world. This may lead to participants criticising their relationships with the researchers, and the research process itself. One potential target for critical reflection could have been in relation to people's roles and positions within the organisation and the research process itself, and the impact this has on decision-making. For example, being a researcher in this study, I was presented with many opportunities to make decisions about the shape of the research. Likewise, the executive officer, by account of her position was also afforded certain opportunities, as well as constraints. This is best illustrated by highlighting the conflict of interest through having an executive officer that was required to support the board, to fulfil their duties as board members, whilst at the same time having a board that was dependent on the executive officer for setting the agenda.

In reflecting upon the disproportionate influence that certain people had over decision-making, it may have enabled us to minimise the experience of exclusion and disempowerment. Two staff participants certainly acknowledged these dynamics, but it could have been useful to involve and engage others in such a discussion.

Our experiences are intricately related to the roles and positions we assume; what, how, and why we do the things that we do are shaped by the social, cultural, ideological spheres that we occupy. If this form of critical thinking can be integrated into the research process, then the

values of PAR as described by Nelson et al. (1998) may be realised.

Towards Getting it Right

In this study, I set out to undertake research in more empowering ways than has occurred in more traditional disability research. In accordance with PAR principles, strategies included encouraging participants to identify and define the focus of the research themselves, keeping them continually informed about developments, and involving them in decision-making. In this way, I hoped that participants would feel valued and respected and that it would be a more meaningful and useful experience for participants. It may even lead to other positive outcomes such as strengthening existing relationships amongst the team, developing a greater sense of ownership within the organisation, and eventually lead to action and social change (Archer & Whitaker, 1994; Speer et al., 2001).

Employing a participatory research approach, however, was not the panacea that I had imagined it would be at the outset. Rather, I discovered that at the same time as opening up the potential for empowerment, I created other avenues for disempowerment. I utilised a combination of academic, egalitarian and care and connection discourses to facilitate a participatory and empowering experience. However, as Lennie et al. (2003) cautioned, implementing all three discourses simultaneously does not necessarily lead to empowering outcomes. Claiming that the participants and I were all 'equals' in the research relationship when I clearly had more decision-making authority and an academic report to write provides just one example of how an attempt to be empowering may have been compromised. Ultimately, of course, it is not for researchers and practitioners to say whether a process is empowering. Instead, that is a role for participants. And even then, given the multi-faceted and complex nature of the phenomenon of 'empowerment', we might find that there are many different and contradictory accounts.

Despite the challenges that researchers face in attempting PAR, the potential benefits for involving disabled people appear to outweigh the limitations (Balcazar et al., 1998). Therefore, as Reason (1994) inferred, we have a responsibility to persist, with ongoing commitment and integrity, no matter what obstacles emerge. If participation is an ideal to which researchers aspire, then it may be imperative for researchers to critically reflect on the realisation of participatory principles (French & Swain, 2004). French and Swain (2004, p .24) suggest that, in developing processes of critical reflection, two key questions need to be addressed: "The first question is: does the research address the concerns of disabled people themselves? Second, does the research promote disabled people's control over the decision making processes which shape their lives?" Reflecting upon these questions can perhaps address why I felt that the research failed to live up to my expectations for, despite my efforts, in many respects the answers to these questions are 'no'.

Ultimately, I felt that I struggled to make a difference and achieve my goal to enact the principles and values of PAR into practice. I approached the organisation with certain expectations about how the process would unfold. I implemented several strategies in order to facilitate participation, made the process as transparent as possible, and attempted to equalise research and organisational relationships to bridge the gap between myself, as the researcher, and the participants. Certain practices and deeper cultural patterns, however, appeared to interfere; patterns and practices that were resilient, and resistant to change, such as decision-making hierarchies, and attitudes to academic status. This served to compromise the transformative capacity of this PAR approach. Thus, based on this experience, it seems that while a commitment to the values of participatory research is important, it may be insufficient to transform entrenched and oppressive power relationships and structures.

This study indicates that the ability and capacity to be critically reflective may assist researchers to enhance the potential of PAR to bring about transformative change. Specific resources that may be required to foster this capacity include: (1) an openness to be challenged and to critique our own practices; (2) an awareness of critical theoretical and

conceptual frameworks (e.g. social model of disability, participation, organisational change, ways on understanding power); and (3) having critical reflective partner/s to continually challenge our ideas and actions.

In this study, critical reflection enabled the demystification of some aspects of the research, and to support important observations that while certain research approaches can be empowering, they can also be disempowering (Tomlinson & Swartz, 2002). The practice of critical reflection is much more than simply incorporating personal subjectivity into the research process (Parker, 2005). In addition, it demands that researchers interrogate their ideologies, assumptions and values and acknowledge that they are dynamic beings, intricately interconnected with their social environment. Being embedded in social, political, cultural contexts with different group memberships (e.g. gender, race, sexual orientation, ability and education) afford researchers different levels of power and privilege. Researchers cannot assume that simply by conducting PAR it will lead to empowering outcomes and experiences. Rather ongoing examination of the dynamics of the research process is required before we are going to get it just right.

References

Archer, L., & Whitaker, D. (1994). Developing a culture of learning through research partnerships. In *Participation in human inquiry* (pp. 163-186). London: Sage Publications.

Balcazar, F. E., Keys, C. B., Kaplan, M. A., and Suarez-Balcazar, Y. (1998). Participatory action research and people with disabilities: Principles and challenges. *Canadian Journal of Rehabilitation, 12*(2), 105-112.

Bostock, J., & Freeman, J. (2003). 'No limits': Doing participatory action research with young people in Northumberland. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 464-474.

Dockery, G. (2000). Participatory research. Whose roles, whose responsibilities? In C. Truman, D. Mertens & B. Humphries (Eds.), *Research and inequality* (pp. 95-110). London: UCL Press.

Duckett, P. S., & Fryer, D. (1998). Developing empowering research practices with people who have learning disabilities. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 8*, 57-65.

Fawcett, S. B. (1991). Some values guiding community research and action. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 24*(4), 621-636.

Fook, J., Ryan, M., & Hawkins, L. (2000). *Professional expertise: practice, theory and education for working in uncertainty*. London: Whiting & Birch Ltd.

Foucault, M. (1997). *Ethics: The essential works* (Vol. 1). Harmonsdsworth: Penguin.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

French, S. (1994). The disabled role. In *On equal terms: Working with disabled people* (pp. 47-60). Oxford, UK: Butterworth Heinemann.

French, S. & Swain, J. (2004). Researching together: A participatory approach. In S. French & J.Sim (Eds.), *Physiotherapy: A psychosocial approach*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Hart, C., Jones, K., & Bains, M. (1997). Do the people want power? The social responsibilities of empowering communities. In P. Hoggett (Ed.), *Contested communities: experiences, struggles and policies*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

Healy, K. (2000). *Social work practices: Contemporary perspectives on change*. London: Sage.

Ife, J. (1995). *Community development: Creating community alternatives - vision, analysis and practice*. Melbourne: Longman.

Kerruish, A. (1995). Basic human values - the ethos for methodology. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 5*, 121-143.

Lennie, J., Hatcher, C., & Morgan, W. (2003). Feminist discourses of (dis)empowerment in an action research project involving rural women and communication technologies. *Action Research, 1*(1), 57-80.

Miller, G. (1969). Psychology as a means of promoting human welfare. *American Psychologist, 24*, 1063-1075.

Nelson, G., Ochocka, J., Griffin, K., & Lord, J.

(1998). "Nothing about me, without me": Participatory action research with self-help/ mutual aid organizations for psychiatric consumer/survivors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 26*(6), 881-883.
Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Community psychology: Towards liberation and well-being*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative psychology: Introducing radical research.* Maidenhead, England: Open University Press.
Radermacher, H. (2006). Participatory action research with people with disabilities: Exploring experiences of participation. Unpublished thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne.
Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*, 1-25.
Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994). *Participation in human inquiry*. London: Sage.
Rees, S. (1991). *Achieving power: Practice and policy in social welfare*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Riger, S. (1993). What's wrong with empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*(3), 279-292.
Serrano-Garcia, I. (1994). The ethics of the powerful and the power of ethics. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 22*(1), 1-20.
Speer, P. W., Jackson, D., & Peterson, N. A. (2001). The relationship between social cohesion and empowerment: Support and new implications for theory. *Health Education & Behavior, 28*(6), 716-732.
Stewart, R., & Bhagwanjee, A. (1999). Promoting group empowerment and self-reliance through participatory research: A case study of people with physical disability. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 21* (7), 338-345.
Stone, E., & Priestley, M. (1996). Parasites, pawns and partners: Disability research and the role of non-disabled researchers. *British Journal of Sociology, 47*(4).
Tomlinson, M., & Swartz, L. (2002). The 'good enough' community: Power and knowledge in South African community psychology. In L. Swartz, K. Gibson & T. Gelman (Eds.), *Reflective practice: Psychodynamic ideas in the community* (pp. 99-112). Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Publishers.
White, G. W. (2005). Ableism. In G. Nelson & I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being* (pp. 405-425). Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
Whitmore, E. (1994). To tell the truth: Working with oppressed groups in participatory approaches to inquiry. In P. Reason (Ed.), *Participation in human inquiry* (pp. 82-98). London: Sage Publications.
Whyte, W. F. (Ed.). (1991). *Participatory action research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Acknowledgements
Thanks to all the board members and staff at the advocacy organisation for their ongoing support, generosity and engagement.

Address correspondence to
Harriet Radermacher
Email: harrietrad@hotmail.com

The utility of a model from Activity Theory for analysing processes in the Nkosinathi Community Project

Jacqui Akhurst
York St John University, York, UK.
Debbie Evans

Community project work is very complex and the psychologist's role needs careful negotiation. The psychologist may make an important contribution at the nexus of theory and practice. The Nkosinathi Project began in 1997, but gained momentum from 1999 with the regular provision of adult literacy classes, using material drawn from Constructivist approaches. The project encouraged active participation of learners and the progress of the project was continually evaluated through the explicit use of Action Research cycles. Since different theoretical approaches were being used, the integration of the strands of work in a meaningful way became a challenge, to enable an understanding of factors contributing to the success of the project. This paper will explore the utility of a model of Activity Theory as developed by Engeström, as an integrative tool. Activity Theory provides a means to consider multiple levels of activity, highlights the interaction of various factors and provides a means to consider the differing perspectives of participants in the project. The utility of this model is discussed, and potential further developments in the field are mentioned. The article also outlines key outcomes of the project and the ways in which its success has influenced the development of other initiatives.

A commonly debated issue in the field of community work relates to the role and potential contributions of psychology. de la Cancela, Alpert, Wolff and Dachs (2004) state that the "most critical role for psychologists can be to contribute to understanding of the issues and systems change possibilities inherent in healthy community efforts" (p. 178). In this article, we hope to illustrate the ways in which psychological theory enabled a deepened understanding of factors contributing to the success of a community project in South Africa. Specifically, utilising Activity Theory encouraged an interactive systemic view of the issues, and an understanding of the complexity of processes impacting on the progress of the project. Through using a diagrammatic model of activity systems developed by Engeström (1987), we were able to integrate the key findings from the qualitative data that had been gathered during the project's implementation over a two year period.

In this article, the inception of the community project and some of the features of its development will be briefly outlined before a description of Activity Theory is provided. The main aim of the article is to use Engeström's (1987) model of interacting triangles to articulate the complexity of the human activities and interactions in the project, and to discuss its utility and potential further developments from Activity Theory.

Background to the Community Project

This community project began as part of a local church initiative in a rural parish of the Midlands area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The outreach activities of members of the church community had led to extensive communication between members of the church and leaders from a nearby impoverished community, resulting in the development of the 'Nkosinathi' ('God with us') project. The driving force for the engagement was a commitment from a core group of the churchgoers to work for greater social justice post-apartheid, and a desire for the church buildings to be more than a place of religious practice, providing resources for the people nearby.

Geographically, the area had been predominantly white-owned farmland where both mixed farming (crops and cattle) and timber plantations co-existed. It is located about 25 kilometres from the nearest city, to which people commute for supplies; with people in the area

working either on farms or at a nearby sawmill. During the political changes of the 1990's, many farm workers had moved from their former farm-based accommodation due to changes in both land-ownership and labour laws. This led to the formation of informal settlements of very basic dwellings crowded together on vacant land, often common land where there had been no prior planning for provision of water, electricity or roads. The people living in the settlement closest to the church mentioned above became involved in this project, along with some people still living on farms in the area and some based in housing provided by the sawmill.

During the period 1997-9, a process of asset-based assessment (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) was undertaken by a committee of church and community members. The following major needs were identified: land, education, income, and health care. In the former apartheid era many disenfranchised people were dependent on provisions supplied by farmer-employers, leading to a strong desire for land ownership, to enable former farm workers to use their skills for their own direct benefit. However, the community leaders recognised that to engage in the processes related to land restitution, there was first the need to increase their negotiating power and sense of agency as a group. A major contributor to making progress would be the improvement of the adults' education, since many of the people concerned had experienced only elementary education and thus had very limited or no functional literacy skills.

The church community realised that, to facilitate communication and to seek to develop the links established, they should employ a community worker who would live in close proximity to the settlement. It was during regular meetings between a group from the church, community leaders and the worker that joint goals were identified, and the idea of engaging in a literacy project developed, as an achievable short- to medium-term goal. It was hoped that this project might also lead to some people developing marketable or work-related skills, to ease the unemployment situation in the settlement.

A pilot adult literacy project started on one farm in 1997, but did not initially gain impetus because there was a lack of funding for training educators and the purchase of learner material. Furthermore, potential participants experienced transport difficulties getting to the site after hours. At the point where little progress was being made, the project coordinator (the second author of this paper) was approached by the Nkosinathi committee for assistance, since she lived in the area. She was asked to investigate the potential involvement of the university due to her previous work on a project at the local university campus, to see whether the university could provide some of the resources necessary. It was fortuitous that when contact was made with the first author, who worked in the Faculty of Education at the time, the Research Office of the university was seeking to fund projects which worked at the interface of community development and research.

A successful funding proposal was made to the university-based fund and the first round of funding became available in 1999, to provide for adult education and training. Following the success of the first year's implementation of the project in meeting the intended goals, a second round of funding was accessed in 2000. These funds gave the project a two-year impetus: some of the funds were used for the training of literacy workers from amongst community members who had attained better levels of schooling, and the funds also provided materials for the project. Thus a partnership between the Nkosinathi project and the university was established, providing seed money for the project and opportunities to engage in researching the project's development. Because the project had become viable, in the second year the funds were supplemented in two ways: by a grant from a local charitable group in the nearby city for further materials, and the local sawmill company began making a monthly contribution towards the payment of the literacy workers.

Implementation of the Project

In this section, key features of the design of the unfolding of the project will be outlined, as a backdrop to the analysis which is the focus of this article. Three of these key features were: the preferred approach to adult education chosen by the team, the thinking skills methodology that informed the content and facilitation of the literacy programme, and the research methodology that informed the project implementation and evaluation.

Broadly in South Africa, Adult Basic

Education and Training (ABET) is the preferred approach to working with adults with limited literacy skills. This approach was supported philosophically by the national Department of Education, because of its twin aims of both educating and enabling learners to become more skilled and therefore more able to find employment. However, due to the demands on the limited budget of that department, there was no access to funds for a small-scale project such as this one. ABET has a clear empowerment agenda (Merriam & Brockett, 1997), and the project team was very concerned to see the learners develop life-skills alongside the educational process. Such concern for local functional literacy "places people at the centre of their environment and gives them the means to take an active part in community life" (from a UNESCO monograph, cited in Fordham, Holland & Millican, 1995). Whilst the acquisition of reading and writing skills has the potential to be transformative in people's lives, this is further strengthened by making strong links between learning material and the learners' social contexts.

The principles of Freire's (2006) approach to education, developed in impoverished communities in Brazil, resonate well with the philosophy of ABET. This approach emphasises the transformative nature and political empowerment of people, treating learners as competent adults (even though the goals were to learn basic reading and writing skills). Furthermore, groupwork and cooperative endeavours are encouraged to promote communication, for example collaboration between learner and facilitator regarding the topics to be covered. Freire (2006) describes the way in which the trainers should work: "From the outset, her efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power" (p. 109). This emphasises the important role of partnerships between educators and learners in such work.

Then, to inform the second feature of this project, a thinking skills methodology that was developed from Constructivist approaches, Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC) (Wallace & Adams, 1995), was chosen as a framework for the content and delivery of the literacy material. The project coordinator was familiar with TASC, having been part of the process of writing materials related to its use in teacher training. TASC was also suitable as a model because it corresponded well with the project aims which were broader than merely providing basic literacy training. TASC is soundly based in progressive ideas of cognitive skill development, and had been successfully trialled in the nearby city in the early 1990's. A problem-solving 'wheel' which uses a step-by-step approach incorporating a variety of thinking skills is central to the TASC model.

In Evans and Akhurst (1999), we describe the value of aspects of the TASC methods, including the "deliberate promotion of communication skills … encouraging learners to verbalise their ideas and the thinking processes that lead to them" (p. 4). The content of lessons is drawn directly from issues of relevance to the learners' lives, with explicit attention being given to listening, speaking, reading and writing through active participation, interaction and working with others in groups. A culture of questioning and interacting is promoted, with particular focus on both the literacy trainers' and learners' abilities to reflect upon alternatives and make conscious decisions about activities and learning materials to be used. Learners were to be encouraged to construct their knowledge collaboratively through discussion, using tools such as cognitive mapping, and reading and writing would follow using easily accessible materials such as Learn with Echo, the weekly adult education supplement from the local newspaper.

Finally, because research was central to the project from the funding perspective, Action Research was chosen for its utility for examining the unfolding of processes. This iterative approach of 'plan – act – observe – reflect' at each session had been shown to be effective in research undertaken in three other developing countries (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). Action Research has a transformative political agenda, in that it aims to de-mystify the research process, resonating with participatory principles, and incorporates the ongoing collection of evidence upon which decisions are based. Furthermore the Action Research cycles could work in

conjunction with the TASC methodology, which also uses a cyclic approach.

Weekly planning sessions between the project coordinator and literacy trainers formed part of the Action Research process. Quarterly reviews were also undertaken (including perspectives of members of the Nkosinathi Board and the university-based researcher). At various stages of the process, conference papers were presented (e.g. Evans & Akhurst, 1999), drawing on evidence collected from the learners and literacy trainers, to enable reflective opportunities and a critique of the undertaking.

Activity Theory and the 'Activity System' as a Unit of Analysis

The cultural-historical approach to learning and child development has its origins in the work of the Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky. Vygotsky's work (e.g. 1962; 1978) has been expanded and developed in a number of directions by a variety of theorists. The direction of relevance to this paper is Activity Theory (AT), which owes much to one of Vygotsky's collaborators, A. N. Leont'ev (see Russell, 2004). AT draws from Vygotsky's expansion of the behaviourist notion of stimulus and response: he introduced the concept of the mediation role played by 'tools', whereby people respond to stimuli through the tools they use in activities, rather than directly (Cole, 1996). The focus of AT is therefore greater than the individual, and focuses on transactions, activities and practice (Engeström, 2005).

AT "grounds analysis in everyday life events, the ways people interact with each other using tools over time" (Russell, 2004, p. 311), and to assist in such analysis, Engeström (1987) has expanded on the subject – mediator (or tool) – object model to formulate a useful means of representing an activity system, shown in Figure 1. The basic mediational triangle (subject – tools – object), as described initially by Vygotsky, may be seen in the upper part of the diagram. This is then expanded to include the 'outcome' of the activity resulting from the actions (on the right), and further interconnected triangles between other components: the 'rules' are the norms and conventions that influence actions, the 'community' refers to the people who share a common purpose and the 'division of labour' refers to the ways in which actions are undertaken by various members of the community.

One of the values of such a representation of the activity system is that it incorporates both the "object-oriented productive aspect and the

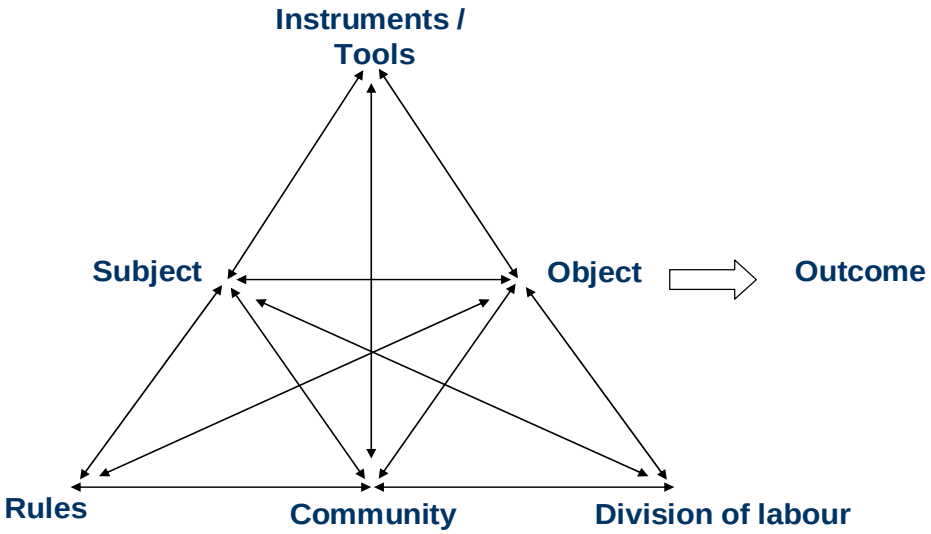

Figure 1: Engeström's (1987) expansion of Vygotsky's mediational triangle

person-oriented communicative aspect of human conduct" (Engeström, cited in Cole, 2005, p. 217). The above representation of an activity system is useful as a means to extract interactions for focus, whether tool-related, to do with people's intentions and motives or relationships. It is also a "flexible unit of analysis (theoretical lens), which allows us to train our gaze in different directions and with different levels of 'magnification' …" (Russell, 2004, p. 312). In the explanation below we hope to demonstrate the utility of this heuristic, in analysing aspects of the Nkosinathi project.

Application of the Activity System Model to the Nkosinathi Project

The above activity system triangle may be used to enable an exploration of the perspectives of the adult learners, the literacy trainers, the project coordinator and the university-based researcher. Use of these triangles incorporating details from various perspectives enables a view through different 'lenses', and illustrates the complexity of the systemic factors which were influential. In this section, illustrative quotations are also included from participants in the project (in italics); these were collected from interviews and group discussions during the ongoing evaluation. Whilst these illustrations do not include all the stakeholders in the project (for example, members of the advisory board and employers' voices are not represented), the main participants are represented.

To begin, Figure 2 identifies the perspective of the adult learners. With reference to the top triangle in the figure, the learners (subjects) attended classes in order to improve their literacy (object), hoping that the outcome would be to read and write in their own language (isiZulu) and to develop these skills in English as well. In order to achieve this, they were exposed to the TASC-based materials as 'tools'.

The three elements of the top triangle are linked to the elements at the base of the model. A central element was the developing community of practice (the adult learners), who were introduced to and worked according to the rules of engagement (noted at the left) associated with a progressive ABET and the TASC approach, which encouraged oral participation and group interactions as the means through which learning would take place. Since the learners needed to be split into those learning in their home language, and those wanting to learn in English, this did at times lead to some tension if the two groups were brought together, since the isiZulu learners did not want to feel inferior (see one of the learner's

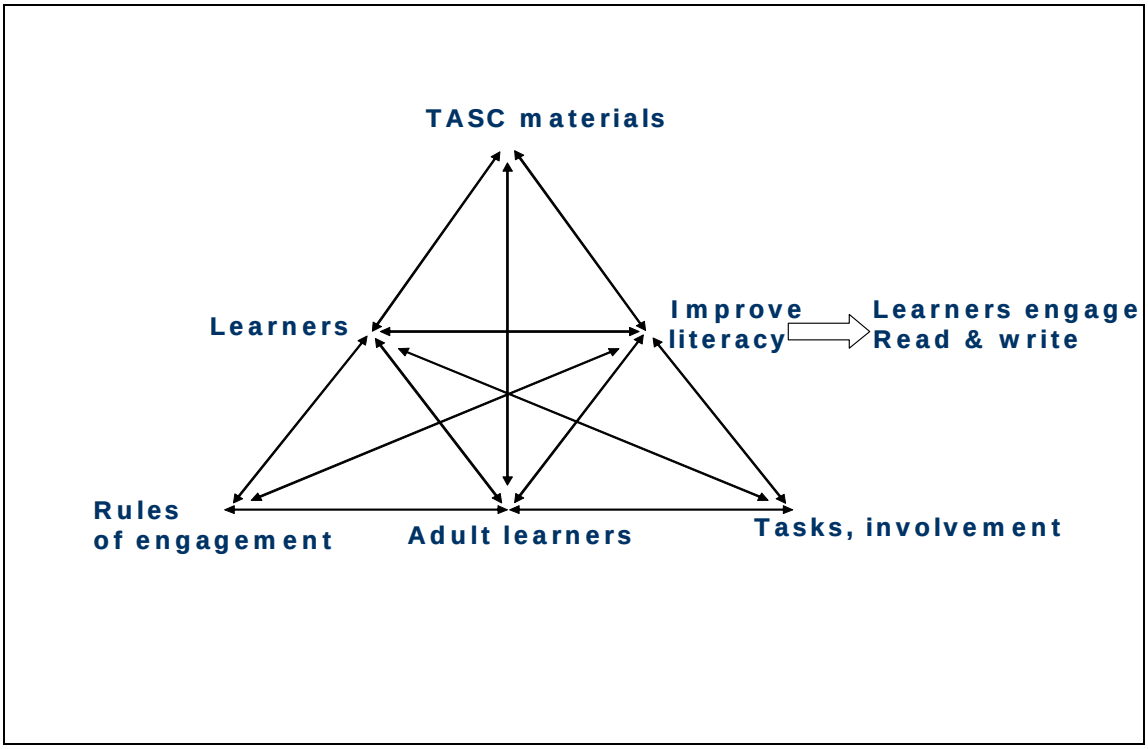

Figure 2: The Activity System model for the adult learners

excerpts below). The tasks (at the right) were designed to have relevance to their everyday lives and needs, thus being of intrinsic interest and led to learner involvement, and the value of these is emphasized in some of the learner responses below.

The following excerpts from interviews with learners illustrate what the learners said of their experiences in the first months:

- *We think all are getting somewhere. We like to be asked for our opinion.*
- *Everyone wanted to have a thought and to voice out some points. This we like very much.*

The group learning in isiZulu said of their achievements (outcomes):

- *Even in Zulu I didn't know how to do anything. How to write words … write clearly. Now I can ask and answer questions … Many things …*
- *Now I learn a bit of English – date of birth and ID.*
- *Now I can read a newspaper, write a letter, write the date – all these things.* (Translated)

One participant said the best part was:

- *To read and write, and I was also trying to speak but not perfect – specially I had a problem of using tenses such past, and future tense.*

Another said the best part was:

- *I am able to leave spaces and use capitals properly. I am able to see directions round my home, like 'Kranskop'* (a road sign) *– before I didn't know this words.*

However, the worst part for this learner related to the community of practice:

- *When we learnt with the higher levels doing English … They might laugh … When they were discussing things – we didn't want to do it.*

One said the course would be improved by:

- *having books with me to keep on revision after hours.*

Some extra comments from participants:

- *Since I attended this adult schools I have learn to communicate a person, to give person direction …learn even to separate metres and kilometres.*
- *I know how much important to introduce a person, even myself. The teacher… by working like a breakdown … she pulled us from scrap.*

In the last comment the learner is alluding to the thinking skill of making thoughts and plans explicit, and to the sense of personal improvement that has resulted. When asked 'where else did you read or write outside of the class?' a number spoke about being able to decode traffic signs, illustrating that a lesson had relevance and that visual literacy was increasing. There were indications that transfer of learning was taking place.

The value of the approach to learning is summed up in one learner's comment related to the participation (rules):

- *I think this is real learning – if we (had) had this at school I think this country would be much different now.*

Another learner (who is also a shop steward) spoke about the impact of the learning on his role at work:

- *I even put myself in management's shoes – when they see 'production' I see 'the workers' … now I try to understand what they are saying.*

The activity system triangle in Figure 2 may be expanded to include the literacy trainers' perspective. In Figure 3 below, the additional features are added in bold and italics, to enable the views to be considered together. The literacy trainers, whilst sharing the objective of the learners' improving literacy, have their own objectives: the development of their own training skills. This was enabled through the funding of their attendance at various certificate courses in the city, and their weekly preparation meetings with the project coordinator. Their hopes were that developing these skills might improve their own employability (and this has been an outcome for some of them, since a number are now employed in that capacity, whilst others have moved on to other employment). The rules of engagement were similar to those of the adult learners (since these trainers also formed their own community of practice), but their tasks and involvement were to access resources for use, to prepare material, facilitate group-work and pass on their skills and expertise to the learners.

Figure 3 shows the interaction of the two activity systems, represented through the differences in detail of some of the elements.

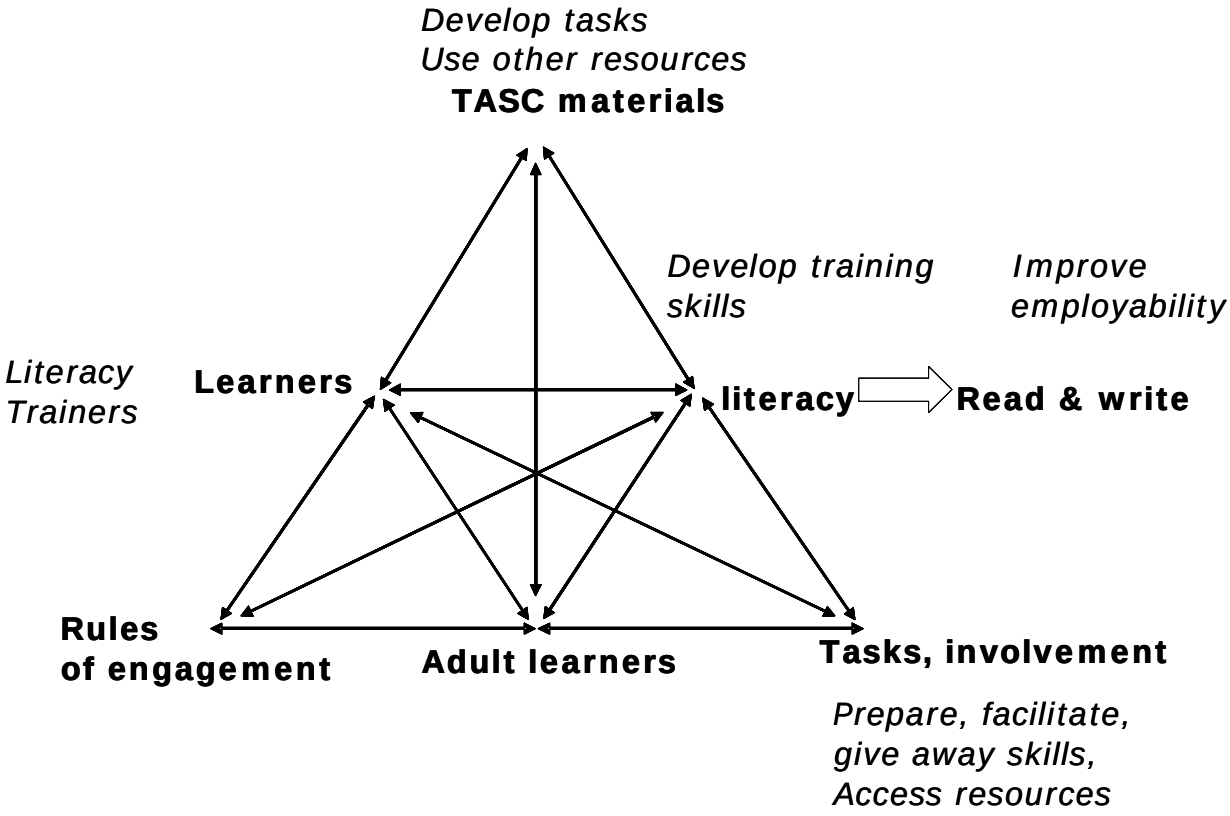

Figure 3: The Activity System model for the adult learners and literacy trainers

However, these different elements did not appear to be in conflict with one another, hence a 'working together' of the elements to enable the activities to progress. The acknowledgement of these differences is important in order to articulate mutual benefits to members of the two systems, and to sustain the commitment and motivation of the literacy trainers who were central to the successful delivery of the materials.

Two early comments from the trainers about the materials and approach were:

- *Some were struggling, we must adapt and make it relevant;*
- *But the people were free – they enjoyed it.*

The interaction of the two systems is illustrated by the dialogue below. In it, the value of the literacy trainers' understanding of the motivation and need to encourage the learners, as well as their sensitivity to the cultural nuances of the community is illustrated. This dialogue between the project coordinator (Q), and the trainers (T1 & T2) occurred after the project has been underway for a couple of weeks, with numbers growing each week and the concomitant difficulties in planning and the time consumed whilst orientating new learners to the approach to be used.

Q. *Can we close registration now, do you think, as it is making our planning and organising very difficult?*

T1. *They would be discouraged. They are coming in their own time … People from our society … it's part of being illiterate – they don't understand the other things …*

Q. *Can we not explain that they can register again in July, after six months?*

T1. *Let the mistakes be done by them, not us. We show them this is an organised thing – we are serious, so let them come. I'm impressed with these people – it was raining and they came, no complaints.*

T2. *Most of them as the year goes on will see the need, and we will see who drops out. They have to come by themselves. We must do everything for them, get the transport and give the lessons. We must be committed to them …*

The above excerpt illustrates the value of a culturally sensitive approach to community engagement. The comments about the rain were made in a context where dirt roads become very muddy and difficult for people who may be walking a distance. Transport was a variable that impacted on attendance on a number of occasions, since meetings were sometimes held at the same time at the sawmill, leading to the driver being otherwise occupied.

It was interesting to note the ways in which the trainers were utilizing the TASC thinking skills more broadly than in the lessons alone. One of the trainers, also a lay preacher noted:

- *Even out of classes I find myself using them. I was preparing my sermon for Sunday and I found myself using 'In someone else's shoes'. My point was about Jesus telling the people that to enter his kingdom they must become like little children – see things from the point of view of a child.*

In a focus group discussion, another trainer said:

- *We can think creatively … I look all around ideas. I challenge myself and ideas from both sides … It has taught me to use my mind.*

The central role played by the literacy trainers must be emphasized. The personality, dedication and competence of the facilitators is one of the important factors in the success of any adult literacy project. The degree to which the facilitator is prepared to shift control to the learners and work in a co-operative as opposed to an authoritarian style appears to correlate highly with learner satisfaction, and is also important for modeling democratic behaviour in community affairs. The early investment in their training had given the project credibility. The trainers were praised by learners for their fluency in English, punctuality and competence as facilitators. The risk to the project was that the trainers might find other, more lucrative, employment, but this did not affect the project in the two years under consideration (and although this did occur at a later stage, this was seen as a part of the empowerment of the participants).

In the first month or two, attendance was up to and over 50 per class, thus the two trainers would work in isiZulu with smaller groups, and the project coordinator was needed to work with the smaller group who wanted to learn in English. Initially, then, the project coordinator took on a dual role, working both as a literacy trainer and as facilitator of the trainers' meetings. At a later stage in the project, further trainers were recruited, enabling her to do the coordination and conduct some of the research.

Figure 4 represents the activity system

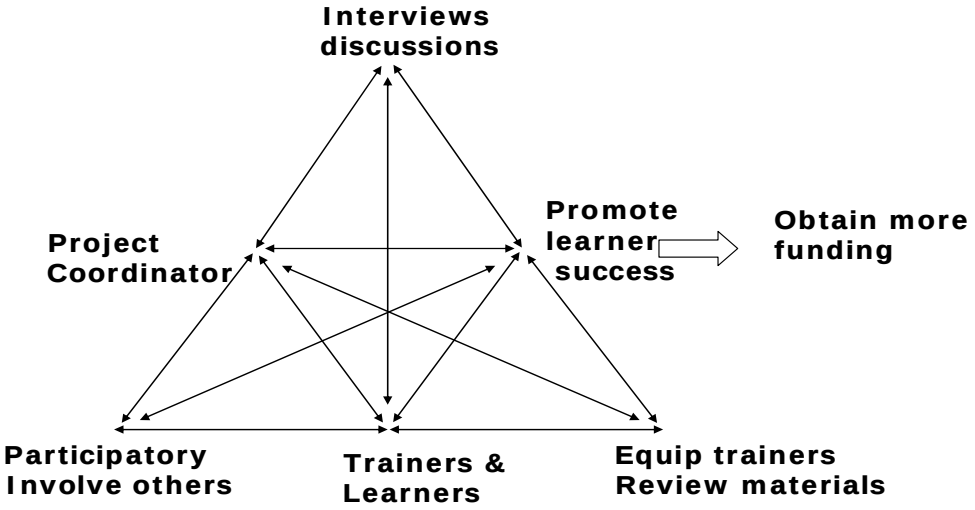

Figure 4: The activity system model for the project coordinator

from the perspective of the project coordinator. The main object was to promote learner success through her engagement with the literacy trainers on a weekly basis, and by ongoing communication with the learners, including the gathering of data to contribute to the research process. Overall, it was important to enable the project to gather momentum and reach a point (in terms of the number of learners successfully achieving progress and the capacity-building of trainers) where access to funds from organizations (either governmental or charitable) could facilitate the establishment of the project in a longer term way. It was also vital that modeling of the collaborative and systematic communicative style of ABET and TASC was evident in her engagements with both the trainers and the learners. The trainers' meetings involved both enabling the trainers to utilise the training they had received, and the gathering and sharing of materials (as represented by the elements at the base of the triangle).

Figure 5 overlays, in bold and italics, the engagement of the university-based researcher who had accessed the funds for the project. Her object was to make sure that evidence was gathered and the process was underpinned by research methodology in order to produce the outcomes required by the funding body. Her contributions to the quarterly review meetings were to continue in the participatory spirit of the project, assist with data analysis and provide theoretical and reflective input. Away from the project context, she also generated reports and conference proposals/papers for academic audiences, which in the short term enabled the second year's funding to be successfully acquired, and in the medium term provided the evidence base to enable applications for more sustained funding to go ahead.

The interaction between the project coordinator and university researcher is highlighted at the interface of their differing, but complementary, activities shown at the element nodes in Figure 5. This was facilitated by the mutual recognition of the differing contributions being made by each, and contributed to the continuation of the project work.

The figures above and their associated descriptive narratives illustrate the utility of the activity system model to enable and highlight interactions and differences in the activities of the people involved in the Nkosinathi project.

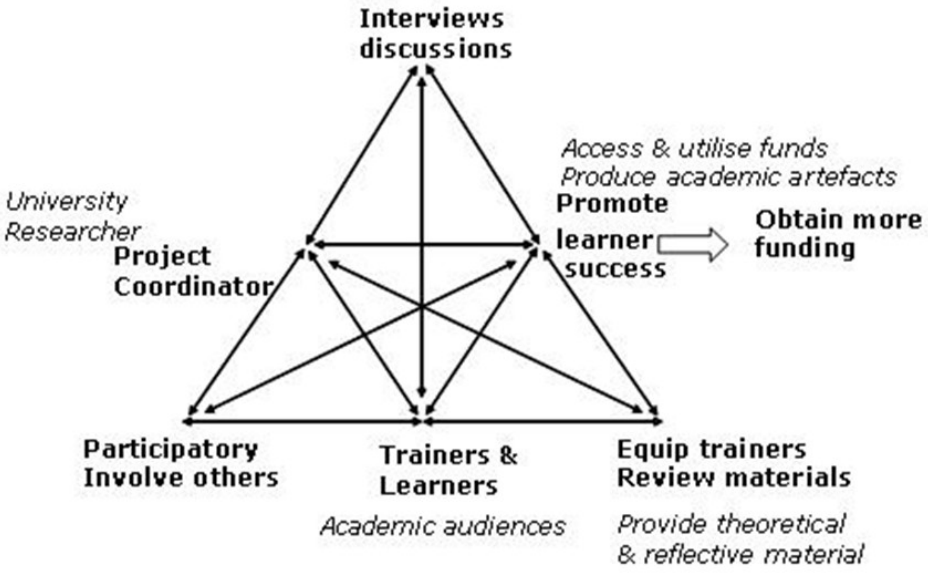

Figure 5: The activity system model for the project coordinator and the researcher

Whilst in the case of this project, the confluence of the differing objectives and outcomes enabled the continuation and success of the project (summarized in the following section), it is clear that the differences found when expanding on each of the elements of the model might also enable the articulation of tensions and barriers to progress within systems. For example, the philosophy shared by both the researcher and project coordinator led to each working as equal partners in the project, due to the recognition and appreciation of the contributions of the other. Clear communication during negotiations and mutual decision-making enabled this to occur. This was also the case in the more frequent weekly interactions between the coordinator and trainers. Had communication at these levels been complicated by mistrust, unarticulated expectations or unwillingness of participants to take up and deliver on agreed responsibilities, the results may have been very different. A further crucial factor appeared to be the equipping of learners and trainers to articulate their thinking and to see that their contributions were valued and important to the project's overall success.

It must be noted that the representation of activity systems above is not exhaustive. Further systems could have been drawn for other slightly more distal stakeholders, for example the employers, Board members and funders. Further 'layering' of the activity systems could lead to other comparisons and confluences becoming evident, enabling greater articulation of the variety of perspectives.

Outcomes of the Project

Comments about the impact of the project were gathered periodically, and the following, from the Human Resources officer at the sawmill, are illustrative of the progress made by some of the learners:

- *I have noticed some people, especially Mr C ... he can understand what's going on in meetings better than before. What impressed me the other day, he always was one that was thumb-printing, and now he's signing his name, which is wonderful to me.*
- *(There is) a big improvement in her paperwork – wage records, concentration. She used to do quite a lot of mistakes, but now she is better and accepting more responsibility.*
- *The driver, he is more open to talk – it's increased his confidence.*
- *As I am sitting with some of them in village committee meetings and shop stewards meetings I have noticed that they show great improvement in communicating their ideas.*

Some illustrative case studies were collected as evidence (in Evans &Akhurst, 1999), but space precludes the inclusion of details of these. However, some short excerpts from these are:

1. Learner A, after eight months' attendance at Nkosinathi, can read, write and speak English confidently enough for his own purposes. He had never been to school. He is now a leader in the youth congregation of a Sunday School. He said: *Now I know how to read and write. To read and write means I can look after myself in life. I can rule myself. After a further 6 months as a learner he wrote: in this year I learnt many things. I learnt how to write a project, debate, take time to think … think broadly.*
2. Learner B was able to reduce literacy classes to once a week. On another evening she co-ordinates and helps to run sewing classes for local women in the community. She collects money, makes out receipts, and helps to market products made by the group. Thus she has been instrumental in getting other projects off the ground. She only passed Grade 4 as a child.
3. Learner C, who could speak very little English and who struggles to read and write, is a mechanic on a local farm. Yet he has stood for and been elected to the farm school's governing body as chairman. He attends classes regularly in order to improve his English so that he does not feel inferior to the school teachers on the governing body who are all highly literate and can therefore intimidate him.
4. Learner D was unemployed, and had only attended school to grade 2. After passing level 1, she also enrolled in an early childhood Educare course, and started working with five children in a voluntary capacity. She was able to stand up in a community meeting and speak confidently about the importance of pre-school education.

She notes: *This is my future … I can learn more. I can help all the children.*
5. Others stated that they could now 'help their own children', 'greet their employer in English' and that they thought it 'might even help them to find jobs or get promoted'.

By 2001, the following results were directly related to this project: six jobs were created; community members were trained, both as literacy facilitators and to take on other roles in this list; employment projects were started, including sewing and carpentry classes, vegetable gardening and the training of some of the learners in word processing and other computer-related skills; an Early Childhood Education centre was established, and the carers from the community were trained by drawing from the project funds; links were established with a district clinic, and there was information dissemination and training provided for two volunteers in the provision of home-based care for HIV/AIDS.

Each of the above-mentioned outcomes developed further after 2001. The project had gained a momentum of its own, and this coupled with the ongoing success of the learners in examinations, led to funding being granted from the provincial education department to pay for some of the teachers' salaries. Members of the expanded project team also made links with other Adult Education providers, and access to other funds for the development of skills was facilitated.

It is important to highlight the enabling mechanisms and elements that contributed to the success of the project. As noted earlier in the previous section, the commitment and persistence of the ABET trainers and the learners played a central role. Furthermore, the proximity and willingness of the project coordinator was crucial. She gave of her time and expertise voluntarily, only claiming recompense for travel expenses and materials. Thus the major 'players' were very much a part of the local community. Then, the source of the initiative in the local church must be acknowledged, and the usefulness of the church building (for no fee) as a central venue was also important. The Nkosinathi Board, comprising church members, community leaders and the community worker, worked actively 'behind the scenes', and the success of the project led to enhanced trust that the group were committed to delivery. This in turn led to improved communication.

Discussion

In this paper, the utility of activity system models to enable reflection on the interaction of roleplayers in the Nkosinathi Project has been demonstrated. This has led to an understanding of the confluence of factors that contributed to the success of the project. A limitation is that the expansion of aspects of the project using the tools of AT happened post hoc, rather than as a part of the ongoing Action Research evaluative cycles. More recently, at the conference of the International Society for Cultural and Activity Research, in Seville, Spain (2005), there were a number of examples of researchers utilising the model in active discussion with the community with which they were working. The models may prove to be useful tools for discussions, in communities of practice, about the interactions between activity systems, potential conflict points and tensions.

In the past decade, Engeström and his colleagues have worked extensively with the activity systems triangles described in this article. However, there have also been further model developments, to enable closer links to be made with Action Research. The most recent model to be proposed is the 'expansive learning cycle' (Engeström, 1999), and this may prove to have utility for community engagement.

From the point of view of the role of the psychologist in a project such as this, I hope the article has illustrated the way in which a theoretical lens may be used to enhance understanding of the interaction of various factors. This perhaps partially answers the question raised about how psychologists can "remain relevant and contribute to the profession by pioneering and reinventing praxis responsive to social change?" (de la Cancela, et al., 2004, p. 156). In this project, research was integrated into the process, and the associated reviews and analytical work were utilised as input into the next phase of the project. The reports and research papers that were developed were used as leverage to access further funding, thus leading to a direct benefit back into the project.

Other principles of community psychology

were also inherent in the project design, including the participatory and cooperative approach taken, and the empowerment of participants. Rozensky, Johnston, Goodheart, & Hammond (2004) note that "psychology builds a health(ier) world by enhancing the positive interplay of the individual and his or her personal, local, and global environment" (p. xx), and the outcomes of the project in terms of the benefits to participants have been noted above.

Reflecting on the project from the perspective of the provision of literacy to adult learners, one of the factors that have plagued other projects has been the high drop-out rate reported. In Evans & Akhurst (1999) we noted that: "we learnt that we had to provide the best service, the most encouragement, acceptance, despite difficulties of organisation, i.e. put no obstacles in the way of those wanting to come". There is no doubt that the levels of motivation and enthusiasm shown by the project coordinator and the trainers were important contributory factors that could not easily be measured. This project was also based firmly in learning theory, and we believe this was a further important factor. It would be valuable to reflect on the pragmatics of the integration of the TASC methodology with the methods of training used in adult education in further reflection on the work. A further positive political factor was the presence of an accredited system of assessment provided by an independent body, but supported by the South African Government's Ministry of Education, which was accessible to the project and found to be encouraging to the learners.

Finally, this project underlines the social justice roles that may be played by university systems. In an era where much management and funding is ruled by the principles of employability and economics, it is valuable to have an example of university-related work contributing to community development. This project is a small example of the sort of work described by Fryer & Fagan (2003) where community members and middle class research allies can work in solidarity to successfully bring about at least limited social change, reducing a little of the impact of poverty. Crick (cited in Annette, 2005, p. 333), notes that universities "are part of society and, in both senses of the word, a critical part which should be playing a major role in the wider objectives of creating a citizenship culture". Whereas there are many universities with widening participation agendas, there appear to be fewer voices calling for reciprocal engagement. Active community psychology has the potential to be one of the vehicles for such engagement in social justice, engaging people excluded by poverty and limited education in emancipatory understanding and enhancing their potentials to transform the quality of their lives.

References

Annette, J. (2005). Character, civic renewal and service learning for democratic citizenship in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 53*, 3, 326-340.

Archer, D., & Cottingham, S. (1996). *Action research report on Reflect: The experiences of three Reflect pilot projects in Uganda, Bangladesh, El Salvador.* Overseas Development Administration Evaluation Report, Issue 6, London: Institute of Education and Education Action.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cole, M. (2005). Putting culture in the middle. In H. Daniels (Ed.), *An introduction to Vygotsky* (pp.199-226). London: Routledge.

de la Cancela, V., Alpert, J., Wolff, T., & Dachs, S. L. (2004). Psychological approaches to community health: Community health psychology. In R. H. Rozensky, N. G. Johnston, C. D. Goodheart, & W. R. Hammond, (Eds). *Psychology builds a healthy world: Opportunities for research and practice* (pp.155-184). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity theoretical approach to developmental research*. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Oy.

Engeström, Y. (1999). Innovative learning in work teams: Analyzing cycles of knowledge creation in practice. In Y. Engeström, Miettinen, R., & Punamaki, R. (Eds). *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 307-404). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Engeström, Y. (2005). Toward overcoming the encapsulation of school learning. In H.

Daniels (Ed.), *An introduction to Vygotsky* (pp.157-176). London: Routledge.
Evans, D., & Akhurst, J. E. (1999, June). *FLEXI-THINK! A co-operative communicative approach to the Nkosinathi Adult Literacy project*. Paper presented at the Conference of the International Association for Cognitive Education, Calgary, Canada.
Fordham, P., Holland, D., & Millican, J. (1995). *Adult literacy: A handbook for development workers*. UK and Ireland: Oxfam /VSO.
Freire, P. (2006). The banking model of education. In E. F. Provenso (Ed.). *Critical issues in education: An anthology of readings* (pp. 106-112). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Fryer, D. & Fagan, R. (2003). Poverty and unemployment. In S. C. Carr & T. S. Sloan (Eds.). *Poverty and psychology: From global perspective to local practice* (pp.87-102). New York: Kluwer Academic / Plenum.
Kretzmann, J. P. & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out.* Chicago, IL: Acta.
Merriam S. B. & Brockett, R. G. (1997). *The profession and practice of adult education: An introduction.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
Rozensky, R. H., Johnston, N. G., Goodheart, C. D., & Hammond, W. R. (Eds). *Psychology builds a healthy world: Opportunities for research and practice.* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
Russell, D. R. (2004). Looking beyond the interface: Activity theory and distributed learning. In H. Daniels and A. Edwards (Eds), *The Routledge Falmer reader in psychology of education* (pp. 307-325). London: Routledge Falmer.
Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (Original work published 1934).
Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Wallace, B. & Adams, H. (1995). *Thinking actively in a social context.* Bicester, UK: AB Academic.

Note

Investigation undertaken under the auspices of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express sincere appreciation to the literacy trainers for their contributions to the success of this project, and are grateful to the Research and Community Development fund of the former University of Natal for the funding support. The comments and suggestions made by the two anonymous reviewers were also important in assisting us to refine the article.

Address correspondence to

Jacqui Akhurst,
Faculty of Human and Life Sciences,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York, YO31 7EX,
United Kingdom.
Ph: +44 (0)1904 876744
FAX: +44 (0)1904 876500
Email: J.Akhurst@yorksj.ac.uk

Depicting outlaw motorcycle club women using anchored and unanchored research methodologies

Julie van den Eynde
University of Queensland, Australia
Arthur Veno
Monash University, Australia

Entry of researchers into a subculture can be fraught with personal and methodological problems resulting in researcher ill health, poor data and corrupt analysis. Based upon the literature a method was developed to avoid these outcomes. The technique was used during a major community psychology intervention requiring a researcher to become deeply immersed into the subculture of Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs (OMCs). We coined the term Insider – Outsider to describe the technique. The technique allowed a complete re-framing of the role of women involved with OMCs. Previous research of women associated with OMCs is scurrilous as the women are defined only by their sexual and economic values to the OMC members. We came to the conclusion that previous research was one of the last bastions of sexist research. Our findings normalised the role of OMC women as, in our methodology, women were actually interviewed, observed and a replicable methodology was used.

Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs (OMCs) have been variously defined by researchers as a deviant group, a subculture, a tribe, and a minority group (e.g., Quinn, 1987; Quinn & Koch, 2003). The OMCs are known by their club names like Hells Angels, Rebels, Gypsy Jokers, Coffin Cheaters and Bandidos. These clubs reject the value set of middle Australia and are governed by their own codes of behaviour. Recent research by Quinn (2001) in America, and Veno (2003) in Australia report OMCs have patriotic ideologies and are defined in terms of extreme masculine concepts such as brotherhood, loyalty and an enforced code of silence.

In an unprecedented move, the president of a major international motorcycle club approached Veno to assist in defusing a serious conflict that had developed between the OMC and the state government and its police. A series of violent events had occurred between OMCs and police over the previous year, and tensions had escalated to such an extent that OMC members were planning violent retaliation against police. As a result of this serious situation, the authors orchestrated a community-wide conflict resolution strategy based on neutralising moral panic initiated by the state. Details other than methodology used during this media based conflict resolution intervention are reported elsewhere (Veno & van den Eynde, 2007). This paper reports on the unique methodology developed to conduct the community intervention. We coined the term 'Insider – Outsider' anchored research methodology to describe the technique developed.

We also report on unintended and surprising consequences of utilising this methodology. For amongst the drama and danger of the ethnographic field work in a cultural setting of extreme masculinities, the researchers came across perhaps one of the last bastions of unbridled sexist research.

Designing the Research Methodology

Similar to Miller (2004) who worked with refugee communities, and Scheper-Hughes (2004) who researched the underworld of organ trafficking, we realised traditional sole researcher roles were not suitable for use in the current study. Traditional research roles were limiting and perhaps dangerous in this highly volatile setting. Consequently attention was turned to develop a methodology which would

(i) produce outcomes based on social justice, non-violence and peace making,[1]
(ii) be culturally appropriate for the extreme masculine and secretive culture of OMCs,
(iii) maintain an anchored research methodology technique, steeped in research, rigid in data collection, and provide the means to record the

immersion of the researcher, and
(iv) maintain the value base of the professional researchers.

We began our search for methodology in the 'space between' the major social science disciplines – i.e., with an interdisciplinary methodology. We were guided by recent scholarly conversations (e.g., Newell, 2000; Nowotny, 2003) summarized by Smelser (2003) who stated "if we are to understand context, we are forced to be interdisciplinary" (p. 653). This necessity drew us into considering methodologies encompassing anthropology, sociology, psychology, and to recent social evaluation work[2]

For example, our attention was drawn to the early traditions of anthropology established by Malinowski (1922), who presented an argument that researchers in foreign cultures need to emphasize their role as 'participants' rather than as 'observers'. Malinowski and subsequent researchers using ethnographic exemplars enabled anthropologists and other social scientists to discard distortions of cultural values being studied by viewing the researched through the researchers' values of western, anglo, masculine, 'rightness' of behaviour and thought. More recently, in the community psychology field, Maton (1993) concurs, to an extent, as he suggests research that is not a culturally anchored methodology often results in

> ….*weak, inconsistent, or unimportant research findings. At worst, findings from such research strengthens negative stereotypes about subcultures, reinforce victim blaming, and contributes to the development of continuation of social policies that negatively impact on subcultural groups or populations.*
> (p. 748)

We reasoned that a methodology encompassing ethnography and participant observation would enhance our cultural understandings, as we predicted our experiences would be embedded in a 'foreign culture'. We believed we would be culturally challenged at all levels by this foreign culture.

Snow, Benford, and Anderson (1986) suggest numerous roles for ethnographers. One role suggested was that of a 'controlled sceptic'. This terminology was used to describe the role for ethnographers studying a proselytizing Buddhist movement where "… the researcher acted as if he were a naïve, curious, and moderately willing but sceptical member who needed to be coaxed and instructed each step of the way" (p. 382). Another ethnographic role discussed by Snow et al. (1986) is that of the 'credentialed expert' where the researcher worked as an activist, and become so immersed in the setting that the researchers life was taken over by activities as an activist in a disarmament organization (p. 385). However, either of these ethnographic roles were not a realistic option for Veno to utilise in the setting. In OMC culture he could not role play - deception would be dangerous, as well as unethical. Veno had to be 'honest' and 'staunch' as these are some core values of the OMC culture. Adler, Adler and Rochford (1986) reinforced this perception by Veno as they persuasively argue that in ethnographic research roles, in general, "role playing and using deceptive strategies does not constitute 'good faith' " (p. 371).

Tewksbury (2001, 2002) concurs with the ethical imperative for ethnographic researchers to be 'true members' of the subculture to achieve culturally valid results. He conducted research in gay bathhouses and recorded sexual activity, ritual, negotiation of anonymous sexual interactions, and the environmental features of the bath houses that facilitate different sexual activities. By full participation, he gained access to the secretive and hidden social setting of gay bathhouses; he achieved special permissions, knowledge of rites-of passage, filtering procedures, ceremonies and gatekeeping processes. Tewksbury (2001) claims ethnographic investigators must fully immerse in the culture being studied and this requires full participation as a member. He goes on to state that researchers achieving full membership is particularly important in criminal and/or deviant social settings, not only to achieve deeper knowledge, but also to increase validity. He warns that "the possibilities of skewed interpretations may be especially true when the subculture being investigated is a stigmatized, or hidden, population and/or a population that is built around 'deviant' activities" (Tewksbury, 2001, p. 8).

A further refinement to our methodology came from Miller (2004) who worked with refugees and produced a compelling argument for the need to reject notions of the neutral observer, and work towards, and earn, "an authentic interpersonal relationship" (p. 220) with participants, built on authentic trust and respect. So, with guidance from these colleagues who have experience in participative ethnographic methods, we took heed, and as a result, Veno eased into the OMC world, taking on the role as the anthropological 'inside ethnographer' (Kanuha, 2000; Messerschmidt, 1981) gaining acceptance from OMC members, and establishing close, authentic relationships with key OMC members (Miller, 2004). Veno developed an emic-stance, i.e., a subjective, informed, influential and powerful standpoint rich in new ethnographic knowledge of OMC culture (Headland, Pike & Harris, 1990).

The decision 'to walk a mile in OMC shoes' was not taken lightly – a great deal of attention was taken of colleagues' experiences and recommendations on how to conduct deep participation and immersion in the field. Colleagues warned of a series of costs involved in deep participation ethnography – these are noted below.

Cautions for 'The-Insider'

Working alone as an insider – researcher, Marquart (2001) warned of the emotional cost to researchers utilising deep participatory research methodology. His research setting was in a prison and the participative role was enacted by being ostensibly employed as a prison guard. Marquart reported that "the participative or outside-inside role is emotionally and physically taxing because the researcher, in any scene or setting, must in essence wear 'two hats' " (Marquart, 2001, p. 40) – in this case the guard, and the insider-researcher. He cites instances where these dual roles meant he felt compromised as he often obtained 'guilty knowledge' (Marquart, 2001, p. 44), and often witnessed many illegalities but he 'did not see them'. His reaction was "to block or neutralize the moral predicament of seeing 'too much', I kept quiet and simply observed" (p. 44). Marquart (2001) succinctly reports on the heavy emotional toll on himself as he conducted this intense research methodology.

VanderStaay (2005) also reports on the dangers of deep participatory techniques. For his research, he actively engaged with a drug dealing society which was culturally foreign to the researcher. He befriended a young teenage cocaine dealer, and became involved with his family. His stated goal was to "acquire empathy for local ways of acting and feeling" (p. 399). VanderStaay became a 'big brother' to the young drug dealer, but the young man ended up in jail for murdering his mother's friend. The research project was abandoned.

As with Marquart (2001) above, VanderStaay (2005) was 'haunted' by the participant's demise. He was guilt ridden, and suffered emotional distress and secondary trauma. He reported he did not have the "capacity to negotiate the emotional trauma and ambiguity of his fieldwork" (VanderStaay, 2005, p. 400). He experienced stress and trauma at every stage of his fieldwork, which obscured his "focus on the concerns and goals that first led me to initiate the study while inhibiting my capacity to make sound judgements in difficult circumstances" (VanderStaay, 2005, p. 402).

These warnings from high participatory researchers were of crucial importance in devising our methodology. They not only discuss ongoing emotional trauma; they also report emotional responses of the researcher which caused them to lose focus and lose sight of the goals of the research (Marquart, 2001; VanderStaay, 2005).

Of course, weaknesses of ethnography (according to classical psychological methodologists) are well documented. Tewksbury (2001) warns against losing analytical perspective through the use of such deep immersion techniques. Maton (1993) argues that by using ethnographic methodologies without other corroborating evidence "researchers personal and cultural biases may lead to inaccurate 'translations' of a subjective culture" (p. 749). To transcend these concerns, Maton corroborated his ethnographic research into religious subcultures with a linked empirical-ethnographic methodology. Whilst this may be possible in some settings where participants are likely to comply with empirical methodologies; we did not have this luxury with the OMCs. Compliance with neither quantitative techniques nor any other technique which would divulge

information about the OMC is "against what we are all about" as Veno was told by a senior office bearer of a major international OMC. Empirical techniques having been ruled out, we had to find other ways to avoid the validity dangers and pitfalls of deep immersion ethnographic techniques.

High emotional costs and the abandoning of research methodology are not often reported, but, in the instance of working with OMCs, we believed these researchers were reporting highly salient findings. As well, we needed to devise a technique which provided at least some checks and balances to the insider-researcher's ethnographic data. Hence, we needed to devise a methodology to avoid psychological harm to the insider-researcher, to alleviate the ramifications on the researchers' analytical perspective, and to devise a research procedure which provided some degree of methodological rigor.

We hypothesised that the disadvantages of deep participation and ethnographic techniques might be offset by designing a research team for this setting. That is, could the problems Marquart (2001) VanderStaay (2005) and others encountered be magnified because they were working solo and thus, neutralised or at least minimised by working in a team setting?

Constructing a Research Team

The academic literature is rich and stimulating where researchers report their immersion and deep participation into cultural settings very different from their own, by collaborating with colleagues to form teams. There are several variations of such research teams, each with different aims and purposes.

Brodsky and Faryal (2006) refer to the technique they developed for a team as 'constructing bridges' to enable entry into other cultures. These authors formed a team to research the culture of Afghan women who resisted oppression during the Soviet invasion, the subsequent Taliban rule, and finally, the USA coalition's bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. The insider-researcher was an Afghan woman, whose roles included key informant, translator and collaborator. The outsider-researcher was a non-Afghan woman academic, with rudimentary Dari language skills. The insider and outsider researchers worked together on data collection and rudimentary data analysis. This fascinating ethnography provided us with hints about using two researchers in the OMC setting - one as an imbedded 'Insider', and a complementary role for the other as an 'Outsider'. Similar to Brodsky and Faryal (2006), only the Insider (i.e., Veno) had permissions, access to OMC culture, and credibility with OMC leadership. Van den Eynde, like Brodsky, is a female academic. Within the OMC research setting, the parallels to Brodsky and Faryal (2006) were powerful in shaping our methodology.

Another variation of the role of Outsider came from Bartunek and Louis (1996) who formed teams consisting of outsider academic fieldworkers and insider community members, who jointly worked together in taking action to manage, improve or solve their problems in the community. Bartunek and Louis (1996) strongly recommend that the Insider-Outsider research teams are most advantageous when composed of members of "complementary dissimilarity" (pp. 17-18). The authors, Veno and van den Eynde qualify as 'dissimilar' on grounds of religion, gender, class origins and amount of experience in the OMC setting. Bartunek and Louis (1996) state "…the more diverse the experience histories of the individuals composing a research team, especially in terms of their relationship to the setting, the more diverse should be their perspectives on and potential interpretations of any particular observed event there" (p. 17-18). Consequently, it appeared van den Eynde would be an ideal 'Outsider' as she had no exposure to OMC culture while Veno was an ideal Insider with his access and long term exposure to OMCs.

Affirmation for our proposed team model came from research literature in the program evaluation field (e.g., Hurley, van Eyk & Baum, 2002). Using evaluators language, insider evaluators are defined as people who are involved with the implementation or outcomes of the program, have intimate knowledge of the organisation, culture, norms and key contacts, whereas; outside evaluators are external to the goals and outcomes of the program, bring a fresh view to the situation, and have a mandate to raise sensitive issues, and the ability to critique the insider ethnographer. Van den Eynde took on the

role of the external researcher with an anthropological etic-stance characterized by deeper levels of objectivity, distance, and removed from the subject matter or project (Headland, Pike & Harris, 1990). This inside-ethnographer/outside-researcher team allowed Veno to cross into the OMC world with a degree of confidence with respect to not 'going native' and having a colleague to whom he was responsible for the production of data, refinement and targeting of research questions, and most importantly critiquing and debriefing.

Insider-Outsider Methodology

Veno, as the Insider moved into the OMC culture and over time took on many of the attributes of the OMC culture. Similarly, Wolf (1991) a graduate anthropology student, immersed into OMC culture and noted "I watched my own identity change as the result of experiences I had on my own as a biker and those I shared with Rebel club members" (p. 216). He went on to describe that he needed to keep track of himself and be cognisant of how he had changed as a result of being drawn into the club (The Rebels) and drifting away from 'the establishment'.

At an operational level, Veno as the Insider reported back to van den Eynde as the Outsider almost daily. Van den Eynde as the Outsider took extensive field notes from all conversations. Conversations between Insider and Outsider were often digitally recorded for later reference. 'Complementary dissimilarity' (Bartunek & Louis, 1996) was a powerful dynamic in these sessions. That is, as Veno immersed deeper into the culture, van den Eynde would question, argue, probe, disagree, debate, and/or listen to ensure her understanding of the culture, and the ongoing events. These sessions also provided a debriefing function for both the Insider, and the Outsider.

Feedback loops were constant, and bi-directional. As in action research, the Outsider held sessions with the Insider where goals were set, actions were planned, results were analysed, and later the goals were again revisited and reset. This kept the project on track with clear goals and outcomes to work towards. The Outsider was constantly researching and collecting data, and feeding back the preliminary analysis to the Insider – allowing informed decisions to be made, and enabled planning to be conducted with solid supporting evidence. For example, as we were trying to neutralize a moral panic, newspaper reports were collected and analysed, and transcripts from television news reports were collected. This media analysis allowed us to determine which media mode was most effective in slowing the moral panic, and critically, we could determine when the OMC spokesman was successful in taking control of how the media was representing OMC culture. This research and analysis was a critical function of the success of the community intervention.

Whilst Veno, in his role of Insider, immersed deeply into the OMC culture, van den Eynde maintained her role as objective, distanced and watchful. Horowitz (1986) detailed how she maintained her role as 'lady reporter' and an outsider, and resisted any attempts from USA street gang members to re-negotiate her role to an 'insider'. In this Outsider's case, no approach was made to renegotiate her role – this was a culture of extreme masculinity, and as a consequence there was no way van den Eynde would be approached to come closer to the OMCs. Very early in the research project, the OMC leadership spoke to van den Eynde privately and checked if she could handle their swearing and cussing, and checked she was not overly offended with 'substance use'. At this conversation, the OMC leadership told her she 'was under OMC protection'. When she replied that she never wanted to be in a position where she needed protection from anyone, she was told 'you need protection'. No further clarification or negotiation was possible!

The Outsider made no attempt to fit-in with the OMC culture – this was not her role, and most definitely was her preference. In this environment of extreme masculinity, she neither swore, nor drunk alcohol, nor used drugs. She never road a Harley Davidson, nor asked for a ride. She did not go to OMC club houses, and never approached an OMC member. In fact she became an 'invisible person' when around OMCs, and certainly in the shadows when OMCs' 'business' was happening. But she was working hard - seriously listening, intensely

observing and gathering 'deep data' Upon reflection, one wonders how successful this role would have been if the Outsider was a man – would the same dynamics be successful?

Outcomes

As noted previously, Veno's immersion into OMC culture was primarily to enable working with members of the OMC to develop culturally appropriate conflict resolution strategies. This was achieved and is reported elsewhere (Veno & van den Eynde, 2007). Meanwhile, this deep participation in OMC culture meant Veno was being drawn into all facets of biker life, including biker social life, biker 'business', biker family life and coming into contact with all kinds of groups who loosely associate with motorcycle clubs.

The strategy was effective but so was the technique. Veno was able to maintain a reasonable continuity to his non OMC life and whilst there were significant challenges experienced to his identity similar to Wolf (1991); he maintained an overall ability to interact with academic environments and social settings. Admittedly, he did move towards regarding the world much more as an OMC member. For example, he became completely unintimidated by positional authority.

While attending community psychology events he felt much more comfortable arriving early and 'hanging out' at Harley Heaven, trying to get his mind space able to deal with the major culture shift being experienced. Old friends and colleagues were shocked to see him light up a cigarette during one Community Psychology Professional Development Activity as he had quit twenty years previously and only taken up smoking and other 'undesirable habits' since living the OMC lifestyle. Not withstanding these peccadillos, the research relationship was strong and anchored by the Outsider to keep him on track with the job at hand.

This Insider role allowed Veno a gradual introduction to the women who associate with OMCs – for example family members (i.e., wives, girlfriends, partners, children, mothers), business associates to the OMC (i.e., waitresses, strippers, madams of the local brothel) and women who liked to 'hang out' with the men from the clubs. This was an enlightening and unintended consequence of deep participation, as Veno as an Insider, found the reality of the women who associate with OMCs incongruent with the reports in the academic literature. These inconsistencies were reported to van den Eynde and she targeted key women to speak with and set other data collection tasks for Veno to collect data about the women who are associated with OMCs.

Profane Methodology: Politics, Self Advancement and the Illusion of Scientific Method in the Study of Biker Women.

Fatal flaws exist in previous research into women who associate with OMCs. A primary concern is that all the research was conducted by male researchers (Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990; Montegomery, 1976; Quinn & Koch, 2003; Watson, 1980; Wolf, 1991). As well, the methodologies employed by these researchers are vague and hazy. Most of the research was focussed on male members of the motorcycle club (e.g., Quinn, 1987). The authors of these previous studies were not particularly interested in the associated women except when discussing men's activities related to club sexual rituals, earning of merit badges, and the economic survival of the men or clubs. One exception is Hopper and Moore (1990) who specifically focused on women associated with outlaw clubs. These researchers engaged in a crude form of participant observation and conducted unsystematic interviews with club members and their female associates over seventeen years, in four states within the USA. Unfortunately, no account was given of the number of women interviewed, the critical demographic information of the participants, or details of the settings in which the women were observed.

Similarly vague methods of participant observation and interviews were conducted by Montegomery (1976) in Canada over 2 years, and Watson (1980) in USA over a three year time frame. Hopper's (1983) research methodology was unclear other than stating he had studied motorcycle clubs for the previous ten years with his friend, the former president of an OMC. Quinn and Koch (2003) make

elusive statements claiming they had thirty years of "intermittent interactions with bikers" (p. 282).

The concern with this earlier research is not only related to the loosely stated methods, but more critically, to the concomitant validity of the research results. All of the aforementioned research on women associates of OMC members has vaguely stated methodologies and unstated participant demographics. Yet, without exception; each research report still makes clear statements, analyses and firm conclusions about the women who associate with OMCs. Only Watson (1980) made any attempt to address the weak methodology issues when he bravely stated "I must admit that my interviews with biker women were limited least my intentions were misinterpreted" (p. 42). Notwithstanding this admission of little contact with women, much of his paper continued to report on women in this setting in considerable detail and with authority.

Whilst their affiliations may have afforded these previous researchers greater access to the male culture of OMCs, their gender excluded entrance into most of the women's world (Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990; Montegomery, 1976; Quinn & Koch, 2003; Watson, 1980; Wolf, 1991). A clear example of this point occurred when the Insider in this current study participated in a weekend 'run' organised by an OMC which was open to family members and the public biker community. Approximately 100 bikers (as well as media cars, media helicopters and numerous police escorts – motorbikes, marked and unmarked cars) rode from pub to pub through a picturesque historical rural area. At each pub stop, the men congregated at the pub, drinking, eating snacks, and forming primarily male discussion groups. Interested village people tended to collect at a distance, watch the bikers, admire the impressive show of Harley Davidson's, and take photographs. Police, after tending to their video surveillance machinery, retreated to eat lunch and take breaks in discreet eateries, and wait for the next stage of the bikers ride.

At each village, the women who were riding with the bikers tended not to congregate with the men around the pub - women had their own business to attend to and male researchers are not privy to it. For example, the women's rest rooms were a hive of activity, as were the local antique shops. The women tended to wander through the village in small groups searching for trinkets and souvenirs for their children and family who were not on the runs. Some women searched for the police contingent so they could take photographs. These events occurred far from the so-called 'centre of activity', i.e., at the pubs where the men were. The depth of information about women's participation in biker sociality gained from these informal conversations is not available to male researchers – this is women's business.

We argue it is audacious of male researchers to claim validity of their data from weak research methodologies, unstated participant demographics and a lack of access to women's settings and informal conversations (see Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990; Montegomery, 1976; Quinn & Koch, 2003; Watson, 1980; Wolf, 1991). Unfortunately, the relevant academic literature relevant to OMC culture provides shocking information based on such techniques. In light of these shortcomings, the following discussion reports on the current available research on women who are associated with OMCs – deeply flawed as it is.

The existing academic literature reports that most women associated with OMCs come from dysfunctional family backgrounds where many suffered abuse as children, and their alcoholic parents had separated (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 376). They were generally "from lower class families in which the status of the female is not remarkably different from that they currently enjoy" (Watson, 1980, p. 42). Many women believed "they deserved to be treated as people of little worth" (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 378), and consequently displayed low self concepts (Watson, 1980). The research claims that the combination of a dysfunctional family environment as children, and the low status afforded to women in lower class families meant for the women that "their family background had prepared them for subservience" (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p.

378). The result of this alleged acquiescence is that "biker women were completely dominated and controlled" (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 383). Further, Watson (1980) reports that "many are mothers of illegitimate children before they resort to bikers and may view themselves as fallen women who have little to lose in terms of respectability" (p. 42).

The above research chronicles women's preparation for complete domination by the biker men. Astonishingly, the male researchers report that "the women attracted to such a scene are predictably tough and hard-bitten themselves. Not all are unattractive, but most display signs of premature aging typical of lower class and deviant lifestyles" (Watson, 1980, p. 42). Biker women were not interested in brand name clothes and fashions, were politically conservative (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 380), and similarly to their men, worshipped the Harley Davidson motorcycle (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 369). Importantly, at no stage is any evidence provided which supports any of these salacious claims other than retrospective "quotes".

The consensus seems to be that "bikers treat women as objects of contempt" (Watson, 1980, p. 38). Claims are made that bikers are not capable of sustaining relationships with women, are unable to demonstrate or express love for women and children, refer to women in derogatory terms and are tolerated as a necessary nuisance (Watson, 1980, pp. 41-42). Women are owned by the bikers, and branded or labelled as belonging to a man on the women's riding jackets (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 371). Not only are the women 'owned' by the biker, women are chattels who can be sold to the highest bidder (Hopper & Moore, 1990, pp. 371-2), or sold for a packet of cigarettes (Montegomery, 1976).

However, biker women are not portrayed by the researchers as idle women, as "all work to keep their mate and his motorcycle" (Watson, 1980, p. 42), and "all turned their salary over to their old man on payday" (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 375). These authors claim biker women are money makers who are expected to be engaged in economic pursuits for their individual man, and sometimes for the entire club's benefit (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 374).

Some had 'straight' jobs as secretaries, factory workers and sales persons (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 375), but it is claimed many biker members pressure their women into prostitution (Hopper & Moore, 1990; Quinn, 2001; Watson, 1980), or work in nightclubs as topless and nude dancers – under close scrutiny of the biker men to ensure the women were not keeping money on the side and/or to ensure they were not being exploited by the bar owners (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 375). Indeed, Watson claims that "some outlaws live off the income of several women and, in this sense, are dependent on them but only in the sense that a pimp is dependent on his string of girls" (Watson, 1980, p. 46). According to this research, clearly the "average biker woman was expected to be economically productive" (Hopper & Moore, 1990, p. 381) and she performs a critical role in relation to the club's and individual members' financial status.

Other than focusing on women as 'money makers', the research defines women in relation to their sexual role in the clubs. In this literature, the women who associate with outlaw motorcycle clubs are categorised into three groups – mamas, sheep, and old ladies. A mama is a "promiscuous girl who is willing to 'pull a train' or have sex with all members of the gang. The term is used only for girls who regularly associate with a club" (Hopper, 1983, p. 61). A 'sheep' is defined by her sexual role in the club. A sheep is a new woman who is bought to the club by an initiate. All members have sex with the sheep as part of the new members' initiation ceremony (Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990).

Ol' ladies refer to the more or less permanent partners of the biker men. Whilst the term is a North Americanism used to describe one's spouse by working class men of the 1960's – 1980's, in the hands of previous researchers, the term becomes pejorative. Ol' ladies are said to be 'hands off' for other members but this can change at any time with sole power or ownership residing in the men's hands.

Continuing with the focus on women and sexual rituals in the clubs, previous authors

provide detailed reports of how club members earn merit badges, or 'wings', by performing particular sexual activities with women (Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990; Montegomery, 1976), e.g., specific badges (called Red Wings) are awarded to club members "who perform cunnilingus on a menstruating woman … performed before a group of onlooking members" (Montegomery, 1976, pp. 339-40). Further, there are many reports of notorious 'gang-bangs' (pack rapes as we know the term here in Australia), and women being penalised for breaching 'biker rules' by being made to 'pull a train' (i.e., have sex with all members of the club who are interested in participating) (Hopper & Moore, 1990).

In summation, the previous male researchers have reported that women who associate with biker men are largely from dysfunctional working class families, whose upbringing prepares them for domination in their relationships with biker men (Hopper & Moore, 1990). They are tough in character, mostly unattractive and show signs of premature aging in appearance (Watson, 1980). Their roles in the clubs are as objects used for club sexual rituals, and they are required to perform work tasks which bring economic rewards to the man or OMC (Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990). The women are portrayed as powerless pawns, submissive and meek, who are bullied into demeaning roles within the male domain of OMCs.

The research reported above from the current academic literature, presents a drastically different picture of women who associate with OMCs, than that noted by Veno in his role of Insider as guided by van den Eynde as the Outsider. It is true, like previous researchers, Veno could not participate and access the women's world. However his deep participation into the extreme masculinities of the OMC world did provide him with the **same** access as the previous researchers and extensive social contact with women who associate with OMCs. However, the Insider–Outsider technique itself served to powerfully shape the research as he was guided by van den Eynde's values and gender differences to his. The results of this procedure will be reported in detail elsewhere. However, presented below is a brief summary of these rich data.

The I–O method is still profane in the depiction of women who associate with OMC members as it does disempower women, i.e., the technique still reflects a man's view of what women say. The results could be very different, again, if a woman researcher utilised feminist research methodologies designed to elicit women's voices and views. It is a hope of the current authors that a woman researcher will pursue this research to present a credible picture of the role of women who associate with OMCs.

Stories From Women Who are Associated with OMCs Using Insider–Outsider Methodology

Normally at this juncture in an article, authors would now begin to address the previous literature, using their new data to accept or reject the past knowledges and arguments, with the aim of working up new knowledges. Upon reflection, this paper will not 'talk to' the previous literature in any great depth – we argue that trying to address the previous literature is fraught, on two grounds. Firstly, on methodological and sexist grounds we have discarded much of the previous literature. Secondly, we felt that if we addressed the previous literature, we will be allowing the sexist literature to run our agenda – this would only add insult to the women from the OMC culture. Simply, we believe we need to start afresh.

Consequently, we present some short stories of the women who Veno, as the Insider, interviewed. These include indepth and intimate conversations with family members of OMCs, business women who are an integral part of OMC life (e.g., Sam the stripper, and Veronica the manager of a strip business), and a rare report from a self proclaimed 'bikie-slut' – Grandma.

Little analysis has been done with this data. The data is deliberately left in its raw state because the authors recognise the data is 'incomplete' – i.e., this is material about women who are associates of OMCs, gained by the (male) Insider. We realise that much

detail, and other knowledges are likely to be gained from 'women talking to women', and then analysed through a women's-lens.

However, we do present these stories as examples of powerful women in their own cultural setting.[3]

Veronica

Veronica is the manager of Richo's – a strip club located directly across from Parliament House. For several months, Veno worked out of Richo's back room as an office during the course of the main research. As such, he came to know staff reasonably well. One striking example of women who associate with OMCs was Veronica. Veronica commenced working as a performer (i.e., as stripper and a pole dancer) at Richo's five years previously. When Veno met her, she was the Manager. Richo has the reputation of being the kindest and most gentle nightclub owner in the city. He tries to get the women who work for him to resolve their personal issues and strongly supports their obtaining training and education to further their career prospects prior to when they age past the point that they are employable as strippers. Veronica had taken advantage of these opportunities, for when Veno met her; she was in her third year at university studying Psychology and Business. Veronica was stunning in her intellect and her beauty – she was accomplished, urbane and confident. Part of her job was to manage the OMC members when they attended the premises. She said it was easy work, and her prime management technique was to 'flatter the male ego'. The only real problems in respect to OMCs were times of interclub wars and intoxication from 'whizz' (methamphetamines). The solutions were formulized for Veronica - she used the OMC club structure to intervene, if any intervention was necessary. She had the personal telephone numbers of all office bearers of OMCs and would simply telephone the Clubs' President if one of his members was behaving badly. She most definitely felt that OMC members were quite easy to manage.

Sam the stripper

Strippers, stripper enterprise managers, prostitutes and brothel madams all indicate without exception that working 'a bikie function' is much more preferable to working a 'suits party'. The consensus is that the bikies are much better behaved and much more respectful of the women than the intoxicated 'suits'. Veno wanted to find out the details of this relationship, and was directed to talk to 'Sam the stripper'. Veno interviewed her where she wished to be interviewed- at the nightclub where she worked. He arrived at the specified time with his tape recorder, and he was of course dressed appropriately for the occasion. He asked for her and was told she was working behind the bar serving drinks. The interview was a difficult one as she was naked except for a pair of cowboy boots and a fake gun and holster. In spite of the setting, he was able to ascertain that she did not work at a particular OMC club as her brothers both were members of a rival OMC and they would have been 'overzealous' in their defence of her should any problem occur. As Veno eased into the interview environment, he sought her story about her life, her occupation in providing voyeuristic sex to OMCs, and her relationship with OMCs more generally. She was guarded in her responses and Veno felt the 'iron curtain of women's business' drop between him and Samantha. It became patently obvious that she wasn't going to tell a male researcher what he wanted to know about women and the OMCs. Clearly this is a job for a female researcher - preferably a feminist as Samantha defined herself as a feminist.

Grandma

There are also a very few women who are 'groupies' or as the previous researchers would call them 'mamas'. They have strong allegiances to the club and for one reason or another are keen to be identified as 'belonging' to the club. One particular woman who stood out in Veno's mind was a grandmother – with a difference. She had a club tattoo which she happily showed Veno and the President of an OMC by hiking up her skirt, pulling down her panties to reveal a 15 cm tattoo of a dagger and the OMC colours tattooed on her upper thigh and hip. As this was done in a five star city hotel, the incident was striking due to the context! Veno had a further opportunity to interview this woman. She had recently moved from interstate and had moved to her new

residence specifically to be near the OMC. She had left her husband, children and grandchildren based in a small rural town in Victoria and said her family unanimously agreed that "I am a bikie slut." She went on to say that she couldn't explain it, but, she was simply overwhelmingly attracted to the OMC and had literally "given up her life to be with the club". Veno suspected party drugs may have been part of her motivation to be near the club. When he put this to her, she replied "I can get drugs at any club or many, many other places. That's definitely not the reason. It's more like the club gives me a cause and a meaning in life. I feel like I am a part of something now". Veno came across only two such women in his many years of studying OMCs and the behaviour is highly unusual in the OMC context. Nevertheless, such women do exist and they have a fascinating story to tell.

Family members

By far and away, however, women partners, sisters, mothers, aunties and children, particularly female children are the central meaning of an OMC member's life. In the vast majority of cases, the children and partners of the OMC members are the reason for their existence as men. The job of the men is to protect the women and children.

The women are fiercely proud to be partners of OMC members. They are aware of the sexual proclivities and goings on at the clubhouse and are not distressed by the situation. Most believe that their men are no more likely to cheat on them than other men. The women partners seemed to particularly enjoy the scheduled 'runs' that the men went on. This was seen as a time when they could have their own space and do their own thing. The same attitude was held by the women about the long hours spent at the clubhouse by the men. The women enjoyed their freedom.

Many women partners and family members held a wide variety of jobs and professions including public service jobs, childcare duties, lawyers, medical technicians, graphic designers and a variety of other middle class and some factory occupations. Many had achieved significant levels of education and training. In some cases, the men were the child minders and the women were the primary source of income. No biker women (Ol' Ladies) Veno came across worked as a stripper or prostitute. The women generally earned their own money and most generally, the money was family money, where the earnings of both the man and the woman were pooled and used as the total family budget.

The main complaint by the women was the police harassment that they experienced as family members of OMC members. A second was distress experienced during times of war between the differing clubs of the OMCs. In one notable example, the women and children of one club were taken to several 'safe houses'. The location of one of the safe houses was leaked to the opposite club and the women had to leave urgently. As the women left, laser dots from gun sights were shone on them by persons unknown. The women were livid. Later, as they drove through town to another safe house, the woman who had leaked the information was discovered. The women pulled the car over and gave 'the dog' or in North American terminology 'the rat' a severe flogging. The women can be very violent and seem to accept violence as a viable means to 'payback', or as a means to punish others for their misdemeanours. A deeper analysis of this acceptance of violence would be a fascinating exercise – much could be learnt about the justification of violence, and the rituals and rules surrounding punishment etc.

Whilst Veno, in his Insider role gained many new insights into the women who associate with OMCs, a deeper exploration of these women's lives and experiences would be illuminating. For example, how do the women negotiate their lives and the lives of their children whilst their men and their cultural lifestyle are under threat from the state and the police?

The next narrative is a remarkable recording of intimate events in OMC family life. It is worthy of inclusion as it provides rich knowledge of this culture, provides many pointers to further research, and begs the answer to many other questions.

Mothers and sisters and daughters

One particular OMC member wanted Veno to meet with his mother. His club

nickname was Terrible ("Why?" Veno asked another member of the OMC. "Because he is f….n terrible" was the response). At 35 years of age, Terrible had a long history of convictions for assault and possession of narcotics. Veno was at a bikie function with him on the night we were to meet his "Mum" as he called her. The function was to end at 9:30 pm but; it had dragged on until nearly 11:00 pm. Terrible came over to Veno in the middle of seven people and said "Hey, Arthur, its time to go." "Can't we put it off for another night?", Veno said as he was feeling tired and had some unfinished business to attend to with the crowd gathered around him. Terrible's eyes narrowed and his heavily tattooed arms flexed as he said directly to Veno "What, you don't want to meet my Mum?" We departed immediately for Terrible's apartment which was located in a notorious brothel. His Mum had already gained entry and was waiting for us.

It became apparent why Terrible had wanted me to meet his Mum. She was a nurse and her former husband (Terrible's father) was a senior school administrator. After exchanging pleasantries, Veno asked Terrible to go down to the pub and get him some Tasmanian beer. This was done as it was obvious that Terrible's Mum wanted to speak to Veno directly about Terrible.

Upon Terrible's departure, she said "Arthur, all I really want to know is what happened to my little guy. He was so sweet and loving and then something happened to him when he went to his first school. He was never the same after that." She had brought along three large notebooks full of memorabilia and pictures from Terrible's life.

It seems that Mum had recently asked Terrible to write down what he saw as having 'gone wrong' with him. His sister was a lawyer; his brother was an ambulance driver and an ex-rugby star. When Terrible got the request from his Mum, he worked on it for months and finally produced a letter which his Mum wanted me to read, and to comment upon. The letter indicated that an incident had occurred in his third grade class in which Terrible believed he had killed a child. He claimed that he then split into two characters – one character was benevolent, the other whom he called 'The Punisher' emerged whenever situations became threatening for the 'dominant persona'. The Punisher was mean and vicious.

Terrible re-entered the room as Veno finished reading the letter and started to address the issues with Terrible's Mum. After only moments of conversation, both were crying profusely, Terrible made amazing admissions, including a 'need' for sex up to 13 times a day, etc. Later in the evening 'Mum' tearfully admitted she was very proud of him, but, she just wished he could rid himself of the pain that caused his aggression and his profuse drug use.

Terrible's sister came by at about 1:30 am to pick up her Mum. After speaking with his sister at some length, it became clear that they were as two apples from the same tree. One apple happened to fall on the outlaw side of the fence (Terrible) and the other on the law side of the fence (his prominent lawyer sister). There were several other meetings with Mums and families which could be discussed here, but; hopefully the point is taken. The families are not, necessarily or even mostly dysfunctional. Much could be learned by spending time with Terrible's remarkable mother and his sister, and listening to their stories. Once again, this is the realm of the female researcher.

Finally, daughters are a special case, indeed. On her first day of high school, the OMC daughter can expect to be taken to school via Harley Davidson with several members of the OMC.[4] She will dramatically be dropped off by 'Dad and a few of his mates' just so that the boys in school get the clear picture – "mess with my daughter and your arse is grass". Again, it would be fascinating for a feminist researcher to interview the daughter and perhaps some children at a school which the daughter attended to get a more complete and meaningful picture, and the true story of what it means to be a female child associated with an OMC member. Using the techniques of Insider this was not possible as Veno was immersed into the extreme masculinity of the subculture.

Conclusion

The Insider-Outsider methodology seems effective in preventing many of the problems of deep participation research. Admittedly, there was significant impact on the Insider and it took about 18 months to recover fully from the experience. However, this long recovery was compounded by the fact that the Insider-Outsider technique ended with the completion of the intervention. Events subsequent to the termination of the intervention included the spokesperson for the OMC going missing and presumed dead. Unlike other authors (e.g., VanderStaay, 2005) this did not affect the researchers to the point reported in the literature whereby the data could not be reported. It also did not personally affect either the Insider or Outsider to the point where we could not function effectively at work or at home (see Marquart, 2001). We tentatively conclude from this single case study that the use of the Insider–Outsider methodology is a powerful and effective research methodology which effectively prevents the researcher from 'going native'. Additionally, an unintended consequence of the Insider-Outsider methodology was the researchers 'discovering' of new knowledges because of the immersion and ethnographic techniques employed.

One explanation for the incongruence between the previous literature on women who associate with OMCs and the current research could be related to the concept of mythology construction. According to May (1991) myths are the narration of stories which cement a community (p. 53), and which underpin our moral values (p. 3). Not only do we need to create myths to create our own sense of personal identity; we create a set of myths for others ostensibly to make sense of what we do not understand. That is, we need to construct a set of myths surrounding others to define 'what we are not', therefore defining 'who we are' (pp. 30-31).

Another explanation, perhaps intertwined with May's (1991) notion, is that earlier researchers failed to focus on women's experiences. Similar research practices have occurred in the field of criminology, where women's experiences are often suppressed or distorted. For example, behavioural explanations for young women who are associated with youth gangs are reported primarily through the interests, values, and behaviours of male gang members. As a consequence, a narrow range of behaviours are attributed to women – more often related to women as sexual toys for men, or as instruments of gang destruction (see Curry, 1998; Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999).

Taking into consideration the criticisms of research on young women gang members, we argue a similar flawed process has occurred with women who affiliate with members of OMCs. This preliminary research suggests a set of myths have been propagated concerning women who are associated with OMCs. These include the myths that OMC women are:

(i) subservient working class woman,
(ii) used as objects for club sexual rituals
(iii) hard bitten, unattractive, and politically conservative, and
(iv) 'money makers' for biker men, and the club – i.e., the women are either prostitutes, topless barmaids, lap dancers or strippers, who are forced to hand over their money to the club

(See Hopper, 1983; Hopper & Moore, 1990; Montgomery, 1976).

We suggest previous research on women affiliated with OMCs is one of the last bastions of unbridled sexist research. The myths perpetrated by previous authors used deeply flawed methodologies and can be seen as serving two highly political purposes. First, the myth maintains dominance over women by men. It disempowers women and reduces them to sexual 'vassals' or slaves – having no agency. Women's roles were considered only in relation to men's sexual and economic needs, and their own experiences as women with agency are not examined. Secondly, the disempowerment of OMC women amplifies the deviance of OMC men. After all, how can these 'deviant men' be portrayed as partners and fathers to 'normal women'? Were they at all 'normal', they would behave towards women in a 'normal' fashion. In the ongoing conflictual environment between OMCs and the state, these misconceptions and falsehoods

are unhelpful and do not work towards a just and fair society, and a respect for diversity. Rather, the myths amplify the deviance of the whole subculture and further define them as 'Outsiders' (Becker, 1963), 'evil doers' (Cohen, 1980) and deviants.

Rappaport (2000) argues that a central task for community psychologists is to turn tales of terror into tales of joy. We believe that the unintended consequence of the major project of neutralising moral panic generated by the state towards OMCs created fertile ground for such an enterprise. Indeed, the comments by one OMC woman who described the previous research by men about women of the OMC men were "the men that wrote that must be meatheads". Her latest comments indicate that a new narrative has been established for the OMC women. They now have agency, political savvy and have reframed the narratives of themselves. "We did it. We showed them we are real women dealing with real men. I'd much prefer to be living with an OMC member than some dork who is a pawn in the system… we have set the record straight". There are many other subcultures where young researchers can be involved in accomplishing similar objectives and our Insider – Outsider methodology may go some way in facilitating this process.

References

Adler, P. A., Adler, P., & Rochford, E. B. (1986). The politics of participation in field research. *Urban Life, 14*, 363-376.

Bartunek, J. M., & Louis, M. R. (1996). *Insider/Outsider Team Research. Qualitative Research Methods.* Calif: Sage Publications.

Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: Free Press.

Brodsky, A. E., & Faryal, T. (2006). No matter how hard you try, your feet still get wet: Insider and outsider perspectives on bridging diversity. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 37*, 311-320.

Cohen, S. (1980) *Folk devils & moral panics: The creation of the mods and the rockers.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Curry, G. D. (1998). Female gang involvement. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 35*, 100-118.

Deschenes, E. P., & Esbensen, F. A. (1999). Violence and gangs: Gender differences in perceptions and behavior. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 15*, 63-96.

Headland, T. N., Pike, K. L., & Harris, M. (Eds.) (1990). *Emics and Etics: The Insider-Outsider Debate*. Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications.

Hopper, C. (1983). Hell on wheels: the outlaw motorcycle gangs. *Journal of American Culture, 6*, 58-64.

Hopper, C. B., & Moore, J. (1990). Women in outlaw motorcycle gangs. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 18*, 363-387.

Horowitz, R. (1986). Remaining an outsider: Membership as a threat to research rapport. *Urban Life, 14*, 409-430.

Hurley, C., van Eyk, H., & Baum, F. (2002). Insider knowledge and outsider objectivity-the benefits and risks of combined evaluator roles in a study of health care reform. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia, 2*, 60-68.

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work, 45*, 439-447.

Malinowski, B. (1922). *Argonauts of the Pacific*. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

Marquart, J. W. (2001). Doing research in prisons: The strengths and weaknesses of full participation as a guard. In J. M. Miller, & R. Tewksbury, R. (Eds.). *Extreme Methods: Innovative Approaches to Social Science Research* (pp. 35-47). Allyn & Bacon: USA.

Maton, K. I. (1993). A bridge between cultures: Linked ethnographic-empirical methodology for culture anchored research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 747-773.

May, R. (1991). *The Cry for Myth*. Norton & Co: USA.

Messerschmidt, D. A. (1981). *Anthropologists at home in North America: Methods and issues in the study of one's own society.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, K. (2004). Beyond the frontstage: Trust, access, and the relational context in research with refugee communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 217-227.

Montegomery, R. (1976). The outlaw motorcycle subculture. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Corrections, 18*, 332-342.

Newell, W. H. (2000). Transdisciplinarity reconsidered. In Margaret, A., Somerville, & D. A Rapport (Eds). *Transdisciplinarity: Recreating Integrated knowledge*. (pp. 42-48). Oxford, UK: EOLSS Publishers.

Nowotny, H. (2003). The potential of transdisciplinarity. *Rethinking Interdisciplines*. Retrieved December 5, 2005, from http:// www.interdisciplines.org/ interdisciplinarity/papers/5

Quinn, J. F. (1987). Sex roles and hedonism among members of 'Outlaw' Motorcycle Clubs. *Deviant Behaviour, 8*, 47-63.

Quinn, J. F. (2001). Angels, bandidos, outlaws, and pagans: The evolution of organized crime among the big four 1% motorcycle clubs. *Deviant Behaviour: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *22*, 379-399.

Quinn, J., & Koch, S. (2003). The nature of criminality within one-percent motorcycle clubs. *Deviant Behaviour: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 24*, 281-305.

Rappaport, J. (2000). Community narratives: Tales of terror and joy. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 1-24.

Scheper-Hughes, N. (2004). Parts unknown. Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld. *Ethnography, 5*, 29-73.

Smelser, N. J. (2003). On comparative analysis, interdisciplinarity and internationalization in sociology. *International Sociology, 18*, 643-657.

Snow, D. A., Benford, R. D., & Anderson, L. (1986). Fieldwork roles and informational yield: A comparison of alternative settings and roles. *Urban Life, 14*, 377-408.

Tewksbury, R. (2002). Bathhouse intercourse: Structural and behavioural aspects of an erotic oasis. *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 23*, 75-112.

Tewksbury, R. (2001). Acting like an insider: Studying hidden environments as a potential participant. In J. M. Miller, & R. Tewksbury (Eds.). *Extreme Methods: Innovative Approaches to Social Science Research* (pp. 4-12). Allyn & Bacon: USA.

VanderStaay, S. L. (2005). One hundred dollars and a dead man: Ethical decision making in ethnographic fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 34*, 371-409.

Veno, A. (2003*). The Brotherhoods: Inside the Outlaw Motorcycle Clubs*. Allen & Unwin: Vic.

Veno, A., & van den Eynde, J. (2007, in Print). Moral panic neutralization project: A media based intervention. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology.*

Watson, J. (1980). Outlaw motorcyclists as an outgrowth of lower class values. *Deviant Behaviour*, 2, 31-48.

Wolf, D. R. (1991). *The Rebels: A Brotherhood of Outlaw Bikers.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Notes

[1] This was in the tradition of Community Psychology's value sets of the researchers

[2] The authors acknowledge that the use of Anthropological data collection techniques are currently a matter of ethical debate in the community psychology profession and the stance we take is likely to be controversial. Given the dearth of literature from community psychology dealing with violent and 'deviant' subcultures, however, we decided to utilize proven techniques from other disciplines.

[3] Please note, full details of participant recruitment details, participant demographics etc. will be reported elsewhere. In this case, the women's stories mentioned here are used to demonstrate the breadth and depth of women's lives who associate with OMCs. Also the stories show the need to delve

further than the previous sexist and simplistic efforts.

[4]The majority of OMC members and their partners opt to send their children to public school. A few, however, choose to send their children to private schools. Those choosing to send their children to private schools tend to try to keep the Father's and Mother's involvement with an OMC 'below the radar' or invisible. Due to this, the daughter will go to school like her private school peers.

Acknowledgements
The authors wish to acknowledge the generosity of Jan, Lee, Alena, Sally, Marion, Veronica, and all the women associated with the OMC who gave freely of their time and so much of themselves. It is our greatest wish that we have presented the information you so generously gave to us to accomplish the mutual goal of telling the real story.

All respect.

Author s' Biographies
Julie van den Eynde is currently Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Queensland, Australia
Arthur Veno is currently Research Associate at Monash University, Victoria, Australia. His e-mail address is
Arthur.veno@arts.monash.edu.au

Address correspondence to
Dr Julie van den Eynde
The University of Queensland
Faculty of Social & Behavioural Sciences
11 Salisbury Rd
Ipswich, Qld. 4305
Australia
Ph: (07) 33813907
Fax: (07) 3381 1523
E-mail: j.vandeneynde@uq.edu.au

Researching suicidal distress with LGBT communities in UK: Methodological and ethical reflections on a community-university knowledge exchange project

Katherine Johnson
University of Brighton, UK

The Brighton and Sussex Community-University Knowledge Exchange Programme's aim (BSCKE) was to fund projects that would lead to an 'exchange of knowledge' through collaborative work between the university and community groups, with a focus on the impact of marginalisation and issues of social exclusion. Our successful submission outlined a key concern for community psychologists involving the seeming elevated rate of suicide distress amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals. The study used a participatory-action research approach and conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of the experiences of suicidal distress and survival with mental health service users and young people who identify as LGBT. This paper reflects on the process of setting up the knowledge-exchange project before addressing methodological and ethical issues that arose during the course of the research project and the ways in which they were negotiated. It concludes by making recommendations for future applied research practice in community-university partnerships.

Understanding Mental Health Issues in LGBT Communities

In 2003 the first UK based large-scale analysis of the relationship between sexuality and mental health issues established evidence of a higher incidence of mental distress for lesbians, gay men and bisexual men and women than for heterosexuals (King et al., 2003a, 2003b). Of particular concern in this study was the prevalence of suicidal distress and serious self-harm, with 1/3 of the sample having attempted suicide on at least one occasion. This finding was consistent with research studies from other western cultures including the USA and Australia that stress concern with levels of suicidal distress amongst LGBT people (e.g., Bagley & D'Augelli, 2000; D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Jorm, Korten, Rodgers, Jacomb, & Christensen, 2002; McNair, Kavanagh, Agius, & Tong, 2005; McNamee 2006; Ramafedi, 1987). In a survey of 1100 LGBT respondents from Brighton and Hove (UK) conducted by *Count Me In* (2001), 40% of respondents reported serious thoughts of suicide and 20% had attempted suicide. *Diagnosis Homophobic* (Project for Advice, Counselling and Education [PACE], 1998) found suicidal thoughts and attempts linked to internalised homophobia, social homophobia, loneliness and isolation for LGB people. Warner et al. (2004) linked higher levels of self-harm and suicidal behaviour in the LGB population to the levels of discrimination (including physical attacks and verbal abuse) they had encountered. These were significantly more than for a comparative group of heterosexual participants. Other studies show high rates of suicidal distress amongst particular LGBT groups, such as LGB youth (e.g., Herschberger & D'Augelli, 1995) and transgender youth and adults (e.g., Israel & Tarver, 1997), and higher rates of self-harm and suicide amongst lesbians than heterosexual women (e.g., McNair et al., 2005).

Together, these studies illustrate that LGBT people are more likely to experience problems with their mental health than heterosexual people and should be supported with appropriate services and legislation to protect them from discrimination. Yet, studying the mental health of LGBT people is not a straightforward issue. Despite the growing acknowledgement that some LGBT people suffer from high levels of mental distress, and that this is related to elevated levels of discriminatory practices, including physical and verbal abuse, mental health issues are often stigmatised within LGBT communities. The socio-medical construction of 'homosexuality' that led to the pathologizing of same-sex

activities and the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness (Foucault, 1978) has left a legacy that is difficult to shake off. Studies have pointed to the homophobia and heterosexism that still exists within the mental health services in the UK (e.g., PACE, 1998) and there is a well-placed resistance to psychological and psychiatric practices within LGBT communities. A qualitative account of the experiences of LGB people in the UK who had accessed mental health services noted problematic encounters that ranged from "instances of overt homophobia and discrimination, to a perceived lack of empathy around sexuality issues by the clinician" (King et al., 2003a, p. 3). Transgendered people also have their own ongoing battles as 'gender identity disorders' are still classified within DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Thus, their identity status is embedded within discourses of mental illness and, despite political lobbying, psychiatrists still regulate gender reassignment processes (Johnson, 2007).

This poses a dilemma for those who wish to understand how LGBT people experience suicidal distress and provide appropriate services to meet their needs without reconstructing a pathologizing narrative for all. To speak of elevated rates of psychological distress or suicide related behaviour in the LGBT population runs the risk of reinforcing a relationship between sexuality/trans identity status and mental health issues that might imply that mental health problems are simply associated with being LGBT. This is not the case. Rather, recent research in the area suggests that suicidal distress is associated with a range of psychosocial 'stresses', including victimisation, lack of support, family problems, knowing someone who has made suicide attempts, homelessness, substance misuse and other psychiatric problems (Ramefedi, 1999), rather than a specific identity itself. As Meyer (2003, p. 674) proposes stigma, prejudice and discrimination create such a hostile environment that it leads to mental health problems that are the result of 'minority stress'. Despite the growing evidence that suicidal distress is linked to discrimination few studies have addressed the individual narratives of LGBT people who experience this distress. Equally, the methodological design of large-scale quantitative studies affords little ongoing support for participants after questionnaires have been submitted. This paper reflects on the process of using participatory-action research within the context of a community-knowledge exchange programme as an alternative methodological approach for understanding LGBT suicidal distress.

Setting Up the Research Project: The Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange Program

The initial idea for this project arose at a 'matching meeting' hosted by the Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange Programme (BSCKE) in April 2005. BSCKE is part of the wider Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) and is funded by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) under the Higher Education Innovation Funding Scheme (see HEFCE, 2006, for further details). Community-university partnerships are a pioneering development in higher education policy to "reconstruct the relationship between universities and society through action research" (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, p. 85). Such programmes have become popular since the late 1990s to foster allegiances between local universities, businesses and community organisations. BSCKE is one such programme and defines itself as "a groundbreaking initiative to support and fund mutually beneficial partnerships between communities and universities in Brighton and Hove and coastal Sussex" tackling "real community problems, recognizing and addressing diversity and engaging with socially excluded groups". Key to this is the principle of 'knowledge exchange' where

> *BSCKE [also] aims to facilitate the exchange and growth of knowledge across sectors. University partners provide practical support to community, voluntary, public sector and social enterprise organisations and networks, grounded in academic understanding and expertise. In their turn, community partners contribute to lasting culture change within the universities by bringing real issues into teaching and research* (BSCKE, 2006).

In the 2004-2006 funding round BSCKE offered funding of up to £20,000 for approximately 20 small-scale projects. At the 'match-meeting' the author met with the co-ordinator of MindOut, a mental health support group for LGBT people in the Brighton and Hove region. It was immediately clear that we had similar interests and concerns for addressing mental health issues in the LGBT community. My previous research addressed issues of LGBT mental health (e.g. Johnson 2007; King et al., 2003a; Warner et al., 2004) and MindOut had just received funding from the South East Development Centre of the *National Institute for Mental Health England* (NIMHE) to conduct a pilot project on suicide prevention in the local LGBT community. This money was being used to employ a development worker to work with agencies and services, including A&E, mental health services and community groups to ascertain levels of prevalence of self-harm and suicide related behaviour in the LGBT community in Brighton and Hove. Their second task was to pilot outreach methods and evaluate effective strategies for suicide prevention, including a model of peer support. While MindOut were delighted to have received funding for a development worker they realised the outreach strategies would be improved if they were underpinned by a greater understanding of the needs of those who attempt suicide and/or self-harm. They had been told by NIMHE that there was no possibility of funding for a researcher that would make up a Research and Development post and they were looking to BSCKE for support with their community intervention. Thus, together we had a 'match' in interest and drew up a proposal that sought to meet a range of outcomes under the criteria set out by BSCKE. These included:

1. A greater understanding of the meanings and experience of self-harm and suicidal distress in the LGBT community in Brighton and Hove.
2. A positive effect on social inclusion for those who are at risk of suicide/ self-harm related behaviour and in distress.
3. Knowledge to inform national and international understanding of the narratives of LGBT individuals as they describe and interpret factors that impacting on their mental health (distributed through local community forums as well as academic papers and teaching strategies).
4. Knowledge that will inform suicide prevention strategies locally and nationally, including critiques of any discriminatory practices, and aid in the reduction of suicide (distributed through local community forums as well as academic papers and teaching strategies).
5. A sustainable relationship between the university and community organisations in relation to understanding and addressing the needs of local LGBT people.

In an effort to capture the extent of suicidal distress within the local community we initially designed a project that sought to recruit people through as wide a network as possible. We intended to include those who were attached to a community organisation and those who were not through posting open-ended questionnaires on on-line forums and wider advertisements in the local LGBT press. Within this we hoped to interview a sample that included older gay men, young LGBT people, transmen and transwomen and LGBT people from BME groups. However, in the feedback from Round 1 of the funding bid we were asked to reduce the scale of the project to a budget of £11,000. This was extremely disappointing and placed limitations on what we were able to do. We met to consider whether it was feasible or worthwhile conducting a much smaller project. At the same time I was contacted by the CUPP helpdesk who had received another enquiry for research into suicide related behaviour from another local group. *Allsorts* provides support to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and unsure (LGBTU) youths, and they had recently lost 2 group members to suicide. After a lengthy process of discussion with the manager of Allsorts they agreed to become a stakeholder in our project and enabled us to formulate a more contained research proposal that met the objectives of promoting social inclusion and gaining a thorough knowledge of issues faced by hard to reach

groups.

A participatory-action research approach to understanding LGBT suicidal distress

With a relationship between sexual identity and suicide risk already established through large-scale quantitative findings (e.g. King et al., 2003a; Ramefedi et al., 1998) we focused on designing a research approach to gain a more detailed understanding of the specificities of suicidal distress in some LGBT peoples' lives. Specifically, we were looking to compare and contrast meanings and experiences of suicide related behaviour and survival in two LGBT groups considered 'at-risk' of suicide: those with mental health issues and young people. Only a few studies have conducted qualitative interviews with people who have suicidal thoughts or have made suicide attempts (e.g., Asberg, Samuelsson, Wiklander, 2003; Greenland, Prior, Scourfield, & Smalley, 2004; Kidd & Krul, 2002) with fewer still focusing on LGBT issues (e.g. Fenaughty & Harré, 2003) and none that we are currently aware of have focused on young LGBT people and/or LGBT mental health service users. Working in this relatively recent area within the context of the BSCKE programme we operated within the principles of community psychology (e.g., Harper & Schneider, 2003; Nelson, Lord & Ochocka, 2001; Nelson & Pilleltensky, 2005; Rappaport, 1987; Rappaport & Seidman, 2000) and participatory-action research (e.g., Brydon-Miller, 2004; Dockery, 2000; Greenwood & Levin, 2000; Park, 2001) by seeking to involve participants and community group representatives within the research process in order to create a sense of belief in, and ownership of, the projects' objectives and outcomes, as well as ensuring appropriate post-research support for participants from the LGBT community groups.

Nine participants (five at MindOut and four at Allsorts) took part in focus groups to design the interview questions and approve the final schedule. They had all met with the researcher on at least one occasion prior to the focus group, if not more, as the researcher spent time in both community groups discussing the aims and objectives of the research project and responding to questions during drop-in sessions. At the same time participants were informed that the university researchers also identified as lesbian or gay in order to emphasise that this was a participatory-action research project, acknowledge our own commitment to the local LGBT community, and reassure participants that they were not 'objects' of research. The focus group discussions generated themes that participants thought were relevant to LGBT people who experienced suicidal distress. The interview schedule was developed in order to capture this range of themes and experiences and, prior to approving the schedule, participants were asked to reflect on whether it was appropriate for describing their own experience. Twelve people took part in one-to-one interviews (seven from MindOut and five from Allsorts) and participants had the option of being interviewed by either a male or female researcher. Considerable care was taken to layer in levels of support for our participants so that they had the opportunity to discuss their participation with a community worker both before and after the interview. All participants were provided with a list of local and national services and help-lines, but the community groups played a crucial role in ensuring participants had sufficient support for their emotional needs and were available to provide continuing support in the weeks following the interviews. A number of community dissemination events were organised where participants from both groups reflected on the process of being involved in the project and contributed to further community initiatives to tackle suicidal distress. While this summary of our approach adheres to ethical guidelines and the principles of participatory-action research, a number of methodological and ethical issues arose during the research process. These are discussed in the following sections.

The Research Process: Methodological Principles and the Practice of Negotiation

In line with the principles and goals of community psychology and the BSCKE program this project aimed for a collaborative framework throughout. The initial research aims and objectives were constructed via a process of negotiation between the author and the community supervisor from MindOut. Shortly afterwards the research team was joined by a research assistant and a community representative from Allsorts and further development took place. Collaboration and service-user involvement and evaluation was

emphasized at every juncture and each stage raised issues that required reflection and negotiation in order to maintain a balanced, working relationship. It was the first occasion that I had worked in such a partnership and the first time the community groups had co-run a research project. Needless to say much was learnt on both sides of the partnership and two examples are discussed here:

Service-user engagement: A key principle of participatory-research is the engagement of service-users in steering group committees and other decision-making teams in order to learn from their valuable perspectives and insights. The first task for our partnership was to employ a research assistant who would conduct many of the interviews. Thus, the interview panel for the research assistant post consisted of the community supervisor from MindOut, the academic supervisor (the author), an external academic from within the university, and a service-user from MindOut. In our discussion it became clear that there were differences in our preferences for candidates and, as this was the first collaborative task, the negotiation could have been awkward and detrimental to the goal of promoting service-user perspectives. The community partner and I had agreed on the importance of service-user involvement, but I appeared less able to take on the service-user's perspective. Their preferred candidate had less empirical research experience than other candidates and the academic member of staff and I were more confident in the abilities of other candidates, yet I was disappointed that I seemed to be 'pulling rank' at the first point of difference. With clear employment guidelines for distinguishing candidates against set job criteria it was possible to negotiate this difference in opinion in a productive manner, however it made it clear from the very beginning of the project that collaborative working required decision making based on existing knowledge and expertise, rather than through a process of mutual agreement.

Design of interview research questions: After co-facilitating focus group discussions with community group members on 'what do we want to know about LGBT people who experience suicidal distress', the university partners asked the community partners to draft some research questions that they thought should be part of the interview schedule. The resulting questions showed clear distinctions between the community groups existing knowledge of the experience of suicidal distress and the academic mores of qualitative methodology design. For example, one community group posed questions such as 'how has the homophobia you have experienced influenced your suicidal thoughts and feelings?' while the university team generated questions such as 'can you tell me about a time when you felt suicidal?' These differences led to a fairly tense and lengthy discussion where the community groups felt the questions needed to be more specific about experiences of homophobia and the university partners stressed the need for questions to be open-ended and 'not leading', if they were to have academic credibility. Again, as with the previous task, the university partners' knowledge of research design won out over the community groups' knowledge of experiences of suicidal distress their service-users reported. However, the power imbalance in the partnership started to have some negative effects. At this stage the university partners were carrying out most of the tasks, as these relied on research expertise, and the community groups held clear expectations about what they thought the project would find. There was frustration on both sides, but for the university partners it felt like the research had been commissioned by the community groups, rather than as a project that would emerged from a collaborative and equal partnership. This dynamic could have been detrimental to the progress of the research but the relationship shifted suddenly after the project stalled when seeking ethical clearance from the CUPP research ethics board.

Ethical Procedure: Considering Principles and Negotiating Tensions

In line with established ethical guidelines (e.g., British Psychological Society, 2000) we gave due consideration to key principles such as 'informed consent', 'debriefing', 'confidentiality and anonymity' and 'protection of participants and researchers', and attempted to embed good practice around these principles within the methodological design. We were particularly aware that the research raised a number of ethical dilemmas given its focus on suicidal distress and

the incorporation of two groups defined as 'vulnerable': people with mental health problems and 'young people'. The participatory design and co-ownership nature of the research also raised specific issues, in relation to 'confidentiality and anonymity', while aiding others, such as 'debriefing' and 'protection of participants and researchers'.

'Confidentiality and Anonymity': As participants had been engaged in the methodological design of the interview questions, were debriefed by both the researcher and their community worker and had ongoing support from their community group, the main ethical concern for the research team was 'confidentiality and anonymity'. It was clear that complete confidentiality could not been guaranteed to the participants because of the topic area. Thus, participants were informed that their accounts would be treated as confidential unless they mentioned any current plans to take their life. It was agreed with participants before the interviews that this type of information would be discussed with their community group worker immediately after the interview so that appropriate interventions and support could be provided. Anonymity was also a major consideration because the research was co-owned by the university and 'named' community groups, and this factor jeopardised the standard aim of protecting the anonymity of the participants. All participants were informed that it would not be possible to guarantee their anonymity as the names 'MindOut' and 'Allsorts' would appear on the report and interview extracts would be used to illustrate the findings. Thus, there was an increased chance of participants being recognised. All respondents were aware of this and given the opportunity to withdraw from the research.

'Debriefing' and 'protection of participants and researchers': The participatory nature of the research design reassured us that individual participants would be sufficiently supported through both pre- and post-interview briefings with their community worker. Furthermore, due attention was paid to the possible impact of the research material on members of the research team, such that regular debriefing meetings were organised for the research assistant with the community supervisor and the independent transcriber of the interviews was offered similar debriefing sessions if they found the material distressing.

Despite these actions and preparations we were informed that the ethics panel had strong reservations about whether the research should proceed because of their perception of the participants' 'vulnerability' and 'risk' in relation to clinical mental health provision. Others have addressed the limitations of Research Ethics Boards for reviewing participatory-action research (e.g., Khanlou & Peter, 2005) yet given our panel was constructed specifically to consider CUPP projects we were surprised by the implications of some of their recommendations. We were, perhaps rightly, instructed to make our information sheets more user-friendly, which in due course we did. This was regardless of the 'participation' of participants in the research design from the beginning and our sense that information sheets in a traditional sense lacked meaning: participants knew why they were taking part in the research, had helped design the interview schedule and approved it. We were more concerned about the ethics panel's apprehension at the lack of a clinically trained mental health professional (e.g., clinical psychologist or psychiatrist) in the research team, and the suggestion that it was too 'risky' to speak of suicide as participants might become 'traumatised' and the researcher would not be able to manage the situation. It seemed that none of the references to the pre-briefing or de-briefing meeting with their community group worker reassured them that, as a partnership, we were experienced enough to conduct the research without causing harm to the participants.

Understandably the community groups felt completely undermined in terms of their expertise in supporting vulnerable LGBT people – particularly MindOut who were already developing intervention strategies for the suicidal LGBT people attending their group, and who were also our participants. Moreover, the request for clinical mental health provision was equally problematic given the poor experience that many LGBT have had within statutory services (as was pointed out in the proposal). It took several months, a raft of emails and an eventual complaint about the undermining connotations of their (lack of) assessment of community group

expertise before we were eventually given permission to proceed.

At the time, one benefit of a mutual adversary was the strengthening of the relationship between the community partners and the academic partners. Yet, in the context of the research project this meant renegotiating my role so that I no longer felt the 'university partner', but rather the person who worked at the university who also struggled with wider university structures. Retrospectively, the experience was also positive in terms of the types of outcomes BSCKE was interested in. A great deal of 'knowledge-exchange' took place as we discussed our understandings of ethical concepts and institutional structures within our own organisations as we reflected on and negotiated the ethical process. Of particular interest was the different responses the two groups had when ascertaining what the ethics panel regarded as 'risky' or 'vulnerable', principles they related to 'informed consent', but in different ways.

Refining Ethical Concepts in Collaborative Research

'Vulnerability', 'Risk' and 'Informed Consent': These concepts raised different concerns across the two groups. For instance, Allsorts staff attended to the vulnerability status of their participants prior to the interviews and held lengthy discussions about whether taking part in the research was the 'right option' for them. This form of 'risk assessment' was underpinned by an acknowledgement that suicide and mental health issues were not widely discussed within the youth group, most of the young people had not previously taken part in research, and the group had recently lost two members to suicide. Thus, Allsorts wanted to be sure that their participants knew that they were consenting to take part in research and understood the boundaries of a research interview. They were also performing a risk assessment in terms of considering whether some members might find counselling a more appropriate option than taking part in the research, or if they might also require additional emotional support after the research interview. In contrast, MindOut workers were less concerned with 'risk assessments' as they were constantly involved in assessing their members suicidal risk status. For them, all their participants were 'vulnerable' as they lived with fluctuating intensities of suicidal ideation and intension. As such, informed consent was the crucial element to ensure so that we were confident that participants were aware of what the research involved and what the 'risks' in terms of taking part might be to them – in particular that they might be recognised in published material. We all agreed the community workers were best placed to make these assessments with participants rather than an external, clinical health professional because of their longstanding relationships with the participants and their knowledge of them.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Confidentiality was a key ethical concern given that it was possible participants might discuss immediate plans to take their life. This did happen in one of the interviews and the interviewer re-informed the participant that they would have to discuss the matter with their community worker after the session. This admission had far more impact on the researcher than either the participant or community supervisor who both had more experience in discussing these types of emotions. Again, it points to the importance of collaborative research projects for topics such suicidal distress, as the community group were able to provide an immediate debriefing for the researcher and subsequent support for both participant and researcher, if necessary. Anonymity was an early concern as we recognised that one downside of community-university partnership projects is the increased likelihood of participants being recognised because of their association with particular community groups. At the same time having the community group's name on the final report can be extremely useful in accessing further funds to support their initiatives and interventions. We were clear with participants that we could not assure their anonymity and some people decided not to take part in the interviews because of that. However, this issue came up again in the latter stages of the project once the findings and analysis section had been drafted. I was asked by a community group worker if I could remove identifying annotations from the end of interview extracts that stated which group the participant attended, their gender and age. My immediate concern was that

to remove this information would make the data meaningless: for example, how is it possible to make a claim about a transwoman's experience, or differences between young LGBT people and LGBT mental health services users if we cannot identify data with those categories? Yet, I also appreciated the position of the community partner who was concerned that these annotations contravened confidentiality as well as anonymity because they were able to identify their individual group members from the annotations alone. In light of this, we agreed to remove all age references in the hope that it will provide a little more shelter for the identities of the participants. However, we remain aware that co-owned university-community partnership projects require careful ongoing consideration in terms of the ethical dilemmas they raise.

Critical Reflections and Future Recommendations

The findings for this study were launched to a local audience on 24 January 2007 in Brighton and Hove, with a set a recommendations for understanding suicidal distress and promoting survival in LGBT communities. In this context the project has been a great success providing rich data and insight into the isolation and discrimination that some LGBT people encounter (see Johnson, Jones, Faulkner, MindOut, & Allsorts Youth Project, 2007). The project has resulted in a 'knowledge-exchange' that is mutually beneficial for both the LGBT community and the university. I have already incorporated the research design, methodological and ethical considerations into a master's module on qualitative research and use the project in its entirety as an example of Community Psychology in Practice in the undergraduate psychology programme. The community groups have a substantial set of findings to use in their own practice, distribute through community forums and use to inform LGBT suicide prevention strategies. Particular successes are that MindOut received 5 years further funding in April 2007 and Allsorts have been able to draw on the research in planning interventions to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. We also have a strong working relationship and a willingness to maintain the collaboration. Yet, we are also able to make a number of recommendations for future applied research practice in the context of community-university knowledge exchange programmes.

The participant experience - The feedback from participants about the benefits of the research approach has been most positive. Given our finding that suicidal distress is an outcome of acute isolation and that survival can be promoted through 'connections' (Johnson et al., 2007) it was encouraging to hear anecdotal accounts from MindOut participants about the benefits of taking part in the research. This included feeling more connected to both their community group and the wider LGBT community. At MindOut the research was positioned as part of a wider project of tackling suicide in the LGBT community alongside other initiatives such as organising a special edition of the local gay magazine *GScene* to focus on the stigma of mental illness, and holding the first closed *ASIST* suicide intervention training weekend for LGBT people in the UK. I attended this weekend and it was one of the few occasions where I felt taken out of the 'university' role and submerged in the community experience. Here, our working groups consisted of a mixture of LGBT professionals from a multitude of backgrounds and LGBT service-users with a range of experiences of supporting people with mental health issues. The challenges each of us faced in meeting the training tasks resulted in an atmosphere of collaboration and community investment, as well as increased confidence to discuss suicidal distress and intentions with those who might be in need. Participants at Allsorts also spoke positively about taking part in the research in terms of seeing 'how far they had come' as well as expressing a desire to mentor younger LGBT people who might be experiencing similar circumstances they had moved on from. These accounts demonstrate to us the value in participatory-action research approaches in creating some degree of personal and social transformation. The collaborative relationship with community partners is key to understanding the impact of research on participants' lives, primarily through their informal feedback and monitoring of participants ongoing emotional wellbeing. The challenge for the future is to maintain this sense of empowerment and connection for our participants via new initiatives to challenge

stigma about suicide and sexuality in both the LGBT and wider community.

Future Collaborative Practice – Collaboration was central to the success of the project and took place through regular steering group meetings. These were arranged by the BSCKE co-ordinator. Her role proved crucial in problem solving and advising on more difficult aspects of the project (e.g., ethical approval) as well as in negotiating differences between the community-university partners. However, the time required for collaborative research was drastically under-estimated in the original research proposal. With the additional lengthy delay in ethical approval the project was soon behind schedule culminating in the end of the research assistant's contract before the analysis was finished. The project was eventually completed by the academic partner six months later than expected. Future projects need to be aware of the time required for building relationships and negotiating points of disagreement, and need to incorporate this into any funding bid as missing deadlines could have serious implications if community groups are reliant on the research for funding bids.

Funding Issues – Knowledge-exchange projects utilise a model that has been successful in university-business collaborations and applies it to community settings. The ideological values that underpin 'knowledge-exchange' should be applauded but in our reality it took two already under-funded organisations (e.g. modern universities and cash-strapped community organisations serving disadvantaged groups) and provided a skeletal budget to effect social change. As such, the research produced is excellent value for money, but in a time when UK Research Councils are beginning to fund universities at full economic cost it must be noted that much of the work in community-university partnerships is generated by the good will of individual university departments, groups and actors. Funding is equally crucial for sustaining relationships between community organisations and the local university. Initiatives such as BSCKE can begin the process of forging connections but subsequent funding is required if the partnerships are to create ongoing socially relevant research agendas that serve local marginalised groups, and redesign the teaching and learning environment within the academy.

The ethics of knowledge-exchange – Clear guidelines are required for the process of evaluating ethical dilemmas in community-knowledge exchange programmes. Research Ethics Boards need representatives adept in the principles, goals and procedures of participant-action research and who will recognise and value community group expertise. Ethics panels should endeavour to include community group representatives who can comment and advise on their areas of expertise. It should not be assumed by ethics boards that talking about sensitive areas such as 'suicide' or 'sexuality' will traumatise participants: With sufficient layers of support participating in research can have a empowering effect and lead to personal change. When conducting sensitive research projects planners need to fully consider support for everybody that partakes, including researchers, freelance transcription providers, as well as participants and community co-ordinators. Finally, the impact of co-ownership of research raises issues of confidentiality and anonymity within qualitative studies of close-knit community groups, as it is possible that participants' accounts will be recognised. The impact of this requires evaluating prior to the research process.

Redefining Community-university Partnerships – Community-university partnership programmes are a ripe source of funding for community psychologists. They foster similar goals and objectives and demand the use of participatory-action research methods that involve participants throughout the research process in order to facilitate social action and change at community level. In many respects we have been successful in doing this, but overall the responsibility of the research has remained firmly within the university. This has been for a number of reasons that relate to the administrative aspects of community-university partnerships. While it is possible to take the university to the community by arranging meetings in community spaces rather than at the university, or make a visible presence at community events, the overall procedural control for community-university partnerships remains firmly within existing university structures. BSCKE itself is housed on the university campus and funded through HEFCE. The initial proposal had to be

accompanied by a budget with staffing costs approved through the personnel department in the university. The Research Ethics Board was located in the university and had no community group representatives. These existing university structures need to be scrutinised and reformulated in light of new learning from knowledge-exchange programmes. Thus, transformation within university administrative structures and pedagogical approaches is also crucial if knowledge-exchange programmes are to be successful in leading an applied research agenda that serves the needs of marginalised sectors of society.

References

American Psychiatric Association. (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Asberg, M., Samuelsson, M., & Wiklander, M. (2003). Shame reactions after suicide attempt. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences, 17*, 293-300.

Bagley, C. & D'Augelli, A. R. (2000). Suicidal behaviour in gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. *British Medical Journal, 320*, 1617-1618.

British Psychological Society, (2000). *Code of conduct, ethical guidelines and principles.* Leicester: Author.

Brydon-Miller, M. (2004). Using participatory action research to address community health issues. In M. Murray, (Ed.), *Critical health psychology* (pp. 187-202). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Brighton and Sussex Community-University Knowledge Exchange Programme. (2006). Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge Exchange Program – Project Guidance. Available at http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/projects/exchange.htm#guidance [Accessed 30/12/2006]

Count-me-in (2001). *Findings from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community needs assessment 2000.* Brighton & Hove.

D'Augelli, A. & Grossman, A. H. (2001). Disclosure of sexual orientation, victimisation, and mental health among lesbian, gay, and bisexual older adults. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 16*, 1094-1098.

Dockery, G. (2000). Participatory research: Whose roles, whose responsibilities. In C. Trumen, D. M. Mertens, & B. Humphries, (Eds.), *Research and Inequality* (pp. 95-110). London: UCL Press.

Fenaughty, J. & Harré, N. (2003). Life on the seesaw: A qualitative study of suicide resiliency factors for young gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 45*, 1-22.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: Volume 1. An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. London: Random House.

Greenland, K., Prior, L., Scourfield, J., & Smalley, N. (2004). Services for suicidal young people: Qualitative research on lay and professional perspectives. *Youth and Policy, 83*, 1-18.

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2000). Reconstructing the relationships between universities and society through action research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 85-106). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Harper, G. W. & Schneider, M. (2003). Oppression and discrimination among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people and communities: A challenge for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 243-52.

Higher Education Funding Council for England. (2006). Higher Education Innovation Fund. Available at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/heif/heif1.asp [Accessed 30/12/2006]

Herschberger, S. L., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1995). The impact of victimization on the mental health and suicidality of lesbian, gay and bisexual youths. *Developmental Psychology, 31*, 65-74.

Israel, G. E., & Tarver, D. E. II (Eds.) (1997). *Transgender care: Recommended guidelines, practical information and personal accounts.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Johnson, K. (2007) Transsexualism: Diagnostic dilemmas, transgender politics and the future of transgender care. In V. Clarke & E. Peel (Eds.) *Out in psychology: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans perspectives* (pp.

445-464). London: Wiley Press.
Johnson, K., Jones, H., Faulkner, P., MindOut and Allsorts Youth Project (2007). *Understanding suicidal distress and promoting survival in LGBT communities*. Brighton & Hove: HSPRC [available from www.spectrum-lgbt.org] [Accessed 29/04/06]
Jorm, A. F., Korten, A. E, Rodgers, B., Jacomb, P.A., & Christensen, H. (2002). Sexual orientation and mental health: Results from a community survey of young and middle-aged adults. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 180*, 423-427.
Khanlou, N., & Peter, E. (2005). Participatory action research: Considerations for ethical review. *Social Science & Medicine, 60*, 2333-2340.
Kidd, S. A., & Kral, M. J. (2002). Suicide and prostitution among street youth: A qualitative analysis. *Adolescence, 37*, 411-30.
King, M., McKeown, E., Warner, J., Ramsay, A., Johnson, K., Cort, C., Davidson, O., & Wright, L. (2003a). *Mental health and social wellbeing of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in England and Wales*. London: Mind Report.
King, M., McKeown, E., Warner, J., Ramsay, A., Johnson, K., Cort, C., Wright, L., Blizard, R. and Davidson, O. (2003b). Mental health and quality of life of gay men and lesbians in England and Wales: Controlled, cross-sectional study. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 183*, 552-558.
Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 674-697.
McNair, R., Kavanagh, A., Agius, P. & Tong, B. (2005). The mental health status of young adult and mid-life non-heterosexual Australian women, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 29*, 265-267.
McNamee, H. (2006). *Out on your own: An examination of the mental health of young same-sex attracted men*. The Rainbow Project, Belfast. Available at http://www.rainbow-project.org/documents/OutonYourOwn.pdf [Accessed 20/11/06]
Nelson, G., Lord, J., & Ochocka, J. (2001). Empowerment and mental health in community: Narratives of psychiatric consumer/survivors. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 125-142
Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.) (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Park, P. (2001). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury, (Eds.) *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (pp. 81-90). London: Sage.
Project for Advice, Counselling and Education. (1998). *Diagnostic homophobic: The experiences of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in mental health services.* London: Author.
Ramefedi, G. (1987). Adolescent homosexuality: Psychosocial and medical implications. Pediatrics, 79, 331-337.
Ramefedi, G. (1999). Sexual orientation and youth suicide. Journal of the American Medical Association, 282, 1291-1292.
Ramefedi, G., French, S., Story, M., Resnick, M. D., & Blum, R. (1998). The relationship between suicide risk and sexual orientation: Results from a population-based study. American Journal of Public Health, 88, 57-59.
Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/ exemplars of prevention. American *American Journal of Community Psychology, 15*, 121-148.
Rappaport, J., & Seidman, E. (2000). *Handbook of community psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
Warner, J., McKeown, E., Griffin, M., Johnson, K., Ramsay, A., Cort, C. and King, M., (2004). Rates and predictors of mental illness in gay men, lesbians and bisexual men and women: Results from a survey based in England and Wales. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 185*, 479-485

Acknowledgements and Disclaimers
The project was funded and supported by Brighton and Sussex Community Knowledge

Exchange programme for which we are grateful. Thank you to the participants and community group workers from MindOut and Allsorts, Helen Jones, Emma Walsh, Paul Faulkner and Dana Cohen for their contribution to the research process, discussion, collaboration and negotiation, without which the paper would not exist. It should be noted however that this paper is published with the permission of my community partners as a single authored article, rather than co-authored as the spirit of community-knowledge exchange might expect. This is to recognize that despite many insights emerging from our shared discussion the reflections on methodology and ethics presented here are inevitably my own and not the responsibility of other team members.

Author Biography

Katherine Johnson is Senior Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Science, University of Brighton. Her research interests include critical and community psychology, psychosocial studies, gender, sexuality, embodiment and practices of personal and social transformation. She has recently published articles in *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *Men & Masculinities*, *Journal of Lesbian Studies* and is currently writing a book *On Sexualities* (Polity Press).

Address correspondence to

Dr Katherine Johnson
School of Applied Social Science
University of Brighton
Brighton, BN1 9PH, UK
Email: K.E.Johnson@brighton.ac.uk

Natural resource management methodology: Lessons for complex community settings

Brian J. Bishop
Alison L. Browne
Curtin University of Technology, Australia

Natural resource management (NRM) is being seen increasingly as involving complex ecological and social/political settings and thus requiring changes to the research and development (R&D) adopted in the past. NRM R&D has been characterised by predominately positivistic and reductionistic methodologies. Recent attempts to deal with complexity in NRM settings required input from many scientific disciplines including the social sciences. It also involved the use of contextual approaches the nature of the substantive domain is understood in the framing of questions. In using a substantive approach, the importance of considering NRM R&D as a human activity has been recognised and this offers opportunities for community psychologists. In dealing with complex ecological and social systems, there is also opportunity for a reciprocity between NRM methodologies and the development of applied methodologies in community psychology.

In this paper we explore methodological development in the arena of natural resource management (NRM). NRM is increasingly being seen as requiring an integrated methodological approach in which a number of environmental and social sciences are brought together (Syme, 2005). With the belated inclusion of social scientists has come the recognition that communities need to be consulted and directly involved in policy setting and program implementation. There has been considerable discussion of how this integration should be achieved invoking concepts of multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in applied research and development (R&D).

We approach this topic with two agendas. The first is to show that there is a role in NRM for community psychologists as broad integration necessarily involves community participation and people skills. The world is facing serious threats from global warming and environmental degradation. Given that these environmental changes have been contributed to by human activity, social scientists, and in particular, community psychologists, have a role to play in addressing sustainable behaviour. Secondly, the recognition that NRM research involves complex systems can provide methodological insights for community psychologists. The issue of complexity brings with it the need to examine our methodological roots and assumptions that are buried in modernistic positivism. The rise of postmodern thinking provides alternative ways to consider complexity, and NRM provides a forum in which these issues can be examined.

The management of natural resources (or the scarcity of these) has now been made more salient to politicians and the general community due to issues such as climate change, which is now recognised as a serious and potentially major threat to world stability (Jepma & Munasinghe, 1998). Environmental research on global warming has indicated that CO^2 atmospheric concentrations are estimated to rise 90% to 250% by 2100 over those of 1760 (Houghton et al., 2001). The average temperature in Australia has risen 0.7°C in the past century and may warm between 1.4°C to 5.8°C in this century (Pittock, 2003). Sea levels have been estimated to rise 9 cm to 88 cm over the same period (Pittock). In the west, Perth has seen a 50% drop in water reservoirs in the past 50 years and the general decline in rainfall in Australia is leading to the investigation of alternative water supplies such as desalination and water reuse (e.g., Leviston et al., 2006; Po, Kaercher & Nancarrow, 2004; Po et al., 2005). Awareness of water supply issues has increased significantly (as witnessed by the recent media coverage

regarding Toowoomba and Queensland water shortage, e.g., Turner, 2006). The full extent of the impact of the projected changes on humans and the ecology is difficult to predict, but substantial change to our lives and the lives of future generations must be expected. To this end, the Government of Australia has adopted a policy of sustainable NRM. In one example of this:

> In 2004, the Australian Government committed $20.5 million over four years to build the capacity of the agriculture and land management sectors to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Effective greenhouse action can provide sustainability in regional Australia by focusing on economic and natural resource management benefits. (Department of Environment and Heritage, 2006).

A largely agreed upon definition of sustainability refers to a development path along which the maximisation of human well-being for today's generations that does not lead to declines in future well-being (Brundtland, 1987). One perspective of attaining this path highlights the requirement to eliminate those negative externalities that are responsible for natural resource depletion and environmental degradation. It also requires securing those public goods that are essential for economic development to last, such as those provided by well-functioning ecosystems, a healthy environment and a cohesive society. Sustainable development also stresses the importance of retaining the flexibility to respond to future shocks, even when their probability, and the size and location of their effects, cannot be assessed with certainty.

The centrality of human well-being in the concept of sustainability indicates the role that psychologists, particularly community psychologists, can play in addressing environmental change and NRM. An example of how community psychologists can play a role is seen in the following section from a R&D proposal by the Australian Research Centre for Water in Society (ARCWIS).

> This project aims to help [Catchment Management Authorities, CMAs] prioritise and implement on-ground actions to meet the objectives of Catchment Action Plans [to develop sustainable agricultural practices].... This will underpin a targeted and evaluated community NRM change program in partnership with the catchment community. (ARCWIS, 2004, p. 1)

Already a few community psychologists are playing a role in understanding behavioural and environmental change. For example, the ARCWIS has been involved in a range of environmental research in areas such as resource allocation (Syme & Nancarrow, 2001), urban planning (Syme, Fenton & Coakes, 2001), urban water use (Syme, Shao, Po & Campbell, 2004) and community change in response to climate change (Dempsey & Fisher, 2005). It is also a burgeoning field of postgraduate research pursuit, as a number of students are beginning to address the links between community psychology, NRM and ecologically sustainable development (ESD; Browne, Bishop, Bellamy & Dzidic, 2004).

Traditional positivistic approaches in NRM have been characterised as linear models of R&D, particularly linear models of technology transfer of research results to non-scientific stakeholders (Allen, Bosch, Gibson & Jopp, 1998; Edwards & Farrington, 1992; Johnson & Walker, 2000; Roux et al., 2006). Addressing environmental problems has led to a broadening of the scope of science to include integrated approaches where social science compliments physical sciences (Syme, 2005). Recently, there has been a shift towards integrated R&D which has involves a wider range of stakeholders, including policy makers and local communities (e.g., Johnson & Walker, 2000; van Kerkhoff, 2002a). For example, Johnson and Walker looked at the use of participatory approaches. They wrote:

> …these shifts raise fundamental methodological and institutional questions as to how science is conducted, what constitutes an outcome, who controls the agenda and scientist's accountability to others. In particular, it also challenges the way in which scientists communicate both internally and externally, and the role of communication and communication research in NRM R&D [although] …

> they have only recently begun to understand the context of complex problem settings, multiple stakeholders, divergent interests and scales of relevance associated with integrated natural resource planning and management activities (p. 82).

When the concept of integration extends to include communities, the issues become even more apparent, although the inclusion of the community is often positive and with benefits. However, Buchy (2001) highlighted a number of assumptions of integration in NRM R&D that involves community, particularly "that better participation in natural resource management… will lead to better resource management; that communities are able and willing to engage voluntarily in NRM; that local communities are seeking increased power in decision-making processes; and that participation is a means to achieve and end OR that participation leads to empowerment and greater social practice (an end in itself)" (p. 1).

Participatory Integrated R&D

Other than discussions of specific participatory research methodologies within the natural resource and agricultural sciences (Black et al., 2000; Chambers, 1995), most participatory typologies (e.g., Arnstein, 1969; Ashby, 2003; Black et al., 2000; Buchy, 2001; Buchy, Ross & Proctor, 2000; Chambers, 1995; McDougall & Braun, 2003; Probst et al., 2003) and discussions of effective characteristics of successful participatory approaches (e.g., Aslin, Mazur & Curtis, 2002; Buchy & Race, 2001; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Schusler, Decker & Pfeffer, 2003) emerge from the natural resource policy domain. Although these policy perspectives may be useful in developing understanding about the nature and effective characteristics of participation in NRM R&D in Australia, it cannot be assumed that discussions and suggestions within this domain are directly transferable to the arena of R&D. Australian literature has begun to reflect the significance and importance of the development of understandings of 'integration' from a variety of policy and R&D perspectives, and has begun to address the paucity of discussions of integration as it applies to R&D (e.g., Bammer, Curtis, Mobbs, Lane & Dovers, 2005)

One example of this attempt to delineate the nature of integrated NRM research within Australia is Lorrae van Kerkhoff's (2002b) PhD thesis in which she discussed the different understandings of integrated research from the perspective of those involved in the research teams at two Australian Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs). Six models of integration emerged from her research (van Kerkhoff, 2002a, 2002b), with the different models highlighting that "people overwhelmingly thought of integration as a process of managing and manipulating information flows. The flows were integrated through various designs, and relied on the information being representative, rational, and above all, impersonal" (van Kerkhoff, 2002b, p. 147). She also identified a number of essential elements to effective relationships such as getting to know each other, trust, respect, trust and respect entwined, teamwork, communication, fairness and transparency, and being aware of diversity of expectations and visions (van Kerkhoff, 2002b). All of these concepts can be found in the community psychology literature in terms such as resource exchange (Sarason & Lorentz, 1998), liaison (Dokecki, 1977; Hobbs, 1966), empowerment (Rappaport, 1981), trust (Drew, Bishop & Syme, 2001), fairness and justice (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Syme & Nancarrow, 2001) and diversity and social justice (Watts, 2004). The role of active mediator (Bishop, Sonn, Drew & Contos, 2002; Throgmorton, 1991, 2000) in which the community psychologists acts as a facilitator of information flows between scientists and the community fits well in an integrated approach of NRM R&D. As was reflected earlier, as well as incorporating policy and research stakeholders in processes of integration in NRM R&D, there is an increased demand for community participation. Given the aspects of community psychological theory which reflect issues that are emerging within the integration literature, for example, trust which is an essential element in the interchange between community and science (Roux et al., 2006), community psychologists are well placed to begin addressing these issues in integrated NRM R&D settings,

R&D in a complex world

There are implications for integrating applied research approaches of environmental sciences and community psychology. The issues

of complexity and community participation that are being wrestled within NRM are comparable to the emergence of contextualism and postmodernism in community psychology, albeit it emerged rather slowly (e.g., Biglan, 1993; Biglan & Hayes, 1996; Bishop et al., 2002; Hess, 2005; Kingry-Westergaard & Kelly, 1990, 2000; Newbrough, 1992; Tebes, 2005). One of the implications of a contextual and postmodern approach is that the concepts of reality become more complex. This is reflected in the emergence of complexity thinking within natural science understandings of environmental problems (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). It is being recognised that NRM research is embedded in a range of social, legal, economic, political and ecological settings. For example, globalisation has changed the way environmental problems are conceptualised (e.g., Mol, 2001). Contextualism and postmodernism are useful frameworks for exploring the integrated and interrelated elements of these diverse systems which reflect in NRM settings. These notions of layered systems parallel Bronfenbrenner (1979) concept of nested social levels of varying breadth from the macro-social to the micro. In adopting a layered approach, the complexity of issues is recognised.

Kastenberg, Hauser-Kastenberg, and Norris (2005) made the distinction between complicated and complex systems:

> … **complicated** systems that are characterised as atomistic (reductionism), deterministic (cause and effect) and dualistic (subject/object dualism). In other words, the properties of these systems: (1) are understandable by studying the behaviour of their component parts, (2) exist independent of the observer, and (3) are only deduced from "objective" empirical observations….
>
> The context within which Post-Industrial Age are understood is based on a non-linear worldview where second order effects are important and/ or the boundaries are permeable. This worldview gives rise to **complex** systems that are characterised by at least one of the following: (1) holistic/ emergent – the system has properties that are exhibited only by the whole and hence cannot be described in terms of its parts, (2) chaotic – small changes in input often lead to large changes in output and/or there may be many possible outputs for a given input, and (3) subjective – some aspects of the system may not be describable by any objective means alone; that is, objectivity is considered to be only one possible way of describing systems properties. (p. 88)

Current conceptualisations of the interaction between the environment and social, economic and political systems as 'complex' are based in disciplinary derived definitions of complexity, and the resultant research questions, methodologies, and research solutions that these conceptualisations suggest (Browne, 2006). Therefore, the idea of complexity itself is underpinned by a number of disciplinary and philosophical positions and perspectives that shape the nature of the solutions suggested by that perspective (Browne). For example, engineers and ecologists have very different ways of conceptualising the complexity of environmental problems and their solutions (e.g., Wilderer & Wilderer, 2005), than do social scientists or community psychologists. As Voisey and O'Riordan (2001) have stated "political, ecological, economic, anthropological, legal and sociological angles on sustainability … varies both with disciplinary perspective and style of democracy" (p. 26).

In NRM, the interrelated nature of the many factors involved in ecological systems forces complex conceptualisation (e.g., Pinet, McCleenen & Moore, 1998). This conceptualisation is reflected in the diverse range of disciplines which now focus on environmental/social problems and their solutions. Current moves within the natural sciences have seen a shift from the perspective of *complicated* natural systems to *complex* environmental and social systems. Many of these disciplines cite complexity as a frame of reference, but as in the example above, this represents a funnelled complexity of disciplines looking at singular issues, but from a incredibly detailed perspective (Browne). This has led to

two notions of complexity. One is based in modernism in that complexity is seen in terms of increasing numbers of variables as a single issue is examined more and more closely. Natural sciences have begun to recognise the dynamic, integrated, complex, unpredictable and unbounded openness of environmental systems (McDougall & Braun, 2003) in which the second notion of complexity arises from the recognition that more and more factors are involved in dynamic systems, and at different nested levels.

Complexity in NRM is often based on the definition of the environment as complex (e.g., Pinet et al., 1998), and the consideration of social issues as integrated but separate to environmental issues, speaks again to the philosophy and worldviews that exist behind disciplinary conceptualisations of NRM complexity. For example, Luke (1995) suggested that the "separation of organisms from their environments is the primary epistemological divide cutting through reality in the rhetorics of ecology" (p. 63). This issue of the interrelatedness but separateness of the social and the environmental has its parallel in psychology where the discipline has developed theory and research based on the assumption that people are individuals separate from their context (Bishop, Johnson & Browne, 2006; Sampson, 1989; Sarason, 1981). The application of solutions in this definition is usually by complex, expert disciplines that focus on environmentally complex problems and their solutions (e.g., Arthur, 1999; Costanza et al., 1993; Glass, 2001; Werner, 1999), with social, political and economic issues being considered as secondary, or as separate from these environmentally complex solutions.

There has been a significant tradition of approaching research and policy for NRM through singular problem focused and linear approaches to research and the transfer to policy and community through models of extension. These have been criticised as inappropriate for NRM due to what is considered to be their inherent failure to address the complex interaction of *environmental and human problems* that need multiple perspectives to derive solutions. The extension model, that is, the linear model of technology transfer, generally failed to promote change (Allen, Kilvington, & Horn, 2002), particularly in the agricultural sciences, as new technologies were slow in being adopted, and social inequalities were occurring because of the different rates of adoption of technologies across communities (Vanclay, 1995). There is emergent realisation that 'good NRM R&D' which focuses on defining one area of environmental complexity does not necessarily result in changes to NRM policies, agricultural practices, water allocation/use and other practices which impact upon the environment (Johnson & Walker, 2000; Shulman & Price, 2000; Vanclay). NRM R&D based on an appreciation of complexity is more likely to have policy impacts, partially because the involvement of local communities, is in itself, a political action and helps determine that action with eventuate.

NRM R&D and Community Psychology

In community psychology, the slow move to more complex understandings requires that the philosophical underpinnings of its methodologies need to be addressed. Although community psychology emerged as a reaction to the limitations of clinical psychological treatments and the impacts of large social change occurring in the 1960s, it maintained mainstream psychology's embrace of positivism. Thus even though those at the Swampscott conference were advocating analysis and intervention at other levels than the individual, and thus invoking visions of complexity thinking, the methodology continued to be operationalised at the individual level in reductionistic positivism (e.g., Hayes, 2002; Speer et al., 1992).

Just as in NRM complex research, community psychological research requires complexity methodology. Pepper (1942) in his typologies of research described four world theories. He categorised each with its own root metaphor. The first was formism, in which the root metaphor was similarities and differences. Personality traits and types are examples of formism. Mechanism (or positivism) has the root metaphor of the machine. It is the basis of experimental research in psychology and is based on Humean notions of 'cause and effect'. Organicism has the root metaphor of 'harmonious unity'. In psychology, it is the basis of 'complicated' systems theory, where organisations or groups are conceptualised as living, holistic entities. The final world theory is

contextualism and the root metaphor is 'the act in context'.

Mechanism is the dominant approach in psychology, and formism is also well understood. Organicism has become more common with the rise of systems thinking in areas like organisational psychology, and this perspective could also be said to have its parallel in complex systems thinking within the natural and related environmental/social sciences. In contextualism, there are different assumptions about the nature of reality, and cause and effect. One reality is not assumed to necessarily be the case. Cultural differences, for example, may not be simply variations on a theme, but real cosmological and physical differences in the way in which we observe and act in the world. The notion of multiple realities is difficult in psychology as in its theories and practice it reflect modernist notions of positivistim (mechanism) (Tuffin, 2005) in which a single physical reality is used as a metaphor for the social world. As such, the notion that there is one psychological reality denies the complexity of culture (Hayes, 2002; Sarason, 1981) and understandings of social and political systems.

Attempts to simplify contextualism (e.g., Payne, 1996) leads to incomplete descriptions of social, political, economic, cultural and environmental phenomenon. Alternatives that retain more complexity such as those suggested by Linney (2000), Shinn and Toohey (2003) and Tebes (2005) involve an encapsulated context in which aspects of the context can be treated as variables. This is not contextualism, but is complicated systems of organicism in Pepper's terms. We would argue that this lacks what Kelly (2003) referred to as 'adventurous methodologies'; that is, it is a contextualism that is at once incomplete and incoherent, and not reflective of complexities that are expressed in community or regional contexts (Browne, 2006). In allowing people and aspects of context to be treated as variables, as discrete entities, the world becomes fixed as snapshots of local realities and does not allow for dynamism of transaction (Altman & Rogoff, 1984; Dewey & Bentley, 1946). Involvement in NRM directs community psychology's attention to the nature of our methodologies, in both the benefits that we can have in complex settings such as NRM, but also the limitations of our methodologies in addressing such settings. In applying community psychological processes to the arena of NRM, the philosophies underlying our conceptualisations of complexity must be dealt with and not ignored or approached through modelling reductionism, even if it is the partial reduction of organicism. These issues will be addressed in relation to a specific NRM setting in which the authors were involved below.

Northern NRM R&D example

CSIRO and Land and Water Australia (LWA) had recognised the lack of biophysical and environmental, and social research that had been done in the north of Australia to inform development of the region. They sought to address this by undertaking a large scale NRM project in a major catchment in remote northern Australia. Part of this project involved evaluating the impacts of large scale R&D at local and regional levels; this is where we came in (see Bellamy, Bishop & Browne, 2003; Browne, 2006). The project was negotiated with many local and national stakeholders, including local farmers and industry representatives. The initial project was to be a $30 million program involving cash and in kind support from state and federal governments, and from LWA and CSIRO. With a change of state government and policy, much of the initial expected support did not eventuate. The program was pared down to 5 years and a budget of $7.5M and involved 13 major partners such as CSIRO, LWA, WA Agriculture, WA Waters and Rivers and Kimberley Land Council. The project included 5 sub-programs, namely:

1. Regional resource futures.
2. Sustainable rangeland systems.
3. Integrated water resource management and planning.
4. Sustainable coastal and marine systems.
5. Aboriginal management and planning for 'country'.

The aim of the research was to understand and develop biophysical and social data to model of ESD in the large region through a partnership arrangement with industry, governments, NGOs, Indigenous groups and community groups. The research model adopted was participatory, integrative and had aims such as stimulating

sharing of knowledge, providing local learning and increasing capacity, providing a sense of client/stakeholder ownership, to improve the usefulness of research products and to foster the development of change skill for both R&D providers and the clients/stakeholders. We were involved in sub-program 1.3 which was to evaluate progress of the research program, assess the process and involvement of community and stakeholders, and to assess the regional impacts of large scale R&D.

The research process involved a number of phases such as archival research of all relevant documents, observations of research and management, interviews with stakeholders and clients, interviews with the researchers and interviews with people from the local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. An iterative-generative-reflective process (IRG, Bishop et al., 2002) was used to analyse the data in which abductive reasoning is used as a means of uncovering the obvious and not-so-obvious themes in the data. Abductive reasoning involves making speculative conclusions from less than certain premises as a means of expanding knowledge and producing what Polkinghorne (1983) called assertoric knowledge, or knowledge claims to be tested (Bishop et al.).

The research program was externally evaluated after three years. Although considerable time and resources had been devoted to the project and there was extensive scientific and local investments in the study, it was terminated two years prematurely. The main reasons suggested for this termination was that the research was reported to not be addressing the high level strategic science that CSIRO and LWA expected and that management costs were disproportionably high and unsustainable, particularly compared to the financial investment for 'on the ground' research.

A number of major issues arose from the implementation and early termination of this program. The first was the failure to integrate the research into the local communities. Although there were some success stories, generally, the research program did not make much headway into incorporating itself into the local community and the cessation of the research reflected the mismatch between high level, strategic research and community understandings. There was a failure to recognise the broader political climate of the region, in which researchers from the south of Australia (especially those from bureaucratic and administrative centres) were viewed with suspicion, and while the program attempted to address local concerns and to involve people, this was never really successful, as the research agendas were viewed by locals as being driven by the researchers and strategic needs, and not reflecting the complexity and significance of local issues.

The response to the scaling back of the finances at the beginning of the project resulted in a reduction of the integrative elements of the project, which was one of the broad aims of the original research. The reduction in scale led to the selection of a set of discrete research aims centred around disciplinary lines. This did not help those remaining integrative aspects as the nature of these scientifically based projects highlighted the reductionistic nature of science, and supported community suspicions of the ability of the project to address community and regional issues, rather than strategic science based learnings.

While the Indigenous sub-program was successful, there were problems with Indigenous issues that beset the other sub-programs. This region has a high proportion of Indigenous people (approximately 37%, ABS, 2006) and there had been little recognition of their cultural issues in the past. The 'frontier' mentality of the region also did not discourage open racism among some in the community, and the increased power of Indigenous groups in the initiation of native title issues over what was seen to be highly arable and developable land in the region, fuelled the animosity felt by some of the non-Indigenous people. These social and political issues can be seen to increase the complexity of the issues surrounding the implementation of the R&D program, however, these issues were not reflected upon directly within the program plans or literature. The significance and impact of these broader social and political issues has been captured elsewhere (e.g., Browne, 2006).

In terms of the complexity of the natural ecology, the change in funding did not allow the full development of an integrated research program and the issue of complexity could not be effectively addressed, especially where human

issues were concerned. For example, ground water research was demonstrating that the water table was rising significantly and that this posed a major problem for local agriculture, particularly in relation to how this rising ground water impacted upon salinity in the region. The failure to develop an integrated research process meant the concerns of local farmers were not incorporated into the research process, and thus the research aims were not framed in such a way as to address environmental issues in terms of local farming practice and development.

The relevance of this NRM example to community psychology is strong. In dealing with 'social ecology' we need to recognise the importance of dealing with complex systems. Framing research methodology in terms of complex systems has a number of implications. The first is that the breadth of the research needs to be made broad and flexible. We cannot afford to create artificial demarcations on the scope of the research. The research 'boundary' needs to be permeable and allow for changes as the research progresses. The context should create the specifications of the research boundaries and questions that we deal with. The research needs methods that are flexible and reflexive in that the nature of the research issues must to be able to change as the understanding of the context develops. The research requires long time frames. Working with communities requires the development, or reestablishment of trust (Roux et al., 2006), and this requires time. More, we need to recognise that researchers may define research in terms of a specific and ahistorically located project, yet communities do not; such projects are embedded in other community and regional experiences of research and policy (Browne, 2006). What we need to recognise is that our research is in fact one part of a cumulative history of research interventions with communities, particularly with Indigenous communities (Browne & Bishop, 2006). If the history of research practice has been disempowering, our new research is implemented in this context, and therefore, has to address these issues of disempowerment and researchers should expect to spend considerable time (re) developing trust.

A final issue relates to how we report complex systems. Working with local communities means that we become aware of local concerns and viewpoints, and we must reflect those viewpoints in the research. Our desire to reduce complexity down to its 'bare essentials' is something we have to challenge. Complexity needs to be reported in detail. For example, Contos (2003) and Browne (2006) recognised the need to address complexity by not reducing social systems to elemental themes as these leads to increasing levels of abstraction and diminishes the power of contextual analysis.

Conclusion

In summary, we argue that NRM methodology is changing in terms that community psychologists would recognise. The recognition of ecological and environmental complexity, and the realisation that human participation in integrated NRM also involves complex social systems, has provided the opportunity for community psychologists to be engaged in R&D. The emergence of complex science theory and community participation offers parallels for community psychology and its methodology, especially since community psychology has integrated notions of nested social levels as part of its fundamental theoretical and applied conceptualisations. As much as community psychology can offer benefits for the complex settings of integrated NRM R&D, our fundamental philosophical, ontological and epistemological traditions are also challenged by this involvement. Previous attempts by psychologists to be involved in NRM and environmental issues has tended to be focussed on single issues with a single disciplinary approach (e.g., Castro, 2006; Chess, Johnson & Gibson, 2005, Forrant & Silka, 2006; Kim & Kaplan, 2004), as is the hallmark of positivistic, reductionistic and modernistic thinking. The complexity of NRM R&D now being integrated across bio-physical, social, political and community domains requires broad contextual research. The complex nature of NRM issues has conceptual parallels with contextual praxis of community psychology. Community psychological theory and methods can be applied to NRM as it is now being addressed. Moreover, the methodological and conceptual developments in NRM R&D in dealing with complexity, have lessons from which community psychology can benefit.

References

Allen, W. J., Bosch, O. J. H., Gibson, R. G., & Jopp, A. J. (1998). Co-learning our way to sustainability: An integrated and community-based research approach to support natural resource management decision-making. In S. A. El-Swaify & D. S. Yakowitz (Eds.), *Multiple objective decision-making for land, water and environmental management* (pp. 51-59). Boston: Lewis Publishers.

Allen, W. J., Kilvington, M. J., & Horn, C. (2002). *Using participatory and learning-based approaches for environmental management to help achieve constructive behaviour change* (No. LC0102/057). Lincoln, New Zealand: Landcare Research.

Altman, I., & Rogoff, B. (1984). World views in psychology: Trait, interactional, organismic and transactional perspectives. In I. Altman (Ed.), *Handbook of Environmental Psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 1-40). New York: Wiley.

ARCWIS. (2004). *Towards behavioural change, trust and partnerships: a proposal by the Australian Research Centre for Water in Society.* Perth: CSIRO.

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35*, 217-223.

Arthur, W. B. (1999). Complexity and the economy. *Science, 284*, 107-109

Ashby, J. (2003). Introduction: Uniting science and participation in the process of innovation - Research *for* development. In B. Pound, S. Snapp, C. McDougall & A. Braun (Eds.), *Managing natural resources for sustainable livelihoods: Uniting science and participation* (pp. 1-19). London: Earthscan Publications and International Development Research Centre.

Aslin, H. J., Mazur, N. A., & Curtis, A. L. (2002). *Identifying regional skill and training needs for integrated natural resource management planning.* Canberra: Bureau of Rural Sciences.

Bammer, G., Curtis,A., Mobbs, C., Lane, R., & Dovers, S. (Eds.) (2005). Australian case studies of integration in Natural Resource management (NRM) [Supplementary issue] *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management, 12*, whole issue

Bellamy, J. A., Bishop, B. J., & Browne, A. L. (2003). *Draft for OBP board consideration. An interim assessment of the impact of the Ord Bonaparte Program.* Brisbane: CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems.

Biglan, A. (1993). A functional framework for community interventions. In S.C. Hayes, L. J. Hayes, H. W. Reese, & T. Sarbin (Eds.), *Varieties of scientific contextualism* (pp. 251-276). Reno, Nevada: Context Press.

Biglan, A, & Hayes, S. C. (1996). Should the behavioural sciences become more pragmatic? The case for functional contextualism in research on human behaviour. *Applied and Preventative Psychology, 51*, 47-57.

Bishop, B. J., Johnson, K. & Browne, A. L. (2006). Reconciliation of the understanding of persons and community psychology. *Australian Community Psychologist, 17*,

Bishop, B. J., Sonn, C.S., Drew, N. M. & Contos, N. E. (2002). The evolution of epistemology and concepts in an iterative‐generative reflective practice: The importance of small differences. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 493‐510.

Black, A., Duff, J., Saggers, S., Baines, P., Jennings, A., & Bowen, P. (2000). *Rural communities and rural social issues: Priorities for research* (No. 00/130). Australian Capital Territory: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Browne, A. (2006). *A contextual analysis of complex, engaged natural resource management research and development.* Unpublished PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology.

Browne, A., & Bishop, B. (2006). *Iatrogenesis and impacts of working with Aboriginal people in Natural Resource Management.* Paper presented at the 10th Trans-Tasman Conference in Community Psychology, The University of Notre Dame, Broadway

Campus, Sydney, Australia.
Browne, A.L., Bishop, B.J., Bellamy, J.A., & Dzidic, P.L (2004). Redefining natural resource management as a human activity and a natural place for community psychologists, *Network, 16*(2), 8-19.
Brundtland, G. (Ed.). (1987). *Our common future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
Buchy, M. (2001). *Community participation in Australian natural resource management* (Fact sheet for research project No. ANU21). Canberra, Australia: Land & Water Australia, Social and Institutional Research Program.
Buchy, M., & Race, D. (2001). The twists and turns of community participation in natural resource management in Australia: What is missing? *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 44*, 293-308.
Buchy, M., Ross, H., & Proctor, W. (2000). *Enhancing information base on participatory approaches in Australian natural resource management.* Canberra: The Australian National University.
Castro, P. (2006). Applying social psychology to the study of environmental concern and environment worldviews: contributions from the social representation approach. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 16*, 247-266.
Chambers, R. (1995). Paradigm shifts and the practice of participatory research and development. In N. Nelson & S. Wright (Eds.), *Power and participatory development: Theory and practice* (pp. 30-42). London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
Chess, C., Johnson, B. B. & Gibson, G. (2005). Communicating about environmental indicators. *Journal of Risk Research, 8*, 63-75.
Chess, C., & Purcell, K. (1999). Public participation and the environment: Do we know what works? *Environmental Science & Technology, 33*, 2685-2692.
Contos, N. (2003). *A Quest for Justice: The Bindjareb Nyungar Story* Unpublished PhD thesis, Curtin University of Technology.
Costanza, R., Wainger, L., Folke, C., & Maler, K. G. (1993). Modeling complex ecological economic systems. *BioScience, 43*, 545-556
Dempsey, R. & Fisher, A. (2005). Consortium for Atlantic Regional Assessment: Information Tools for Community Adaptation to Changes in Climate or Land Use. *Risk Analysis, 25*, 1495-1509.
Department of the Environment & Heritage (2006). *Natural resources & agriculture*. Retrieved from http:// www.greenhouse.gov.au/nrm/index.html, 11th August, 2006.
Dewey, J., & Bentley, A., (1949). *Knowing and the known*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Dokecki, P. R. (1977). The liaison perspective on the enhancement of human development: Theoretical, historical, and experimental background. *Journal of Community Psychology, 5*, 13-17.
Drew, N. M., Bishop. B. J., & Syme, G.J (2002). Planned social change and social justice. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30,* 623-634.
Edwards, D. T., & Farrington, J. (1992). *Review of the factors influencing uptake and impact of a sample of 21 UK supported renewable natural research projects* (ODI Agricultural Research and Extension Network Paper No. 43). London: Overseas Development Institute.
Forrant, R. & Silka, L. (Eds.). (2006). *Inside and out: Universities and education for sustainable development.* Amityville, NY: Baywood.
Glass, L. (2001). Synchronization and rhythmic processes in physiology. *Nature, 410*, 277-284
Gunderson, L.H. & Holling, C.S. (Eds.) (2002). *Panarchy: Understanding transformations in human and natural systems.* Washington, DC: Island Press.
Hayes, N. (2002). *Psychology in perspective*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, England: Palgrave.
Hess, J. Z. (2005). Scientists in the swamp: narrowing the language-practice gap in community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*, 239-252.
Hobbs, N. R. (1966). Helping disturbed children: Psychological and ecological strategies. *American Psychologist, 21,* 1105-1115.

Houghton, J. T., Ding, Y., Griggs, D. J., Noguer, M., van der Linden, P. J., Dai, X., maskell, K. & Johnson, C. A. (2001). *Climate change 2001: the scientific basis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Jepma, C. J. & Munasinghe, M. (1998). *Climate change policy: facts, issues, and analyses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Johnson, A., & Walker, D. (2000). Science, communication and stakeholder participation for integrated natural resource management. *Australian Journal of Environmental Management, 7*, 82-90.

Kastenberg, W. E., Hauser-Kastenberg, G., & Norris, D. (2005). A new way of thinking about sustainability, risk and environmental decision-making. In P.A. Wilderer, E.D. Schroeder, and H. Kopp (Eds.), *Global sustainability. The impact of local cultures. A new perspective for science and engineering, economics and politics* (pp. 87-93). Weinham, Germany: Wiley-VCH.

Kelly, J. G. (2003). Science and community psychology: social norms for pluralistic inquiry. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 213-217.

Kim, J. & Kaplan, R. (2004). Physical and psychological factors in Sense of Community: New Urbanist Kentlands and nearby Orchard Village. *Environment and Behavior, 36*, 313-340.

Kingry-Westergaard, C., & Kelly, J. G. (1990). A contextualist epistemology for ecological research. In P. Tolan, C. Keys, F. Chertok & L.Jason, (Eds.), *Researching community psychology: Issues of theory and method* (pp. 23-31). Washington, DC: American psychological Association.

Leviston, Z., Nancarrow, B.E., Tucker, D.I., & Porter, N.B. (2006). *Predicting community behaviour: Indirect potable reuse of wastewater through Managed Aquifer Recharge*. [CSIRO Land and Water Science Report 29/06]. Perth: CSIRO Land and Water

Linney, J. A. (2000). Assessing ecological constructs and community context. In J. Rappaport and E. Seidman (Eds.), *Handbook of community psychology* (pp. 647-668). NY: Klumer Academic/Plenum.

Luke, T.W. (1995). On environmentality: Geo-power and eco-knowledge in the discourses of contemporary environmentalism. *Cultural Critique, 31*, 57-81.

McDougall, C., & Braun, A. (2003). Navigating complexity, diversity and dynamism: Reflections on research for natural resource management. In B. Pound, S. Snapp, C. McDougall & A. Braun (Eds.), *Managing natural resources for sustainable livelihoods: Uniting science and participation.* (pp. 20-47). London: Earthscan.

Mol, A.P.J. (2001). *Globalisation and environmental reform: The ecological modernization of global economy*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Nelson, G. & Prilleltensky, I. (Eds.). (2005). *Community psychology: in pursuit of liberation and well-being*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Newbrough, J. (1992). Community psychology in the post modern world. *Journal of Community Psychology, 20*, 10-25.

Payne, R. (1996). Contextualism in context. *International Review of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, 11*, 181-217.

Pepper S. C. (1942). *World hypotheses.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

Pittock, B. (Ed.). (2003). *Climate change: An Australian guide to the science and potential impacts.* Canberra: Australian Greenhouse Office.

Pinet, P.R., McCleenen, C.E., & Moore, L.J. (1998). Resolving environmental complexity: A geologic appraisal of process-response elements and scale as controls of shoreline erosion along southeastern Lake Ontario, New York. In C.W. Welby & M.E. Gowan (Eds.), *A paradox of power: Voices of warming and reason in the geosciences* (pp. 9-21). Boulder, Colorado: The Geological Society of America.

Po, M., Nancarrow, B.E., Leviston, Z., Porter, N.B., & Syme, G.J. (2005). *Predicting community behaviour in relation to wastewater reuse: What drives decisions to accept or reject?* Water for a Healthy Country Research Report. Perth: CSIRO

Land and Water.

Po, M., Kaercher, J.D., & Nancarrow, B.E. (2004). *Literature review of factors influencing public perceptions of water reuse.* Perth: CSIRO Land and Water

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: systems of inquiry*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Probst, K., Hagmann, J., Fernandez, M., & Ashby, J. A. (2003). *Understanding participatory research in the context of natural resource management: Paradigms, approaches and typologies* (ODI Agricultural Research and Extension Network Paper No. 130). London: Overseas Development Institute.

Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*, 1-25

Roux, D. J., Rogers, K. H., Biggs, H. C., Ashton, P. J. & Sergeant, A. (2006). Bridging the science-management divide: Moving from unidirectional knowledge transfer to knowledge interfacing and sharing. *Ecology and Society*, *11*(1), 4 [online].

Sampson, E. E. (1989). The deconstruction of self. In J. Shotter, and K. J. Gergen (Eds.) *Texts of identity* (pp. 1-19). London: Sage.

Sarason, S. B. (1981). *Psychology misdirected*. New York: Free Press.

Sarason, S. B., & Lorentz, E. M. (1998). *Crossing boundaries: Collaboration, coordination, and the redefinition of resources*. San Francisco: Jossey‑Bass.

Schusler, T. M., Decker, D. J., & Pfeffer, M. J. (2003). Social learning for collaborative natural resource management. *Society and Natural Resources, 15*, 309-326.

Shinn, M., & Toohey, S. M. (2003). Community contexts of human welfare. *Annual Review of Psychology, 54*, 427-259.

Shulman, A. D., & Price, R. J. (2000). *Case studies in increasing the adoption of sustainable resource management practices* (LWRRDC Occasional Paper No. 04/99). Canberra: Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation.

Speer, P., Dey, A., Griggs, P., Gibson, C., Lubin, B., & Hughey, J. (1992). In search of community: An analysis of community psychology research from 1984–1988. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 20*, 195–209.

Syme, G. (2005). Integration initiatives at CSIRO: Reflections of an insider. *Journal of Research Practice, 1*(2), Article M3. Retrieved [07/10/2005], from http://jrp.icaap.org/content/v1.2/syme.html, 23rd Nov., 2005.

Syme, G.J. & Nancarrow, B.E. (2001). Justice, Sustainability, and Integrated Management: Concluding Thoughts. *Social Justice Research, 14*, 453-457.

Syme, G.J., Fenton, D.M. & Coakes, S. (2001). Lot size, garden satisfaction and local park and wetland visitation. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 56*, 161-170.

Syme, G.J., Shao, Q., Po, M. & Campbell, E. (2004). Predicting and understanding home garden water use, *Landscape and Urban Planning, 68*, 121-128.

Tebes, J. K. (2005). Community science, philosophy of science, and the practice of research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*, 213-230.

Throgmorton, J. A. (1991). The rhetorics of policy analysis. *Policy Sciences, 24*, 153-179.

Throgmorton, J. A. (2000). On the virtues of skilful meandering: Acting as a skilled-voice-in-the-flow of persuasive argumentation. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 66*, 367-380.

Tuffin, K. (2005). *Understanding critical social psychology*. London: Sage.

Turner, B. (2006). *Transitional fears: Water, surveillance and the abject in Australia.* Referred proceedings of UNAUSTRALIA, The Cultural Studies Association of Australia's Annual Conference, December 6th – 8th. Retrieved 21st February 2007 from http://www.unaustralia.com/proceedings.php

van Kerkhoff, L. (2002a). *Environmental research: From independent experts to post-modern process managers?* (Work-in-progress fact sheet from research project ANU18). Canberra, Australia: Land & Water Australia, Social and Institutional Research Program.

van Kerkhoff, L. (2002b). *'Making a difference': Science, action and integrated research.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Australian National University, Canberra, ACT.

Vanclay, F. (1995). Actors and structures in agriculture: Reflections of an Australian in Wageningen. In F. Vanclay (Ed.), *With a rural focus: An edited and referred collection of papers with a rural focus presented to the annual conference of The Australian Sociological Association Inc, Deakin University, December 1994*. Wagga Wagga, New South Wales: Charles Sturt University, Centre for Rural Social Research.

Voisey, H., & O'Riordan, T. (2001). Globalization and localization. In T. O'Riordan (Ed.), *Globalism, localism and identity: Fresh perspectives on the transition to sustainability.* (pp. 25-42). London: Earthscan.

Watts, R. J. (2004). Integrating social justice and psychology. *Counseling Psychologist, 32*, 855-865.

Werner, B. T. (1999). Complexity in natural landform patterns. Science, 284, 102-104

Wilderer, P. A. & Wilderer, M. C. (2005). On the roles engineers may play in the attempt to meet basic demands of man and nature. In P.A. Wilderer, E.D. Schroeder, and H. Kopp (Eds.), *Global sustainability. The impact of local cultures. A new perspective for science and engineering, economics and politics* (pp. 187-199). Weinham, Germany: Wiley-VCH.

Address correspondence to
Brian Bishop
School of Psychology
Curtin University of Technology
PO Box U1987
Perth 6845
Email: b.bishop@curtin.edu.au

Lessons learned from participatory discrimination research: Long-term observations and local interventions

Bernard Guerin
Pauline Guerin
University of South Australia

In this paper, we argue that racism and discrimination research has not used enough participatory and intensive methods. We argue that the commonly used cross-sectional methods have led to an emphasis on both abstract and generalizable theories and also on interventions that stress verbal increases in 'cultural awareness' and the like. Drawing on our long-term research with a refugee community, we present examples of subtle and everyday discriminations that would not be documented using questionnaires or even interview methodologies. We draw on examples from minority discrimination, religious discrimination, everyday discrimination, and discrimination in bureaucracies, with some of the finer contextual analyses provided for the last of these. The implications for designing interventions are briefly examined.

There have been many decades of research in social psychology concerning discrimination and racial prejudice. Most of this research has been strongly 'top-down' and guided by theoretical or basic research approaches, sometimes justified by Lewin's (unsupported) declaration that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (1951, p. 169; Bishop & Browne, 2006). Such theories include social categorization, group conflict, and biased information processing. However, when we look at the few interventions based on such basic research findings that have actually been implemented, compared to the amount of research resources put into such basic research, we wonder whether the theory building has benefited more than the people on the ground.

Based on intensive community research and work with refugee, indigenous and other communities—in short, by adopting a different methodology—we have found a different picture of discrimination that does not easily fit with current theories of discrimination, and one which suggest very different interventions. What we have found supports both other ethnographic approaches to discrimination, and also the efforts being given to study everyday discriminations rather than just extreme forms (e. g., Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Broman, Mavaddat & Hsu, 2000; Byng, 1998; Carroll, 1998; Connolly & Keenan, 2002; Cowlishaw, 2004; Edmunds, 1994; Essed, 1991a, 1991b; Feagin, 1991; Goto, Gee, & Tekeuchi, 2002; Hein, 2000; Mellor, 2003, 2004; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003; Trudgen, 2000).

One of the most important things we have learned from 10 years of participatory research with Somali communities is that discriminations, even simple everyday discriminations that most people would consider a minor inconvenience, affect people in many different ways and in all areas of their lives. This is not only from cumulative stress (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Moritsugu & Sue, 1983; Williams, Yu, Jackson & Anderson, 1997), but also from much more subtle effects on people's lives.

For example, we found that issues in the Somali community that had been explained to us in terms of 'essential Somali qualities' were often due in large part to avoidance of situations of racial or religious discrimination. In one such case, we were asked to facilitate exercise classes for the Somali women because the women felt that they were not walking as much as they used to—evoking images of African village women walking to the local markets for food—and because they all used cars now instead. Others had suggested to us that Somali women did not walk much because they were 'lazy' and 'overweight' or that they preferred to have others chauffeuring them around. From both our informal observation and our formal research, it seems clear that many of the women did not walk

because of experiencing discrimination, such as staring, verbal abuse, teasing, and rude comments when they did walk (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan & Guerin, 2003). Many women were using cars not because they were unhealthy from not walking, but because they were avoiding discrimination—a sad indictment on our society.

Our original plan was that discrimination would be one topic we would study as part of a long-term series of studies. However, discrimination became part of every topic we studied, including housing, mental health, employment, women's health, religious practices, family life, youth, dealing with bureaucracy, and education. Our witnessing this widespread discrimination across so many areas also gives an indication of the powerful effects discrimination has in the lives of people. It also led us to suggest changes to methodology and intervention, since discrimination no longer seemed like a separable topic that could be studied independently of other social behaviours.

We argue that the 'top-down' approach is not useful in this area. We suggest two main changes to focus on for research and understanding: first, that the local context needs longer and more sustained observations instead of brief cross-sectional contacts; and second, that the development of interventions needs to be more local than general or theoretical. We will illustrate these points by first going through some areas of our research, and then bringing the points into a closer focus and suggesting what needs to be done next.

Discrimination as a Minority

African refugees often become minority groups within the countries in which they have been resettled. This can involve colour (usually as a black minority), religion (usually for African Muslims), and refugee status. There are well known effects for minorities within societies, and especially within either white or colonial societies, but these will not be outlined here (e.g., Chapter 6 of Guerin, 2004). Instead, a few of the less obvious points will be made about the consequences of being a minority.

First, re-settlement lands refugees in countries where they are not only a national minority but also a group that is poorly understood by the majority. That is, in most cases the resident population has little knowledge of the group and their background or practices. It is not just being a minority that has important consequences, but also being a member of a misunderstood or completely unknown group.

Unknown minorities have various social properties not of their own making. For example, unknown minorities have little power to enact consequences on the resident population. Their presence provides the resident population the opportunity to talk abstractly and without a factual basis—especially in the common social forms of rumor and urban legends (Guerin & Miyazaki, 2006). Finally, the presence of unknown minorities provides the resident population with the opportunity to use the problems and issues arising for other purposes that suit them, for example, as issues during an election.

A second less obvious effect of being a minority is one that has only become apparent to us after some years of participatory research. This concerns the absence of role models for youth and others in the resident society, although this differs between different countries of resettlement. For example, in the United States, black African refugees have a number of important role models to look up to as black people who have 'made it', including politicians, sports stars, successful business people, television and movie 'personalities', and senior people in the education fields. The same applies to the United Kingdom, with some black persons of African or Caribbean origin as role models for success. In New Zealand, and most of Scandinavia, on the other hand, there are almost no such role models, where the history of black migration is very recent. In terms of minority religions, the same is true. So, leaders and role models are almost exclusively 'white' but rarely are black or former refugees.

This lack of role models not only affects the refugee population who are resettled, but also the resident population since there may be few exemplars of people of colour or minority religions to counter their abstract language strategies against minorities (Guerin, 2003a, 2003b). The only "factual" sources of information most people can get on Somali, for example, are the reports of terrorists hiding in Somalia, the movie *Black Hawk Down*, and the occasional media-stereotyped articles on female

circumcision, none of which are very accurate or useful.

The effects described above are subtle, and we have found that common social science methods, even including interviews, do not find out information about what is happening. Most of the above points cannot be easily verbalized or reported, and there are other reasons why they might not get reported, so they do not get reported often.

Religious Discrimination

Many refugee groups also face religious discrimination. Since the September 11th events and the London bombings, many westerners have become more vocal in stating their negative views of Muslims, especially through the media (Gale, 2006). As mentioned above, many westerners in countries of resettlement know little about other religions and this will be one reason for the heavy reliance on the media for information. Media portrayals, however, are typically unbalanced, misrepresentative and have powerful effects. For example, Muslim women in a recent study of ours reported that the whole atmosphere seemed to change after September 11th, and there was a foreboding sense of menace in shops and elsewhere (Veelenturf, Guerin & Guerin, 2005). Women in the same study also reported that they felt that the atmosphere was different for them after any 'bad' media coverage, stemming, they report, from the media dramatizing the issues, giving inaccurate reporting, making generalizations to all Muslims, and failing to recognise the huge diversity among Muslims.

To illustrate this from our participatory and interview research with Muslim women, mainly African and Middle-Eastern, we will outline some contexts reported when we explored the issues of headscarves being worn for religious reasons. Such issues have gained prominence from the French ban on headscarves in schools and elsewhere and a case in the USA of a woman and her employer having death threats made because she wore a hijab to work. In New Zealand, there was a court case where concern about wearing a burqa was highlighted because the prosecution claimed that she could lie easier when wearing a burqa. There has also been opposition to Muslim women wearing veils in western countries because it supposedly signifies oppression and servitude.

While this is only one example of religious discrimination, when looked at in a wider context the whole argument is full of holes and ignores most of the detail, a result of cross-sectional information and methods. The idea that veils are a demonstration of oppression is too simplistic, abstract and out of context, since we could say the same for western men and women 'forced' to wear certain dress codes to work (such as a tie). The oversimplification of an issue (such as the notion that veils are a demonstration of oppression), is used as a strategy in a local context. This oversimplification can be challenged with information such as we present briefly now.

First, wearing veils for Muslims has many origins and many different religious meanings. Additionally, in many contexts, Muslim men also wear forms of head-coverings, but are not labeled as 'oppressed'. For example, in a volunteer English language class for men, run by one of the authors, usually about one third of the men wore some form of head-covering every lesson. Many Muslim women since the 1980s choose to wear a veil, and some see veiling as a good corrective to the "beauty myth" of western countries or can be worn as a symbol of rejecting western ways.

The veils, hijab and burqas themselves are also highly diverse and there are different social strategies of wearing them. We have seen teenage girls wear them in a highly flirtatious way when boys are around, even though the veil is still the same. Women can wear plain ones or very fancy and coloured ones that stand out at weddings and other community events. The functions of veils are also diverse, and originally for some Somali women, for example, veils were only needed if men were around who were strangers, non-kin, or marriageable, and that was often rare so women did not wear a veil at all (McGown, 1999). Therefore, some women took up wearing the hijab or veils only upon moving to a new country. In fact, some Somali women even arrived in New Zealand without owning a hijab or veils and had to buy or borrow one quickly.

Finally, is has been argued that our western understanding of veils and burqas is probably derived from colonial literature that is written by non-Muslims (Zine, 2001), and the criticisms are

therefore very condescending for that reason as well. Veils also have functional equivalents in any society and non-Muslims have functional equivalents such as wearing dark sunglasses, and holding poker faces to disguise feelings and thoughts (Guerin, 2001; Murphy, 1964).

The point of going through this detail is precisely to show that abstract analyses that rely on small amounts of information, usually taken cross-sectionally in time, are persuasive but not sustainable. The function of veils and the like are micro-social and require more intensive methods than self-reports in questionnaires or interviews. The majority of the talk that sustains religious discrimination for wearing veils is unsubstantiated and misses the historical, social and cultural detail and diversity, even more so for other religious or cultural practices such as female genital cutting (Guerin & Elmi, 2004).

Everyday Discrimination

There are many forms of everyday discrimination and the current thinking is that the stress effects are cumulative (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Moritsugu & Sue, 1983). That is, any one incident might be innocuous but the lifetime accumulation of incidents can lead to stress, anger, frustration, or other signs (Feagin, 1991) and impacts on health (WHO, 2001). Feagin (1991) found that these effects were all occurring for his sample of middle-class, professional Black Americans, not just poor Black Americans. These professional people reported being pulled over regularly by police, especially if they drove an expensive car, of being watched closely in shops, and of shop keepers not wanting to touch their hands when giving them change. A more thorough review of the literature on everyday discrimination has been summarized elsewhere (Guerin, 2005a).

Common situations in which everyday forms of discrimination occur are in education, employment/work, housing, everyday social interactions, when shopping, in dealings with bureaucracy, social conversation, media representations, and in dealings with police and other authorities (Guerin, 2005a). Common everyday practices of discrimination include assuming things about people, avoidance, giving bad service, bullying, discouragement, exclusion, extra checking, failing to help, being followed around in shops as if suspicious, frequent stopping, harassment, hiring biases in employment, firing biases in employment, ignoring, jokes/ teasing, miscommunication, name calling, not providing insurance, not touching, not sitting next to you, physical abuses, racist graffiti, not renting, rudeness, segregation, being singled out, staring, setting up structural barriers, being unfriendly neighbours, verbal prejudice, withholding, and workplace discriminations (Guerin, 2005a).

While overt and salient forms of discrimination can be easily observed and verbally reported in questionnaires and interviews, detecting and documenting subtle and everyday forms of discrimination also requires a radical change in methodology. Micro-social contexts and details are required, and this entails participation in the field, repeated interviews rather than one-off interviews, and a strong and real relationship with the people involved. It also requires interventions to be derived *in situ* from the participatory analyses leading to reliance on forms of action research and participatory intervention.

Further to these changes in applied methodology, a great deal of everyday discrimination occurs as verbal or language forms, and much of it is not meant as discriminatory even though it certainly has that effect on recipients (Guerin, 2003a). This might be simply making fun of someone's name, or getting a laugh by using a stereotype, or calling someone names. But other parts of the verbal discrimination arise from making assumptions that are simply untrue but for which the listeners do not have the conversational resources or skills to reply in a way that might stop it. This means further methodological changes are required to include conversational or discourse analyses as part of the research methods, since verbal reporting of discourse (surveys and questionnaires) will not provide the detailed analyses required. Recording 'natural' conversations and verbal exchanges need to be part of the methodology since strategic uses of words is a large part of discrimination and racial prejudice (Guerin, 2003a). Much of this is now happening in this area (e. g., Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale, 1999; Condor, 2006; Durrheim, 2005; Guerin, 2003a; Lecouteur & Augoustinos, 2001).

Discrimination in Bureaucracies

Much discrimination has always occurred within bureaucracies, in the ways that service providers treat clients, but research on discrimination within bureaucracies is only slowly growing (Bowling, Phillips, Campbell & Docking, 2004; Cropley, 2002; Essed, 1991a; Gunaratnam, 2001; Hollands, 2001; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1999; Morgan, 1999; Trudgen, 2000). This is probably because it is a difficult to study this topic in a practical sense of getting access to organizations and examples of discrimination. The area can also be difficult to research ethically because of the implications of negative findings.

To understand discrimination in bureaucracies better, we participated with refugees and migrants when dealing with bureaucracies, either as advocates or as friends. Through participation in a support group of government and non-government agencies involved with refugee resettlement, we also spent time talking informally with those in bureaucracies about clients and thereby gaining insight into the bureaucrat's side of the story. We found that this long-term, participatory approach, from both sides of the fence, illustrated dynamics that would not be understood from one perspective only. For example, viewing discrimination solely as a refugee advocate could lead to suggesting that staff of an agency need 'cultural sensitivity' training because they act in discriminating ways. However, a closer look from both sides shows that the problems are more structural in nature, as revealed through longer-term discussions with staff. It would not have been useful to investigate 'racists' or a 'racism' residing 'in' the staff (Guerin, 2005a). Discovering the specific local context assists interventions to address the situation rather than applying broad general or theoretical principles which might not be appropriate.

One issue relating to discrimination among bureaucrats is whether the discrimination results from or is exacerbated by contact with minorities or whether contact with minorities reduces discrimination. For example, if people begin working for bureaucracies and already discriminate against minority clients, as they increase their contact with those groups and begin to understand them better and see their viewpoint, do they become less discriminating? This fits with many of the current theories of discrimination and prejudice that having contact with 'outgroups' under the right conditions leads to less discrimination and prejudice (Goto, Gee & Tekeuchi, 2002; Hewstone, 1994, 1996; Miller & Brewer, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998; Walker & Crogan, 1998). While such contact hypotheses never claimed that all and any contact would lead to better relationships and understanding, there has been little exploration of the specific, local conditions that are required to reduce discrimination and prejudice. Unfortunately, from our understanding, by the time the local conditions are incorporated there is little that the original, abstract contact hypothesis is saying that is of much added value (Guerin, 2004).

Our experience, on the other hand, like that of some others (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Hollands, 2001), is that contact has much more subtle and strategic effects. For example, we have observed new staff coming into a bureaucracy full of understanding, good-will and lack of discrimination, eager to help the most struggling clients. After six months or so we have seen this behaviour change, with the staff members stereotypically talking about groups and treating people differently based on ethnicity (cf. Cropley, 2002). This cannot be attributed to, or blamed on, either the clients or the bureaucrats (although cross-sectional research methods almost certainly would get the wrong idea), but we believe it comes about through a variety of situational factors that are quite common. To help see this, we will give some examples of these factors based upon our participatory research alongside Somali.

Strangers and Family

The majority of refugees come from societies in which the main social relationships are those of kin-based or close extended families and communities. These are built from a variety of practices and in turn allow a number of social properties that define them (Guerin, 2004, 2005b). People can do things with family networks that they cannot do with networks of friends or acquaintances. For example, family members tend to know each other (and can therefore report both good and bad things about members to others) whereas networks of friends or acquaintances tend not to know others in the

network as much, especially family, meaning that they can report less to the others who are important (more of these social properties are summarized in Table 3 of Guerin, 2005b).

The point of this is that bureaucracies are built on stranger relationships or contractual relationships (a term sociologists use), whereas the strategies for social influence, persuasion, monitoring, networking, and bonding for most refugee groups (and indigenous groups) are built upon strong, interrelated family groups forming communities. This means that the styles of interaction and influence that people in close families and communities are most familiar with will be either inappropriate or ineffective with people in bureaucracies. This is where building social relationships through gifts, as would be acceptable in close networks, can turn into bribery when tried within bureaucracies (e.g., Achebe, 1988).

What this means is that misunderstandings are very likely to arise when a client with 'family network' strategies of social influence attempts to find their way through a bureaucracy that is built on stranger or contractual relationships. Those working in the bureaucracy get the wrong impression, and often a bad impression, of such clients because they are trying to achieve very different ends.

A Begging Situation

A second factor in developing discriminatory practices amongst workers in bureaucracies is that, almost by definition, bureaucrats only see clients in a context of asking for something, even when that 'something' is usually an entitlement. Most of the relevant bureaucracies are welfare agencies looking after housing, income, employment, economic or family needs. Thus, bureaucrats get a narrow vision of people from refugee groups because they see only a limited, and not very flattering, range of behaviors and activities. This can give the impression that "they are all the same", "they are all lazy", and that they are "all helpless and cannot do anything for themselves". These statements, even heard from seasoned workers in the field, can arise from limited contact in a limited domain. Even though these issues are the same for non-refugee people who are accessing services, service workers may not develop the same perceptions of non-refugees because there is more contact with non-refugees outside of the service situation. In these cases, there is either not the same discriminatory practices taking place, or the discriminatory practices are directed differently—such as towards those with mental health issues.

This is further complicated for refugees in that many have a history of having to beg or ask for resources. From being in a refugee situation, most food, clothing and shelter would have been provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other agencies and so there is a long history of asking and negotiating for resources. This becomes difficult when refugees are in a country of resettlement and bureaucrats are not used to working with people who have this history and so can react negatively to the presenting behaviours. Similarly, bureaucratic policies are usually written based on characteristics of the majority of service users and fail to accommodate unique characteristics of refugees, such as entitlements when the children were not born in New Zealand or the lack of official documentation of things such as death or adoption. This further complicates the interaction between service providers and refugees.

"Thank you", Politeness and Other Misunderstandings

There are also specific misunderstandings that arise from the bureaucratic situation, and especially between different community groups. For example, we have had bureaucrats tell us that "those Somalis are not very nice people; they are very rude", whereas "those Iraqis are such nice people". Upon further observation and questioning over a longer period, we believe that some of this was attributable to a specific factor: that culturally, some Somali, particularly older Somali and during early resettlement, did not say "please" and "thank you" in the same way most New Zealanders and Australians do. Many men, especially, do not need to do this within their families, and most of their community members are family, so this means that most of the time they do not need to use these forms of politeness since politeness is usually shown within the context for most close family rather than needing to be made explicit (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Guerin, 2003b). These and other differences can lead to the wrong impression once bureaucrats

spend some time with clients, which is why we believe it takes time to develop more appropriate ways to interact.

Another example that is very common amongst all groups with strong extended family and community ties is that of being late for appointments. The implication for bureaucrats is that this is indicative of people who are lazy, do not care, or both. We found this occurring for migrant groups, refugee groups, indigenous groups, and others and was a very common impression. Because this is widespread our methodology has been to spend time following up specific examples *in situ* rather than discussing the issue in principle or just asking people in cross-sectional studies how they get that impression.

We found that, in most cases, there were two overriding considerations. First, we found that community and family commitments often interfered with getting to appointments on time. With very large families and the demands of resettlement, these commitments were time consuming and frequent, especially during the early resettlement period. Additionally, we found that histories of having to wait a long time for appointments also dampened the urgency of getting to appointments early or on time.

Second, we found that appointments and time-management were more important to stranger or contractual relationships than to family and close community relationships (Harris, 1984, 1987). People who most often are involved in family and close community relationships, rather than stranger or contractual relationships, may not then engage in the stranger relationships in the same way as people who frequently engage in stranger relationships. Conversely, people who most often engage in stranger relationships may then find that interacting within family and close community relationships is challenging, such as often having unexpected visitors.

The point here is that impressions can be easily made and lead to prejudicial or discriminatory practices when a more detailed analysis of the situation shows many factors lead to this. It is not about intergroup conflict but, rather, it is more about the local shaping of strategic social behaviour. This is why long-term and intensive applied methodologies are required.

Language Strategies

Bureaucratic language can be very useful for making decisive sounding remarks about certain groups and also for avoiding the consequences of making discriminatory or prejudicial remarks. First, staff working with ethnic groups can claim first hand experience or personal knowledge as a basis for establishing certain facts or beliefs about groups, especially if hedged or prefaced to avoid responsibility afterwards (Beattie & Doherty, 1995; Shuman, 1993; Tusting, Crawshaw & Callen, 2002). E.g., "*I'm not one to talk badly of people, but I've spent a lot of time with Somali* [albeit in the office setting] *and know them well, and I am more than ever convinced that they are just lazy to the bone, unlike the Iraqi who are such nice people. Yes, if you had spent as much time as I have with Somali you would agree*." So working in a bureaucracy allows a variety of privileged strategies to claim or warrant knowledge in this way, even if misguided or wrong.

Second, the language strategies or discourses surrounding discrimination are complex but there are numerous ways of avoiding what would otherwise be negative consequences for saying such things (Guerin, 2003a; van Dijk, 1987, 1992). Even blatant statements such as "*Those Somali are all lazy*" can be easily hedged, "*Oh there are some conscientious ones, but they get dragged down by the rest*", or bolstered in the ways mentioned above, "*It sounds prejudiced but if you had seen them as much as I have you would agree*."

The Backroom Culture

The final local factor we will mention comes from observations of the talk going on in the backroom of the bureaucracy. Informants have told us that the norm is to make 'funny' or exaggerated jokes about the groups in the backroom although in most cases with no real intent of being discriminatory or nasty about it. As argued elsewhere, however, even if it is not 'really meant' to be nasty, such talk can be just as harmful and even more insidious (Guerin, 2003a, 2005b). This is because it can promulgate the talk without the speakers taking any responsibility for it, and also because the interventions need to be of a special sort since just raising awareness of the groups or prohibiting such talk can backfire. For example,

prohibiting talk that is used in the first place for humorous or social reasons can make that talk even more valuable or useful because it has become even more wicked (Guerin, 2004).

The point of these subtle contexts for bureaucratic discrimination is that they are unlikely to be picked up through traditional social science methods such as surveys and questionnaires. All we have said here depended upon using long-term and participatory approaches.

Discrimination in Other Areas of Life

There are many other areas of life where discrimination becomes a problem and can either hurt the refugees or restrict their options. In looking closely at employment situations, for example, we, as well as others, have found that discrimination is a (usually silent) force keeping refugees (especially if black or Muslim) out of jobs or only in part-time or lower-paid jobs (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief & Bradley, 2003; Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye & Abdi, 2005; Gunaratnam, 2001; Mesthenos & Ioannidi, 2002). Such discrimination might involve dress codes (particularly for the women) or simply making things easier by not hiring (Shih, 2002).

Housing is a similar area in which discrimination is rife despite it being illegal to discriminate on the basis of race or religion. This occurs both in private renting markets and in the state housing schemes. In one instance that is all too common, a Somali woman (early 30s and professional) telephoned a landlord who said the house was available for rent. Upon arrival the landlord met her and apologetically said that the house had just been rented out over the phone. The house was in a good location and a good size so the woman contacted us and asked us to phone the landlord to ask about the house. We were told that the house was available and that we could come have a look. On arrival, with the Somali woman, the landlord once again said that it had just been taken. We confronted him with these contradictions, however, and he confided that he was worried about lots of cars coming and going to the property and damaging the lawns, based on incorrect assumptions about Somali. An arrangement and promises were made and the lease taken. A year later when the Somali woman decided to move out for other reasons, the landlord said that she was one of the best tenants he had ever had (although she did then have difficulty in getting her bond back).

It is hard to overestimate the value of participatory methods here. We have asked similar people time and again about their experiences of discrimination only to be told they had not experienced any. Upon spending more time with these same people and seeing such things happening, and hearing much more detailed accounts of events such as this one, we have learned that verbal reports of discrimination are not worth much by themselves. Sometimes, even the people themselves have been surprised at how much discrimination they have experienced but never labeled as such once the instances have been identified.

Interventions to Reduce Racial and Religious Discrimination

Most interventions work towards raising people's awareness of either the cultural groups involved (to solve intergroup misperceptions) or the problem of discrimination itself. These consist of information campaigns predominantly, with simulation games and other activities to 'heighten awareness of others'. Unfortunately, the evidence is that they are not working particularly well (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Kiselica, Maben & Locke, 1999; Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005). In some instances people remember information but do not change their discriminating practices, while in other cases they remember the information a week or two later but no longer.

It should be clear from all of our work described here that we have come to a different conclusion about intervention methodologies (Guerin, 2005a). We believe that the common recommendation of interventions to 'raise awareness' are a direct product of the type of cross-sectional methodologies that are employed in typical research in this area. If one skims the surface then the intervention recommended will merely raise the surface a little more.

What we have pointed out and argued for is a situation-specific intervention agenda. This arises because, as we have seen throughout this paper, the causes and contexts for discrimination episodes are locally governed and depend upon the situation despite the generalist and abstract academic talk around the topic. This means that global interventions to prevent or stop

discrimination are unlikely to work, and certainly not ones that just try to raise a global or verbal awareness of the issues (Guerin, 2005a). This makes sense when considering how researchers have been trying to draw these hugely different examples of 'racism' under the same abstract category in order to come up with theories and interventions that would work across the board. The discrimination situations cover a huge range, from skinhead racism to 'innocent' racial jokes in the workplace.

While this approach to intervention is not as elegant as those promising 'one intervention to fit all', we believe it is more realistic and fits the real situations on-the-ground better than previous attempts. We have seen excellent awareness raising interventions in bureaucracies to improve client-staff relations but on Monday morning things are back to usual and the backroom chat is what it always was (cf. Hill & Augoustinos, 2001). This means that more hard work is needed but that intensive study is required in any case when working with refugee communities.

So the answer to interventions, we argue, is to use methods that allow more time in specific situations doing intensive and longer-term analyses of what is going on, drawing in the social, cultural, religious, historical and economic dimensions (Guerin, 2004). The interventions should also then be guided by local contexts and changes occurring in those local contexts. A plethora of interventions approaches is then available to try (Guerin, 2005b).

Conclusions

Psychology has spent too long on abstract theories and generalist intervention plans for discrimination and racial prejudice. We have tried to show that this partly comes from the cross-sectional methods employed, and we consider that even most 'longitudinal' methods in psychology are really repeated cross-sectional methods. These leave out the local context, in which the real determinants of discrimination lie. For those who have pursued instantiations of these abstract theories in attempting applied research, this has happened anyway, with interventions requiring a lot of local input and knowledge that does not fit the theory and is usually not written up afterwards in the reports.

In all cases we have looked at in this paper, the key determinants were local, and this needed lots of long-term observations and local interventions. This raised many issues not raised elsewhere, for refugees dealing with everyday, bureaucratic, minority, and religious discriminations. All required finding out very specific contexts for what took place and spending the time observing and participating where possible.

The conclusion, therefore, is that we can have a greater impact on applied situations if we can be specific and local in the long run, and spend more time with the people and their situations. This might not be easy perhaps, and goes against the grain of the academic emphasis on generalization as a key factor in any academic endeavour, but being useful should overrule any such principle. Abstract and generalized talk need to be restricted to the social policy arena rather than working with people on the ground. We believe that participatory research of cases or instances will take the analysis and intervention of discrimination to a new level.

We have tried to show through examples from some of our research how things have been learned that could be predicted neither from generalist theories nor from previous research based on cross-sectional designs or especially laboratory experiments. This is not to denigrate such methods, just to argue that in this arena they are not as useful as they might be elsewhere. There might be nothing so practical as a good theory, according to Lewin, but we have not established what a good theory consists of, nor how we would know one. Our argument through this paper is that we have seen abstract discrimination theories put into applied settings and they have needed to have so much local context and detail put into them that the original generalizations no longer apply.

References

Achebe,C. (1988). *The African trilogy*. London: Picador.

ATSIC. (1998). *As a matter of fact: Answering the myths and misconceptions about Indigenous Australians.* Canberra: Australian Office of Public Affairs. [*www.atsic.gov.au*]

Augoustinos, M., Tuffin, K., & Sale, L. (1999). Race talk. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 51*, 90-97.

Beattie, G., & Doherty, K. (1995). "I saw what

really happened": The discursive construction of victims and perpetrators in firsthand accounts of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 14*, 408-433.

Bell, E. L. J. E., & Nkomo, S. M. (1998). Armoring: Learning to withstand racial oppression. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29*, 285-295.

Bishop, B. J., & Browne, A. L. (2006). There is nothing so practical as…: Building myths in community psychology. *The Australian Community Psychologist, 18*, 68-73.

Bowling, B., Phillips, C., Campbell, A., & Docking, M. (2004). *Policing and human rights: Eliminating discrimination, xenophobia, intolerance and the abuse of power from police work.* Identities, Conflict and Cohesion Programme Paper, Number 4: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Broman, C. L., Mavaddat, R., & Hsu, S-y. (2000). The experience and consequences of perceived racial discrimination: A study of African-Americans. *Journal of Black Psychology, 26*, 165-180.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byng, M. D. (1998). Mediating discrimination: Resisting oppression among African-American Muslim women. *Social Problems, 45*, 473-487.

Carroll, G. (1998). Mundane extreme environmental stress and African American families: A case for recognizing different realities. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29*, 271-284.

Clark, R., Anderson, N. B., Clark, V. R., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Racism as a stressor for African Americans: A biopsychological model. *American Psychologist, 54*, 805-816.

Condor, S. (2006). Public prejudice as collaborative accomplishment: Towards a dialogic social psychology of racism. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 16*, 1-18.

Connolly, P., & Keenan, M. (2002). Racist harassment in the white hinterlands: Minority ethnic children and parents' experiences of schooling in Northern Ireland. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 23*, 341-355.

Cowlishaw, G. (2004). *Blackfellas, whitefellas and the hidden injuries of race*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Cropley, A. (2002). Problems and concerns of welfare paraprofessionals working with refugees. *British Journal of Social Work, 32*, 233-245.

Deitch, E. A., Barsky, A., Butz, R. M., Chan, S., Brief, A. P., & Bradley, J. C. (2003). Subtle yet significant: The existence and impact of everyday racial discrimination in the workplace. *Human Relations, 56*, 1299-1324.

Dixon, J. A., & Durrheim, K. (2003). Contact and the ecology of racial division: Some varieties of informal segregation. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42*, 1-23.

Dixon, J. A., & Reicher, S. (1997). Intergroup contact and desegregation in the new South Africa. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 36*, 361-381.

Durrheim, K., & Dixon, J. (2005). Studying talk and embodied practices: Towards a psychology of materiality of 'race relations'. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 15* 446-460.

Edmunds, M. (1994). *They get heaps: A study of attitudes in Roebourne, Western Australia*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Essed, P. (1991a). Knowledge and resistance: Black women talk about racism in the Netherlands and the USA. *Feminism & Psychology, 1*, 201-219.

Essed, P. (1991a). *Understanding everyday racism*. London: Sage.

Feagin, J. R. (1991). The continuing significance of race: Antiblack discrimination in public places. *American Sociological Review, 56*, 101-116.

Gale, P. (2006). Race, fear and national identity. *Dialogue, 25*, 35-42.

Goto, S. G., Gee, G. C., & Tekeuchi, D. T. (2002). Strangers still? The experience of discrimination among Chinese Americans. *Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 211-224.

Guerin, B. (2001). Individuals as social relationships: 18 ways that acting alone can

be thought of as social behavior. *Review of General Psychology, 5*, 406-428.

Guerin, B. (2003a). Combating prejudice and racism: New interventions from a functional analysis of racist language. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 13*, 29-45.

Guerin, B. (2003b). Language use as social strategy: A review and an analytic framework for the social sciences. *Review of General Psychology, 7*, 251-298.

Guerin, B. (2004). *Handbook for analyzing the social strategies of everyday life*. Reno, NV: Context Press.

Guerin, B. (2005a). Combating everyday racial discrimination without assuming racists or racism: New intervention ideas from a contextual analysis. *Behavior and Social Issues, 14*, 46-69.

Guerin, B. (2005b). *Handbook of interventions for changing people and communities*. Reno, NV: Context Press.

Guerin, B. (2005c). Sampling community discourses as a method for assessing "public opinion". In J. Holmes, M. Maclagan, P. Kerswill and M. Paviour-Smith (Eds.), *Researching language use and language users* (pp. 117-128). http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/about/NZLS/e-book/Researching%20Language%20Use.htm. ISBN 0-473-10654-X

Guerin, B., & Miyazaki, Y. (2006). Analyzing rumors, gossip, and urban legends through their conversational properties. *The Psychological Record, 56.*

Guerin, P. B., Diiriye, R. O., Corrigan, C., & Guerin, B. (2003). Physical activity programs for refugee Somali women: Working out in a new country. *Women & Health, 38*, 83-99.

Guerin, P. B., & Elmi, F. H. (2004). The analysis of female circumcision stories: The uses and abuses of oral histories. *Oral History in New Zealand, 16, 9-16.*

Guerin, P. B., Guerin, B., Diiriye, R. O., & Abdi, A. (2005). What skills do Somali refugees bring with them? *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations, 30.*

Gunaratnam, Y. (2001). 'We mustn't judge people…but': Staff dilemmas in dealing with racial harassment amongst hospice service users. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 23*, 65-84.

Harris, S. (1984). *Culture and learning: Tradition and education in north-east Arnhem Land.* Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Harris, S. (1987). Yolngu rules of interpersonal communication. In W. H. Edwards (Ed.), *Traditional Aboriginal society.* Melbourne: Macmillan.

Hein, J. (2000). Interpersonal discrimination against Hmong Americans: Parallels and variation in microlevel racial inequality. *Sociological Quarterly, 41*, 413-429.

Hewstone, M. (1994). Changing outgroup perceptions: A cognitive-intergroup perspective. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale, 1*, 45-

Hewstone, M. (1996). Contact and categorization: Social psychological interventions to change intergroup relations. In C. N. Macrae, C. Stangor & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *Stereotypes & stereotyping* (pp. 323-368). New York: Guilford.

Hill, M. E., & Augoustinos, M. (2001). Stereotype change and prejudice reduction: Short- and long-term evaluation of a cross-cultural awareness programme. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 243-262.

Hollands, M. (2001). Upon closer acquaintance: The impact of direct contact with refugees on Dutch hosts. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 14*, 295-314.

Howitt, D., & Owusu-Bempah, J. (1999). The pragmatics of institutional racism: Beyond words. *Human Relations, 43*, 885-899.

Kessler, R. C., Mickelson, K. D., & Williams, D. R. (1999). The prevalence, distribution, and mental health correlates of perceived discrimination in the United States. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 40*, 208-230.

Kiselica, M. S., Maben, P., & Locke, D. C. (1999). Do multicultural education and diversity appreciation training reduce prejudice among counseling trainees? *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 21*, 240-254.

Lecouteur, A., & Augoustinos, M. (2001). Apologising to the stolen generation: Argument, rhetoric, and identity in public reasoning. *Australian Psychologist, 36,* 51-61.

Lewin, K. (1951) *Field theory in social science; selected theoretical papers.* D. Cartwright (ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

McGown, R. B. (1999). *Muslims in the Diaspora: The Somali communities of London and Toronto.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Mellor, K. (2003). Contemporary racism in Australia: The experiences of Aborigines. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29,* 474-486.

Mellor, K. (2004). The experiences of Vietnamese in Australia: The racist tradition continues. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30,* 631-658.

Mesthenos, E., & Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to refugee integration in the European Union member states. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 15,* 304-320.

Miller, N., & Brewer, M. B. (1984). *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation*. New York: Academic Press.

Morgan, G. (1999). The moral surveillance of Aboriginal applicants for public housing in New South Wales. *Australian Aboriginal Studies, 2,* 3-14.

Moritsugu, J., & Sue, S. (1983). Minority status as a stressor. In R. D. Felner, L. A. Jason, J. N. Moritsugu, & S. S. Faber (Eds.), *Preventive psychology: Theory, research and practice.* New York: Pergamon.

Murphy, R. F. (1964). Social distance and the veil. *American Anthropologist, 66,* 1257-1274.

Pedersen, A., Walker, I, & Wise, M. (2005). "Talk does not cook rice": Beyond anti-racism rhetoric to strategies for social action. *The Australian Psychologist, 40,* 20-30.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49,* 65-85.

Ryan, J., Elmi, F. H., Guerin, P. B., & Guerin, B. (2005). *Going 'walli and having 'jinni': Considerations in the evaluation and treatment of Somali refugees.* Paper given at the Mental Health Services Conference, Adelaide, October 2005. Available from: http://psychology.waikato.ac.nz/people/bguerin/

Shuman, A. (1993). "Get outa my face": Entitlement and authoritative discourse. In J. H. Hill & J. T. Irvine (Eds.), *Responsibility and evidence in oral discourse* (pp. 135-160). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Shih, J. (2002), '…Yeah, I could hire this one, but I know it's gonna be a problem': How race, nativity and gender affect employers' perceptions of the manageability of job seekers. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 25(1): 99-119.

St. Jean, Y., & Feagin, J. R. (1998). The family costs of white racism: The case of African American families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 29,* 297-312.

Swim, J. K., Hyers, L. L., Cohen, L. L. Fitzgerald, D. C., & Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology, 28,* 38-67.

Trudgen, R. (2000). *Why warriors lie down and die: Towards an understanding of why the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land face the greatest crisis in health and education since European contact*. Darwin, Australia: Aboriginal Resource and Development Services.

Tusting, SA., Crawshaw, R., Callen, B. (2002). 'I know 'cos I was there': How residence abroad students use personal experience to legitimate cultural generalizations. *Discourse & Society, 13,* 651-672.

van Dijk, T. A. (1987). *Communicating racism: Ethnic prejudice in thought and talk.* London: Sage.

van Dijk, T. A. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse & Society, 3,* 87-118.

Veelenturf, S., Guerin, B., & Guerin, P. B. (2005). *Veils, Muslim women, and discrimination.* Paper presented at "On the Frontiers: New public goods research on population, migration and community dynamics" conference. March/April 2005, Wellington. [www.waikato.ac.nz/wfass/

migration]
Walker, I., & Crogan, M. (1998). Academic performance, prejudice, and the Jigsaw Classroom: New pieces to the puzzle. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 8,* 381-393.
Williams, D. R., Yu, Y., Jackson, J. S., & Anderson, N. B. (1997). Racial differences in physical and mental health: Socio-economic status, stress and discrimination. *Journal of Health Psychology, 2,* 335-351.
World Health Organization (2001). Health and freedom from discrimination. Health and Human Rights Publication Series, Issue 2, August.
Zine, J. (2002). Muslim women and the politics of representation. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, 19,* 1-22.

Acknowledgements
Our thanks go to the Somali community in New Zealand for sharing so much of their lives with us over many years. This work was supported by a grant from the New Zealand Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (UOWX0203, *Strangers in Town: Enhancing Family and Community in a More Diverse New Zealand Society*) and conducted while at the University of Waikato.

Address correspondence to
Bernard Guerin
School of Psychology
University of South Australia
Adelaide, Australia
Email: Bernard.Guerin@unisa.edu.au

Research with refugee communities: Going around in circles with methodology

Pauline Guerin
Bernard Guerin
University of South Australia

Doing long-term participatory research with refugee communities has changed our views on methodology for community research. For this paper, we draw on our experiences, rather than the community psychology literature, to show ways in which community researchers could productively change or supplement their typical methods and gain flexibility. In particular, we have learned to expect new "stories" to appear at regular intervals and to not place any final value on early understandings. We have found that intensive, participatory methodologies should be used wherever and whenever possible. Finally, we have learned to not expect research 'topics' to divide neatly into compartments when in the field even if those categories are used for funding purposes. After discussing a few more specific methodological issues and problems, we discuss two examples of our research to illustrate how these issues and problems arose and were handled.

We began working with the Somali community in New Zealand in 1998 with an initial meeting between the 2nd author and a few male leaders of the Somali community about possibilities for research between the University of Waikato and the Somali community. Since that time, we conducted formal research projects with the community on health services (Guerin, Abdi, Guerin, 2005), physical activity (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, & Guerin, 2003; Guerin, Elmi & Corrigan, 2007), mental health (Guerin, Elmi, Guerin, 2006; Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye & Yates, 2004; Ryan, Guerin, Guerin, & Elmi, 2005), employment (Guerin, Diiriye, & Guerin, 2004; Jelle, Guerin, & Dyer, 2007), female circumcision (Diiriye, Guerin & Guerin, 2004; Guerin & Elmi, 2004; Guerin, Allotey, Elmi & Baho, 2006), a census (Guerin & Diiriye, 2004; Guerin, Guerin & Elmi, 2006), youth (Guerin, Guerin, Abdi & Diiriye, 2003), and general resettlement (Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye, & Abdi, 2004). We volunteered extensively through running exercise groups, facilitating health sessions, teaching English classes, being a leader at a youth camp, volunteering with the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS), and conducting orientation to New Zealand sessions. We also worked as advocates with people in the community, liaising with the New Zealand Immigration Service, Work and Income, housing, police, various health practices and hospitals, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and RMS.

Overall, we estimate that we have conducted over 900 formal interviews or survey data collection, have spent over 1000 hours facilitating various education sessions (including exercise, English, orientation, health), and spent over 500 hours in advocacy work. Although tertiary qualifications were uncommon in the Somali community when our projects began, there are now many in the community who have completed qualifications and many had been directly involved in projects with us, either as students or as employed research assistants or co-researchers. In September, 2004 we also organized the first Refugee Research Conference in Auckland, New Zealand, with 110 participants and over half of the presenters came from refugee backgrounds.

The purpose of mentioning all this as background is that from our training as social and experimental psychologists these experiences have led us to re-think our understanding of methodology. Many times we felt like our research was going around in circles, but more often, we found that the research was on a spiral, still going around in circles, but progressing for the better. In this paper, we draw on this experience to focus some of our methodological issues and solutions. Rather than relate this back to the extant literature extensively, we focus on

discussing our experiences listed above for others to compare to their own research experiences.

We first discuss briefly three imperative methodological changes for research with communities: what we came to understand as 'peeling the layers of an onion'; the importance of participation and the complexities associated with that; and the important issue of not 'compartmentalizing' research topics. We then discuss some more specific issues and problems. Finally, we work through two examples of our research showing how these issues and problems arose and were (hopefully) solved.

Three Methodological Imperatives for Studying a Somali Community

Making Multiple Cuts in Research: Peeling the Layers of an Onion

Our first imperative from experience working and researching with a Somali community is that finding out about the community, and how it functions as a whole, comes in layers. About every one or two years we came to realize that we had made another 'cut' into what we knew. In between, we had the illusion that we finally found out the 'truth' about particular issues or topics pertinent to the community. Over time we learned to live with those illusions (actually, stories) knowing that they would soon change once again. What this means, then, is that methodology should not be thought of as a procedure that will produce an immediate definitive answer to a research question.

While this might sound obvious to some, especially social anthropologists (Koser, Werner & Ang, 2004), it is not common for some other social scientists, particularly for us in psychology when we started. Even those using 'qualitative' methods tend to use one- or two-hour interviews and write that up as a thematic whole, rather than peeling away over time (see our next imperative) more and more of the context and dynamics of those themes. To help see this point, we will outline four ideas that have helped shaped our thinking along these lines.

First, we found it helpful to get away from the idea that there is an 'authentic' voice or story that can eventually be captured for either individuals or communities (cf. Guerin, 2005; Kusow, 2003). For example, Miller (2004) discusses how first responses ('frontstage' responses) by participants are not always accurate, but then writes about the more 'authentic' backstage responses. Our experience is that there are many backstages that are not necessarily contradictory but can differ markedly and that backstage can become frontstage, with different scenery, and over again.

Second, one has to get away from the idea that what is found in early 'cuts' is 'in-authentic', wrong, or inaccurate, and therefore should be avoided or thrown out. We found that the early material is useful 'in general', but later cuts show many exceptions to the general rule and also show how the initial impression arose in the first place. This point also reflects the changing nature of communities and people over time. We would not want to discourage new researchers to this area by suggesting that the first five years of research will be worthless—it is certainly not. But we would like to discourage researchers—including ourselves—from making bold early assertions that can mislead new people in the area or impressions about people in the community. This in turn raises another important question we will address, of how to write diversity into research reports without losing the audience in a wealth of detail or, at the other extreme, making stereotyped and simplistic statements. But we argue against the idea that because the research stories or cuts are constructed that they are useless.

Our first example relates to parenting and involvement in schools for Somali. We first came to understand the 'problem' through teachers at schools concerned that Somali parents were not involved in their children's schooling. In our initial attempts to understand why, we learned that Somali parents might shy away from participating in schools because, in Somalia, parents only got involved in schooling when something was wrong and their child was in trouble (e.g., Abdi, 2003; Guerin et al., 2004). Over time, however, we found that many Somali parents were 'involved' in schooling in New Zealand as well as previously in Somalia or in other countries, but this involvement took different forms, such as arranging Koran lessons. Also, we found that 'involvement', in the sense that teachers were seeking (such as attending parent-teacher interviews, attending school events and going on camps), involved many

barriers, such as language, religious issues, and multiple family and resettlement demands (Iszatt & Price, 1995). This did not mean that the earlier idea was not true, but there was a greater diversity in parental involvement in school that was not initially evident.

The complexity of these issues was illustrated by a woman in a focus group discussing resettlement issues. She had six children in school and, partly from not speaking English well, and partly from not understanding the New Zealand education system, felt isolated from the education her children were receiving and was unable to engage with either her children or the school to get an understanding of what they were learning and how they were learning it. Her need to trust 'the system', because of the various limitations, was a scary and disempowering reality for her, limiting her ability to get involved in schooling at another level. While an English-speaking parent might read homework and talk to teachers before or after school and other parents, this mother had limited English, a small baby, and various resettlement concerns. However, she was involved in her children's schooling in that, when possible, she encouraged her children to teach her English and lessons that they had learned at school.

Third, the further 'cuts' were not always just adding more diversity and complexities to a generally true assertion, although this was sometimes the case, but they also involved changing the whole way of conceptualizing the question and therefore the 'generally true' answer. In the case just given above, our next cut led us to change the many ideas we had of schooling, of children going to a fixed school, of parents being the sole caregivers of children, and of parents being concerned about what others thought about their children being 'bad'. We also changed our conceptions of 'schools' or education to integrate ideas of private Koran lessons as another form of schooling, and gained new ideas of why parents might not get involved in schools. We not only discovered greater complexity to the issues, but also the framing of our questions changed.

Finally, a point we came to understand only after many years was that first 'cuts' can be insidious precisely because they usually make very good stories (hence our earlier word 'illusions'). To use the above example, a bold statement that "Somali parents avoid contact with schools because in Somalia that was indicative of their child having problems", makes a short, quite reasonable, interesting, probably novel, and highly repeatable story—all great rhetorical or conversational features (Guerin, 2004, p. 222). If initial cuts were vague and not easily comprehended there would be less of a problem, because others would almost certainly try to follow-up for more details and make sense of it all. However, most 'first cut' reports seem final and have that attraction of a good story that tells researchers and professionals they can stop there and not pursue the details and contexts further. Even communities can promulgate simple, attractive (or not, if that is the point) stories about themselves and can facilitate access to resources.

Another example we found was the connection between trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and refugees. Most refugees have been through trauma (which is true) and most refugees in new countries are struggling (also generally true). Connecting these two makes a nice narrative package in which all sorts of issues are attributed to the trauma. While there are certainly real connections for many refugees between current problems and past traumas, we believe that this has been overemphasized or taken for granted and so other causes and contexts for struggling are overlooked and not researched. We are not saying that refugees have not been through traumatic experiences or that none of them 'have' PTSD, but we are questioning the easy story that all their woes are due to (i.e., caused by) the trauma they have experienced. Like others (Sonn & Fisher, 1998), we have looked for features in social contexts that might show resilience (Bracken & Petty, 1998; Guerin, 2001b; Ryan, Guerin, Guerin, & Elmi, 2005). For example, we have found that an important factor in the community's resilience was that everyone in the Somali community has experienced similar traumatic events in their lives. We believe there would be worse traumatic effects if only a small group had experienced them and the others in the community could not fully grasp these experiences.

What this first point means in practice for research is that we have become critical of our

own early work and summaries, but without discounting them entirely and 'throwing babies out with bathwater'. Further, research that has approached a community once, conducted 10 one-hour interviews and gone away to write up the themes and results, is limited. Once again, we do not completely discount such reports, but we know that if the same researchers went back and did even one extra hour of research interviews per participant, they would likely come away with different impressions and more interesting complexities. These limitations are often not identified and research findings can be overly ambitious and de-contextualised because of how the findings were obtained.

The Use of Participatory Methods

Our second methodological imperative from research with a Somali community is that intensive and participatory methods are necessary (e.g., see Maton, 1993) and that questionnaire and survey methods will not provide quality information, even on what may seem to be straightforward issues. One problem is that data from non-participatory methods can usually make a good story from whatever results there are, as we saw above for any first cut, even if untrue. But a second problem is that you do not have any way of gauging whether or not your results are close to or far from what is actually going on. So once again, the results (or the story) can appear to be definitive and mislead those not versed in being critical of methodology—especially policy makers.

One of our first projects (e.g., Guerin, Abdi, & Guerin, 2003) was 'collaborative' in that members of the community presented the initial idea for the project and were also employed as researchers collecting and interpreting data and writing reports and publications. However, that project was a survey using a questionnaire. Below is an example from that study (Guerin, Abdi & Guerin, 2003) on experiences of the health system, through a questionnaire-interview carried out by a Somali co-researcher:

> *Perceptions of Good and Poor Health*
> Most of the participants rated themselves as in good health, with an average of 5.2 on the 7-point scale (slightly above the label "good"). Correspondingly, most were not concerned about their health, with an average of 2.5 on the scale of how concerned they were about their health. Both these ratings correlated with English proficiency, with better health and less concern about health both associated with better English. (p. 29)

This makes a nice and typical summary of research results. A policy maker may have viewed the above results as indicating a lack of health problems within the community. Since that project, we have spent many hours talking about health informally in a wide variety of settings with many of the same people who would have been interviewed in that study and contributed to the results. We talked during exercise classes held for Somali women, we ran health information sessions, we accompanied many to health and medical appointments, and we talked extensively with health professionals with lots of experience with the major health problems of this group (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan, & Guerin, 2003).

Doing this provided a very different picture of the health of the Somali community, their perceived health, and their concerns about health. We found that there was a growing concern with diabetes in the community and a lack of knowledge about some health issues such as cancer (that was perceived to be a 'western' disease and believed to not affect Somali). We also learned that access to health care before coming to New Zealand was poor compared to the relatively easy access in New Zealand (e.g., while the density of physicians in New Zealand is 2.37 per 1000, it is only 0.04 in Somalia; WHO, 2006). This led to excessive use of general practitioners by some, which could very well lead to a perceived sense of good health. What we originally wrote was not untrue. The above quoted summary likely reflects the improved health services in New Zealand in contrast to those available prior to coming to New Zealand. But learning informally by participating in the community brought us a much more accurate (both for us and the Somali community) picture of these topics and a much better basis for intervention and policy in this area.

Overall, the second clear methodological imperative in this sort of research is that

participatory or intensive methods are necessary. This may seem easy to those not accustomed to such methods—you just go into the community and start chatting with anyone you meet—but the methods require extensive preparatory work gaining the trust, collaboration and permission from communities to work alongside them and can be time-consuming and costly in time and money. However, the point for us is not that researchers cannot afford participatory methodologies, but that we cannot afford to do without participatory methodologies.

Non-Compartmentalization of Research Topics

The final methodological imperative is that topics about refugee communities (and amongst many other communities) cannot be treated as separate or be 'compartmentalized' into distinct topics. We originally planned a series of separate studies with the Somali community on topics they reported to be of importance—health, mental health, religious beliefs, youth, discrimination, etc. We soon found that the topics all impinged on each other and were not distinct separate topics.

As an example, when we set up exercise classes after a group of Somali women expressed an interest, we found that many community and religious issues became a focus in a way we had not anticipated. For example, a rumour circulated in the community that an imam (i.e., religious leader) had said that the women should not do exercise classes because they should stay at home. This was promulgated by some of the men in the community and some women then felt they should not attend the classes (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan & Guerin, 2003). Resolving the issue required an understanding, not just of the benefits of exercise for women, but of the religious implications and communicating with the women about these issues. We also found it was necessary to discuss concerns about appropriate music (or no music at all sometimes), the kinds of exercise that we did, and we discussed and incorporated cultural dance into the sessions. Women later requested sports and walking groups and, surprisingly, requested the sessions be run after dark when people could not watch them and stare or make rude comments (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan & Guerin, 2003). This was an important consideration as another exercise group was stopped to change facilities, partly because of the abuse the women encountered when going to the first facility. Discrimination and religion impacted on health issues, and we needed to consider these alongside the development and planning of exercise classes.

We are not suggesting that all research should be approached as a big amorphous whole, but that with groups who live in close communities it is unrealistic to question people and learn about one topic, without needing to know about other topics. We therefore only nominally divided our research into topics such as a census of Somali in Hamilton, households and mobility, employment, dealing with bureaucracies, health, Somali women's fitness and exercise, female genital cutting, mental health, children and schooling, discrimination and westernization. The broader argument, not given here in full, is that it is the nature of typical western social relationships that make the compartmentalization possible, but this does not apply to other communities that have different sorts of social relationships (Guerin, 2004)

Despite not being separable, the individual topics were useful for organizing themes and analysis, and also for funding purposes. Funding is more likely to be received for a series of projects on mental health that includes looking at community dynamics, health, discrimination and religion, than for a big amorphous project on 'studying everything about Somali communities'. There is a practical use to dividing up the material, but for analysis we found it was important to look at the whole context rather than discipline-defined topics.

The final point to make about lack of nicely compartmentalized topics for research is that this impacts on social policy and other interventions (Guerin, 2005). Social policy is often divided up into the same or similar topics as we have mentioned, such as housing or immigration policy, but in reality social policy in one area impacts on many others, and the interventions in one area of life impact on other areas. For example, changes in housing and government housing policy affected other areas of our research including ones that we considered remote. If our research methodologies can better reflect the interconnectedness of topics then we will be in a better position to write good policy

that is sensitive to all the trickle-down consequences even in seemingly unrelated areas. Governments are also attempting to tackle this same issue with "whole of government", cross-government and cross-departmental committees approaches (e.g., COAG, Council of Australian Governments, in Australia).

Other Methodological Issues in Studying Somali in Diaspora

Communities are Changing

Another methodological consideration we found is that communities are highly dynamic and researchers need to be careful about what is described as 'traditional'. It is easy to 'explain' results as deriving from essentialistic, traditional characteristics when there are many other factors in the social, economic and historical contexts that have been overlooked because of methodological assumptions about what is 'traditional' or not for those communities.

For example, we not only found that many lay people but also many professionals explained high mobility in Somali communities as deriving from their 'nomadic' nature. Somali themselves have even explained high mobility to us this way. However, there are many other factors in the situations for Somali that account for high mobility, and the same factors can be seen in other populations in similar situations who do not have a national stereotype as nomadic pastoralists.

Methodologies, therefore, need to be geared towards finding changes and flexibility rather than just a static, snapshot picture of a community. In our studies, under a general topic of housing mobility, we employed a variety of methods—surveys, case studies, repeated interviews, key informants—to help us understand why some Somali in New Zealand communities frequently moved houses within a city or moved to another city or country and then back again. By careful searching we found a plethora of reasons for moving frequently, none of which related to being 'nomadic'.

Suspicion towards Authorities (including Researchers)

Like others (Chile, Dunstan, & Dibley, 2003; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; North, 1995; Pernice, 1994; Reichelt & Sveaass, 1994) we encountered suspicion about research and fear of revealing information. There are numerous reasons for suspicion of research that differs between communities. For example, research participants are usually in a position of lesser power (e.g., see Ramachandran, 2004) and may try to please the interviewer or researcher and give answers that do not reveal but provide what the researcher 'wants' to hear. Additionally, history of bad experience with researchers or a lack of tangible outcomes for research participation can influence hesitation to participate in research.

However, we found that when participants were suspicious of research, this related to concerns that providing information might impact on them. Participants could be particularly hesitant to answer questions when the researcher was from an immigration or other government department or assumed to be part of a government department. For some, there was no distinction between government and university, but, rather, all were seen as 'people with power and access to resources'. Although being independent researchers from a university helped, we also learned that refugees had to provide stories repeatedly about their activities all along the route from exiting a civil war to long after arriving in a new country. This often involved questioning from police and military personnel from both friendly and unfriendly countries that could have dire consequences. Immigration questioning is usually done in such as way as to 'catch people' telling a 'lie' or hiding something, thereby aggravating the whole process and creating, sometimes unnecessary, tensions and anxieties about interviews and questioning. Even when answering questions from immigration services, people are careful and suspicious about what is said, not because they are dishonest or hiding something (McKelvey, 1994), but because they know a misunderstood statement can lead to grave consequences, and this is true for anyone negotiating the immigration system.

Finally, a more simple reason for being suspicious and unforthcoming with information is because of limitations in ability with the host country language. Coupled with the problems of accidentally giving detrimental information, people will often err on the side of caution in revealing anything in case lack of language ability also leads them inadvertently astray.

A clear example of this was when we conducted a census of Somali. Some expressed hesitation in revealing how many people lived in a household or their ages in case information was passed along to housing or income benefit agencies. Despite following standard community-based research approaches and ethics protocols (i.e., consulting with leaders, holding community meetings, employing researchers in the community to collect data, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality) a few families agreed to provide only limited information. The project was conducted not long after the September 11th attacks and some members of the community believed that one of the authors, a US citizen, was an undercover CIA agent documenting Muslim residence.

This brings us back to two of our earlier points. First, that participative and longer-term methods are necessary, since these are the only way to overcome some problems. Building trust and exploring topics and issues from many sides are the ways to go. Second, the well-rehearsed stories are very seductive in their rhetoric and are believable and fit the facts. If the stories had glaring contradictions then researchers would seek out more information, but the stories are often so well-rehearsed that one can easily accept them and not pursue the contextual details (which needs participatory methods).

Political and Social Issues can Colour the Research

Suspicion is just one aspect of having a refugee background that can colour responses to researchers. There are political agendas that can also form the basis of responding to research. The problem is not that methodologies should prevent any such biases from creeping into research questioning, the problem is that there will always be biases and the methods need to inform us when there are biases. Until a community is known well, a researcher will not know if responses are influenced by social and political concerns. So once again, knowing communities in an intensive and participatory way must come first. This will not stop biases appearing in 'data' but will allow recognition or prediction of when they are likely to occur.

As an example, 'clan' divisions among Somali was a contentious issue with contradictory views. Some Somali were adamant that, although clan divisions were responsible for conflicts in Somalia, the refugee experience and resettlement in a new country ceased those clan divisions in New Zealand and that all Somali were Somali, regardless of clan. On the other hand, there were indications that clan divisions were still used to differentiate people and to gain access to resources. It was therefore possible that results in our research might have been influenced by clan membership. The influences of clans were not all bad, however. For example, in countering the reputation that clans divided the community, some community members made extra effort to ensure that people from all clan groups were included in anything that involved the Somali community, sometimes at the expense of their own clan, as an attempt to demonstrate lack of clan preferences. In one case, a new family were arriving who were from a minority clan with only one family from that clan living locally. To help the family feel welcomed, women from a variety of clans, including the minority clan, pulled together to set up house for the new family. New curtains were bought and the women stayed up late into the night cleaning and decorating the house and ensuring it was suitable for the new family.

After more years of participating in this community we now have a better understanding of the situations in which clan divisions count and those situations in which they do not. We cannot stop biases based on clan membership about what one person says of another but we now can anticipate and recognize when it occurs in many instances.

Methods are Social Relationships

We can summarise the main points of the paper by reframing methodology itself as a social relationship with all the properties implied (Guerin, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). All methodologies are a way of bridging or negotiating a social relationship so as to obtain responses. For example, useful information can be obtained through door-to-door surveys or questionnaires with populations in which 'stranger' or 'contractual' relationship are ubiquitous, such as most western societies (Guerin, 2004, 2005). But in social situations in which there are complexities, multiple strategies, or strong consequences, such relationships do not suffice. This is characteristic of the communities

with strong kin-based ties, and with these close communities and kinship groups, the building of 'rapport' seen with typically western populations transforms into community collaboration and participation (Austin, 2003; Barnes, 2000; Baum, Sanderson & Jolley, 1997; Davis & Whittington, 1998; Dunne, 2000; Holmes, Stewart, Garrow, Anderson & Thorpe, 2002; Kowalsky, Verhoef, Thurston, & Rutherford, 1996; Potvin, Cargo, McComber, Delormier, & Macaulay, 2003; Snell-Johns, Imm, Wandersman & Claypoole, 2003). The 'data' to be obtained does not 'reside' in one individual but is spread across the community, so the methods must change.

Instead of thinking in terms of the named categories of methods, as are usually outlined in methodology textbooks, surveys, interviews, control groups, etc., we think in terms of the social relationships involved in research between researchers and participants, and what methods are necessary to answer the research questions. To give some examples, running control and experimental groups who are given the same measurements requires a certain type of population with certain forms of control (social relationships). This is perfectly fine for some topics and some populations but for research questions with refugee populations we have found them unrealistic as it is usually not possible to get the necessary social influence to run control groups. Second, we can certainly conduct interviews but the short-term social relationships usually developed with interview methodologies, while fine for western populations who have a high percentage of stranger relationships in their lives (Guerin, 2004, 2005), are usually not enough to get the answers and complexities needed in refugee research. It is the limitations in forming quick social relationships that discourage us from using typical interview methodologies in our research with refugee or other kin-based groups. Repeated interviews can overcome some of the problems but participatory methods we find are usually necessary.

The Effects of Stress and Community Disruption on Methodologies

Even apart from the trauma that is part of the life experience of most refugees; many refugees are under stress from any number of issues arising from moving to a new and unfamiliar country, settling without many resources including language, and from having to face a usually semi-hostile and discriminatory set of strangers. Communities are usually disrupted from what they might have been previously, and do not quite work in the same way as they might have 'traditionally'. This means extra stress from the people in the community trying to build new processes, practices and procedures into their lives.

While these factors are topics in themselves for research, and suitable topics for developing interventions, they also impact on research methodologies. In researching with Somali refugees we are researching with a group of people under some considerable pressure. This means care must be taken in asking for time or other resources from the communities, in how topics are broached, in interpreting what is found, and especially in researching questions that will be of relevance, usefulness and interest to the community. If the people in communities were luxuriating in their new homes they might be open to very theoretical or abstract inquiries, but refugees are people under pressure and are focused on solving problems rather than finding out answers to theoretical questions.

For these reasons, we focus the methodologies as well as the topics on interventions and useful outputs (Guerin, 2005). One does not have to adopt a label of 'action researcher' to allow interventions to develop and work alongside the research methodologies. They can also be subsumed under the 'rapport building' part of methodology and be widened to include many other forms of advocacy (Guerin, 2005).

Distorting Effects of Writing

While not strictly methodological in a traditional sense, the writing-up of research is an essential part of the research method that has also raised issues for us. First, writing usually produces homogeneity or sharpening of results that can give a false impression of unity, single causes, simple contexts, and uniformity. Writing for journals, in particular, usually shapes a coherent and homogeneous story about a topic. Within editorial guidelines and page limits it is difficult to represent the diversity and uncertainties of researching with refugee communities (or any kin-based community).

We have already argued for methodologies (in the traditional sense) that allow longer-term understanding of complexities and seeming contradictions in the wealth of lived experience in communities. A necessary methodological extension to this that we are now exploring is how to present material without losing that complexity, and without being verbally inaccessible, even if it does not make a traditionally 'good story'. One project of ours, for example, is writing about the different aspects of Somali refugee life but layering the complexities into the different cuts—as described earlier in this paper. In this way, we hope to find new ways to 'write diversity' without producing an overly abstract or theoretical end-product, and without producing a conglomerate of contradictory statements that confuse readers more than help them understand.

Two Examples

A Census of the Somali Community

One might argue that there is a place for quantitative methodology in research with a community such as the Somali community. Indeed, medical research such as a study of dental age and chronological age in Somali and Caucasian children (Davidson & Rodd, 2001) is a good example of a straightforward quantitative project. Another good example is that of a study examining a scalp fungus among African (primarily Somali) children and treatments (Lamb & Rademaker, 2001). The results of radiographs of teeth and laboratory tests of fungi are not likely to create much dispute in their interpretation. Social science inquiries, on the other hand, are often fraught with differences in interpretation and definition, even in the best of situations.

Conducting a 'head count' or a simple census of the Somali population in New Zealand at first glance appeared a straightforward project to conduct, similar to the above medical projects. Political and trust issues aside, consider the question, "How old are you?" But, it is not uncommon for some Somali to not know their exact date of birth or their age, so such a question does not produce undeniable results. Similarly, take the question, "How many people live in this house?" Again, from a western-trained, social science perspective there should be no qualms about asking this question or getting straightforward responses. However, in our census project, we found, through our community involvement, that these were very much problematic questions.

As an example, during the course of the project, one Somali family living close to the researchers had some family members move in and out at least three times between Australia and New Zealand, and the people moving in and out were different each time, making a census very difficult (cf. Morphy, 2004; Warchivker, Tjapanati & Wakerman, 2000). Did these other members live there or not? Where should they be counted? We opted to count them all as living in Hamilton because their presence, when they were present, and even their absence, impacted on the family and wider community. Other households had one or two people who lived with them sometimes, but not all the time, due to seasonal employment, university studies, or family issues. There were also a few families who, for a variety of reasons, reported less or more people in the household than were actually there. With a community of approximately 700 people at the time, it was not too difficult to check the accuracy of the counting simply by brainstorming between a few of the researchers and recalling friends, acquaintances and family and ensuring that they had been counted. We also confirmed these numbers with estimates from other agencies and groups to further validate the numbers. Overall, this project showed us that, even with seemingly straightforward questions, we needed to exercise caution in interpretation and draw on multiple ways to think about the collection and results.

The Mental Health of Somali Women

Another on-going project was to understand the 'mental health' of Somali and to find ways to incorporate traditional or religious treatments into western approaches (Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye & Yates, 2004; Guerin, Elmi & Guerin, 2006; Ryan, Guerin, Guerin, & Elmi, 2005). We do not wish to go over all the material here but point out the links to all the methodological issues raised in this paper.

First, this series of projects, more than any other, highlighted to us the point about compartmentalization of topics. Dealing with what are called 'mental health' issues closely involved every other topic, even housing,

discrimination and mobility. We also found that mental health issues were linked directly both to religious practices and beliefs and also to the everyday stresses of life as a refugee.

To illustrate peeling away the layers or cuts, and using intensive methods of research, in the early days of our research we asked people direct questions about mental health and received some good ideas and stories that made sense, but we gradually realized that there was much more to it that we were yet to understand. A breakthrough came one day when with a Somali friend who often came with us for family outings. We were talking in the car about her Mum when she happened to say that her Mum had been getting angry at them lately and said she had spirits in her. The descriptions of her mother's behaviour would, in a western assessment, suggest schizophrenia. We asked what she did to make things better and were told that she had Koran readings.

We followed this up and found that Koran readings were a regular part of anyone's 'mental health', as well as physical and spiritual health, and were almost always the 'first stop' when depressed or 'not feeling yourself'. We also learned more about 'spirit' possession' which is much more ordinary and everyday than the English translation suggests. But this peeling away of new layers came about through participatory methods and had been missed in previous 'interview' research we conducted. As mentioned above, this did not mean that anything we reported earlier was completely wrong, just limited and possibly over-simplified. We did not know to ask about Koran readings and interviewees did not mention them. But in terms of mental health and useful interventions, learning about Koran readings was very important.

Looking at the other methodological points made in this paper and how they relate to our metal health research, there is still much diversity within the community on this topic and it is constantly changing. For example, while most of the women did not find western therapies and approaches helpful, there were Somali women who had been through western mental health services (including Cognitive Behavioural treatments) and were satisfied and felt it helped them. Also, while many women believed in spirit possession, others did not. Consideration of diversity in community research is certainly not new (e.g., O'Donnell, 2006; Trickett, 1996; Watts, 1992), but incorporating that understanding in practice and in interventions or policy is more challenging.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many methodological issues when working with refugee communities but we do not see an answer being more and more refining of methodologies to get rid of all the "biases and issues". The issues are part and parcel of any social relationships and we have argued briefly that methodologies are social relationships. It is like saying that families sometimes have conflicts and we must aim to build families with no conflicts. But conflicts have good sides and we are unlikely to be rid of them unless everyone gets everything they want or nothing.

Overall, we have found that balancing two facets of communities is important in understanding and researching with Somali. First, we need to show the **unique characteristics** of these communities—the specific practices that make them different and lead to some problems in resettlement. Somali have specific and sometimes exotic-looking ways that differ hugely from those of most other New Zealanders, especially on religion, social practices, language, and looks. This is similar to working with the homeless and first focusing on the major differences to other Australians. But second, we also need to show the **ordinariness** of the people who are, after all, just people like we are. Somali are just ordinary people who share most things with everyone else—love, conflicts, social relationships, closeness of families, humour, beliefs, opinions, emotions, moods, health and illness, need for employment, desire for education, gossip, parties, and spiritualities.

The trick is to find the methodologies—that is, the social relationships—that will allow both these to be discovered and that can maintain a good balance between the different and the ordinary. Our experience is reflected in this paper more than the rational arguments of ourselves and others through the research theories, and our experience promotes participatory methodologies for this balance, or

at least spending as much time as possible with participants of research. It also encourages us not to be so enamoured of words that we cannot be critical of the stories constructed by both our participants and ourselves around the subject matter, and to being open to regular new stories (or cuts) in what we know. Finally, our experience also tells us not to be so enamoured by words that we divide our subject matter up in ways that prevent us from seeing connections because our theories (words) do not point us in that direction.

References

Abdi, A. (2003). *Enhancing educational access for the Somali community through positive school management and parental involvement.* Masters Thesis, University of Waikato.

Austin, D. (2003). Community-based collaborative team ethnography: A community-university-agency partnership. *Human Organization, 62*, 143-152.

Barnes, H. M. (2000). Collaboration in community action: A successful partnership between indigenous communities and researchers. *Health Promotion International, 15*, 17-25.

Baum, F., Sanderson, C., & Jolley, G. (1997). Community participation in action: An analysis of the South Australian Health and Social Welfare Councils. *Health Promotion International, 12*, 125-134.

Bracken, P. J., & Petty, C. (Eds.). (1998). *Rethinking the trauma of war*. London: Free Association Books.

Chile, L., Dunstan, S., & Dibley, R. (2003). Refugee voices: The challenge of researching vulnerable populations. *New Zealand Population Review, 29*, 59-71.

Davidson, L. E., & Rodd, H. D. (2001). Interrelationship between dental age and chronological age in Somali children. *Community Dental Health, 18*, 27-30.

Davis, J., & Whittington, D. (1998). "Participatory" research for development projects: A comparison of the community meeting and household survey techniques. *Economic Development and Cultural Change, 46*, 73-94.

Diiriye, R. O., Guerin, P. B., & Guerin, B. (2004). *What some Somali women say about Female Genital Cutting.* The 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education: Valuing Diversity, Reshaping Power: Exploring pathways for health and well-being. April 26-30, Melbourne, Australia.

Dunne, E. (2000). Consultation, rapport, and collaboration: Essential preliminary stages in research with urban Aboriginal groups. *Australian Journal of Primary Health-Interchange, 6*, 6-14.

Guerin, B. (2001a). Individuals as social relationships: 18 ways that acting alone can be thought of as social behavior. *Review of General Psychology, 5*, 406-428.

Guerin, B. (2001b). Replacing catharsis and uncertainty reduction theories with descriptions of the historical and social context. *Review of General Psychology, 5*, 44-61.

Guerin, B. (2004). *Handbook for analyzing the social strategies of everyday life*. Reno, Nevada: Context Press.

Guerin, B. (2005). *Handbook of interventions for changing people and communities*. Reno, Nevada: Context Press.

Guerin, B., Abdi, A., & Guerin, P. B. (2003). Experiences with the medical and health systems for Somali refugees living in Hamilton. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 32*, 27-32.

Guerin, B., Guerin, P. B., Diiriye, R. O., & Abdi, A. (2004). Living in a close community: The everyday life of Somali refugees. *Network: Journal of the Australian College of Community Psychologists, 16*, 7-17.

Guerin, B., Guerin, P. B., Diiriye, R. O., & Yates, S. (2004). Somali conceptions and expectations of mental health: Some guidelines for mental health professionals. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 33*, 59-67.

Guerin, B., Guerin, P., Abdi, A., & Diiriye, R. O. (2003). Identity and community: Somali children's adjustments to life in the western world. In J. Gao, R. Le Heron & J. Logie (Eds.), *Windows on a changing world* (pp. 184-188). Auckland: New Zealand Geographical Society.

Guerin, P. B. & Diiriye, R. O. (2004). *Conducting a census of Somali in a small*

New Zealand City. Institute of Australian Geographers Conference. April 13-16, Glenelg, Adelaide, South Australia.

Guerin, P. B., Allotey, P., Elmi, F. H., & Baho, S. (2006). Advocacy as a means to an end: Assisting refugee women to take control of their reproductive health needs. *Special Issue for the journal of Women & Health, 43*(4), 7-23.

Guerin, P. B., Diiriye, R. O., & Guerin, B. (2004). *Obstacles to employment for Somali: Negotiating new directions*. New Directions, New Settlers, New challenges: Foundation for Research, Science and Technology end-users meeting. April 19-21, Wellington, New Zealand.

Guerin, P. B., Diiriye, R. O., Corrigan, C., & Guerin, B. (2003). Physical activity programs for refugee Somali women: Working out in a new country. *Women & Health, 38*, 83-99.

Guerin, P. B., Elmi, F. H. (2004). The analysis of female circumcision stories: The uses and abuses of oral histories. *Oral History in New Zealand, 16*, 9-16.

Guerin, P. B., Elmi, F. H., & Corrigan, C. (2007). Body composition and cardiorespiratory fitness among refugee Somali women living in New Zealand. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 9*(3), 191-196.

Guerin, P. B., Elmi, F. H., & Guerin, B. (2006). Weddings and parties: Cultural healing in one community of Somali women. *The Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH), 5*(2).

Guerin, P. B., Guerin, B. & Elmi, F. H. (2006). *Conducting a census of Somali in a small New Zealand city: Issues, families and mobility.* Report for the University of Waikato, Migration Research Group.

Holmes, W., Stewart, P., Garrow, A., Anderson, I., & Thorpe, L. (2002). Researching Aboriginal health: Experience from a study of urban young people's health and well-being. *Social Science and Medicine, 54*, 1267-1279.

Iszatt, J., & Price, R. (1995). Working with children from refugee communities. *Educational and Child Psychology, 12*, 52-56.

Jacobsen, K., & Landau, L. B. (2003). The dual imperative in refugee research: Some methodological and ethical considerations in social science research on forced migration. *Disasters, 27*, 185-206.

Jelle, H.A., Guerin, P., & Dyer, S. (2007). Somali women's experiences in paid employment in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations, 31*(2).

Koser, K., Werbner, P., & Ang, I. (2004). Cultural research and refugee studies: New knowledge, methodologies, and practical implications; A panel commentary. *Social Analysis, 48*, 59-65.

Kowalsky, L. O., Verhoef, M. J., Thurston, W. E., & Rutherford, G. E. (1996). Guidelines for entry into an aboriginal community. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 14*, 267-282.

Kusow, A. M. (2003). Beyond indigenous authenticity: Reflections on the insider/ outsider debate in immigration research. *Symbolic Interaction, 26*, 591-599.

Lamb, S. R., & Rademaker, M. (2001). Tinea due to Trichophyton violaceum and Trichophyton soudanense in Hamilton, New Zealand. *Australasian Journal of Dermatology, 42*, 260-3.

Maton, K. I. (1993). A bridge between cultures: Linked ethnographic-empirical methodology for culture anchored research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 747-773.

McKelvey, R. S. (1994). Refugee patients and the practice of deception. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 64*, 368-375.

Miller, K. E. (2004). Beyond the frontstage: Trust, access, and the relational context in research with refugee communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 217-227.

Morphy, F. (2004). *Indigenous household structures and ABS definitions of the family: What happens when systems collide, and does it matter?* Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research Working Paper, No. 26/2004.

North, N. (1995). Resettled Cambodian refugees: Private methodological and ethical issues in cross-cultural, bilingual interviewing. *Oral History in New Zealand, 7*, 4-12.

O'Donnell, C. R. (2006). Beyond Diversity: toward a cultural community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 37*, 1-7.
Pernice, R. (1994). Methodological issues in research with refugees and immigrants. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 25*, 207-213.
Potvin, L., Cargo, M., McComber, A. M., Delormier, T., & Macaulay, A. C. (2003). Implementing participatory intervention and research in communities: Lessons from the Kahnawake Schools Diabetes Prevention Project in Canada. *Social Science & Medicine, 56*, 1295-1305.
Ramachandran, S. (2004). 'There are many Bangladeshis in New Delhi, but…': Methodological routines and fieldwork anxieties. *Population, Space and Place, 10*, 255-270.
Reichelt, S., & Sveaass, N. (1994). Developing meaningful conversations with families in exile. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 7*, 125-143.
Ryan, J., Guerin, B., Guerin, P. B., & Elmi, F. H. (2005). Going 'Walli' and having 'Jinni': Considerations in the evaluation and treatment of Somali refugees. Recommended Readings. *The Mental Health Services Conference 2005 Book of Proceedings: Dancing to the Beat of a Different Drum*, Adelaide, September 2005.
Snell-Johns, J., Imm, P., Wandersman, A., & Claypoole, J. (2003). Roles assumed by a community coalition when creating environmental and policy-level changes. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 661-670.
Sonn, C. C., & Fisher, A. T. (1998). Sense of community: Community resilient responses to oppression and change. *Journal of Community Psychology, 26*, 457-472.
Trickett, E. J. (1996). A future for community psychology: The contexts of diversity and the diversity of contexts. *American Journal of Community Psychology 24*(2)
Warchivker, I., Tjapanati, T., & Wakerman, J. (2000). The turmoil of Aboriginal enumeration: Mobility and service population analysis in a Central Australian community. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 24*, 444-449.
Watts, R. J. (1992). Elements of a psychology of human diversity. *Journal of Community Psychology, 20*, 116-131.
WHO (2006). *The World Health Report 2006: Working together for health*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Acknowledgements
This research was partly supported by the Foundation for Research Science and Technology (New Zealand) through UOWX0203, Strangers in Town: Enhancing Family and Community in a More Diverse New Zealand Society while at the University of Waikato. We would like to thank Fatuma Hussein Elmi, Abdirizak Abdi, Juanita Ryan and Richard Bedford for their helpful thoughts and discussions and the Somali community for so generously allowing us to be participants in their lives. We would also like to that the reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript. Pauline Guerin is now Senior Lecturer in the School of Nursing & Midwifery at Flinders University in Adelaide, Australia.

Address correspondence to
Bernard Guerin
School of Psychology
University of South Australia
North Terrace, Adelaide 5001
South Australia
Email: Bernard.guerin@unisa.edu.au

The researcher 'in the middle': Negotiating the insider/outsider dichotomy

Lauren J. Breen
Centre for Social Research
Edith Cowan University

Researchers, particularly those using qualitative methodologies, often position themselves as 'insiders' rather than 'outsiders' to their research domain. In this paper I discuss the role I occupied within my PhD research, including the personal experiences that led me to consider myself to be neither 'inside' nor 'outside' the research domain. I explore the ways in which my experience 'in the middle' influenced my choice of research topic, the scope of my study, access to informants, the collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research rigor. I argue that the insider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic, and the distinction is unlikely to adequately capture the role of all researchers. Instead, the role of the researcher is better conceptualised on a continuum, rather than as an either/or dichotomy. My role as neither an insider-researcher nor outsider-researcher maximised the advantages of each while minimising the potential for disadvantages, and meant that I was able to benefit from both in my study of grief experiences responses following fatal vehicle crashes in Western Australia.

It is becoming increasingly important for social and behavioural researchers to clarify their personal motivation for their research, especially for those utilising qualitative methodologies that require reflexivity (see Creswell, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Etherington, 2004; Patton, 2002). As a component of clarifying their role in the research, these researchers often position themselves as either 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to their research domain (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Generally, insider-researchers are those who chose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study.

It is common, but of course not necessary, for researchers using qualitative methodologies to study a group, organisation, or culture they belong to, and in doing so, they begin the research process as an insider or 'native' (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Kanuha, 2000). Insider-researchers are often intimately engaged with their research domains, and, unlike outside-researchers, would rarely be described as those who "parachute into people's lives… and then vanish" (Gerrard, 1995, p. 59). Despite the researcher's best intentions, 'parachuting' often occurs because of the demands of academic pressures. Drew (2006) referred to these researchers as seagulls: "…a 'seagull' is a researcher or consultant who flies into a community; craps all over everything then leaves the community to tidy up the mess" (p. 40). Despite the diametrically opposed pressures of academia and the commitment to community engagement, Bishop (2006) provided a number of examples of university-based research projects where the researchers were sensitive to the communities they were studying.

In a review, Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) outlined three key advantages of being an insider to the research domain: a superior understanding of the group's culture; the ability to interact naturally with the group and its members; and a previously established, and therefore greater, relational intimacy with the group. Indeed, some insider-researchers choose to conceptualise themselves as co-investigators, co-learners, facilitators, or advocates, rather than researchers; this is typically an effort to minimise the power differential between themselves and those participating in their research (DeLyser, 2001; Farnsworth, 1996; Harklau & Norwood, 2005).

However, each of these advantages is related to a disadvantage. For example, greater familiarity can lead to a loss of 'objectivity', particularly in terms of inadvertently making erroneous assumptions based on the researcher's prior knowledge and/or experience (DeLyser,

2001; Gerrish, 1997; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002). Pitman (2002) argued that an insider's familiarity can provide an "illusion of sameness" (p. 285), with potentially disastrous results. In conducting insider research with gay women, Pitman shared that she left a detailed message about the research project on the answering machine of an informant, which 'outed' the woman to her university roommates. Pitman realised she had uncritically assumed that the informants were also open about their sexual orientation.

In addition, insider-researchers are often confronted with methodological and ethical issues that are largely irrelevant to outsider-researchers. Insiders often struggle to balance their insider role (e.g., nurse, psychologist, geographer, activist) and role of researcher (DeLyser, 2001; Gerrish, 1997; Kanuha, 2000). Taking on the role of the researcher often acts as a barrier that separates the insider from those in the setting they are researching. In her geographical research on a gold-mining ghost town, DeLyser (2001) wrote that she always volunteered to clean the public toilets in an effort to remain accepted by those she was researching, while Gerrish (1997), who studied nurses' perceptions of district nursing, shared that she often offered to make coffee and wash dishes in order to become accepted in the setting. Doing so, however, created another tension concerning the balance between the development of rapport with the participants and the maintenance of the distance required to make sense of the data.

Insider-researchers often report the difficulties they encountered in collecting data, especially via interviews, for two reasons. First, the insider-researcher might encounter that his or her reflections on the potentially personal nature of the data can result in a difficulty in focussing on the interview process (Kanuha, 2000). Second, the process of interviewing can be complicated by the assumption among their informants that the researcher already knows the answers. DeLyser (2001) reported that probing for information that the informants know she already knew sometimes appeared to aggravate them. Kanuha (2000) did not realise the familiarity was a potential problem – it was only when she read the interview transcripts that she realised how much of the interactions between herself and the informants had gone unsaid. In her interviews, meaning was communicated via a shared understanding of vague comments, innuendoes, and incomplete sentences and descriptions. Gerrish (1997), DeLyser (2001), and Kanuha (2000) described engaging in numerous techniques to overcome this. However, rather than being one-size-fits-all, these techniques varied according to research context and researcher's strengths and weaknesses.

A further difficulty often encountered by insider-researchers relates to ethical codes. Ethical issues might arise, and need to be dealt with, on an individual and daily basis. Although ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and non-maleficence are able to guide researchers, there is often a lack of guidelines as to how these principles play out in community-based applied research (Gerrish, 1997). O'Neill (1989), and more recently, Dadich (2003-2004), provide a number of examples that illustrate the unexpected ethical dilemmas that can arise when researchers are engaged in applied community research, and discuss ways in which these issues might be ethically prevented or resolved.

The distinction between insider and outsider positions correspond to contrasting positions concerning the theory of knowledge, with epistemologies and perspectives such as constructionism, feminism, critical theory, and postmodernism being especially appropriate to the conduct of insider research. These epistemologies and perspectives are likely to (a) view their research process and products as 'co-constructions' between the researcher and the participants in the research; (b) regard the research participants or respondents as active 'informants' to the research; and (c) attempt to give 'voice' to the informants within the research domain (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gergen, 1999; Patton, 2002). As such, these perspectives allow the researcher to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' their group or domain of interest, which contrasts starkly with outsider-research perspectives.

As the above review demonstrates, there are strengths and limitations to both insider and outsider research. Indeed, Pugh, Mitchell, and Brooks (2000) suggested that the research partnership between an insider and an outsider would balance the advantages of both positions

while minimising the disadvantages of each. Despite emphasis on the differences between these supposedly diametrically opposed positions, and their underlying epistemologies, I considered myself to be neither an insider nor outsider in the context of my PhD research. I argue that the insider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic, and that neither term adequately captured the role I occupied throughout the research. To illustrate, I will discuss the role I played in my research, including the personal experiences that led me to consider myself to be neither inside nor outside the experience I was studying, and demonstrate how my role 'in the middle' influenced my choice of research topic, the scope of my study, access to informants, the collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research rigor.

My Role as the Researcher

In undertaking the research, I acknowledged that my personal experiences influenced my decision to research the experience of grief following the loss of a loved one in a crash in Western Australia. Further, I acknowledged that my experiences also influenced the way I chose to research this topic. For some researchers, the motivation for their choice of topic results from a combination of experiences and moments (e.g., White, 2000). For me, it began in the very early hours of the 11th February 1999. I was holidaying in regional Victoria, Australia, with my partner Shannan when his father telephoned to tell him Shannan's sister Skye had been killed in a crash caused by a speeding motorist. We returned to Perth that night.

Skye's funeral was held a week after her death. Neither Shannan nor I had been to a funeral before. After the funeral, Shannan's mother and I were talking about it in the lounge room. She looked over at the coffee table, covered in photographs of her daughter, and hesitantly stated, "I guess I better put these away now". I recall feeling uneasy, but I did not know why. Thinking back to it, this was the first time I noticed how the social norms of grief, especially those concerning the appropriate timelines for mourning, affect mourning practices.

Soon, cards were pouring into the mailbox, and there were numerous death notices published in the newspaper. I felt extremely uncomfortable being mentioned along with Shannan and his parents in many of these. After all, they had lost a daughter and a sister while I did not feel that Skye's death was a personal loss, especially when compared to the loss of a daughter or sister. I thought that others in their family and many of their close friends should have been acknowledged before me.

Over the subsequent days, months, and years after the crash, Shannan's family, particularly his parents, came into contact with funeral directors, the media, the coronial process, the justice system, and insurance companies. It became clear to me that the grief resulting from crashes does not occur in a vacuum, but actually involves and is affected by numerous people and systems. People bereaved though crashes likely face legal, police and coronial investigations, and health/medical and justice systems, among others. Further, grief is experienced within a network of families, friends, and the wider community.

It amazed me how generous people could be. Another family friend who I had heard of but never met, visited Shannan's parents every day for over a year, making sure they were okay and just being there with them and for them. She was also a great support for Shannan. I was also surprised at how it seemed other people could not 'deal' with Skye's death and 'disappeared'; that is, they stopped telephoning and visiting. It was during this time that I realised the importance of social support and how it does not always come from where you might expect it.

While the death of Skye was not a momentous personal loss, I was able to observe the gravity of the situation and appreciate the effect the death of a loved one has on those left behind. It is this reason that I consider myself neither an insider nor outsider to the experience I researched. It was my experiences, some of which I describe here, that influenced my choice to research the grief experiences resulting from crashes in Western Australia. I embarked on the initial stages of thesis development in 2001. In the following section, I discuss the ensuing development of the study.

The Development of the Study

In the months following Skye's death, I started to think about the role that psychology could play in providing support for people

bereaved through crash fatalities. Out of personal interest, I began to search the literature for information on grief. Two of my findings motivated me to explore the topic in more depth via a thesis. First, I noticed that a significant emphasis in the grief literature was on intrapsychic or individual variables. However, understanding grief as only an intrapsychic, individual phenomenon did not fit with my observations of the experiences of Shannan's family's experiences within their social networks, legal and coronial contexts, and so on. Nor did it fit my orientation as a community psychologist. It became obvious to me that a thorough understanding of the grief experience resulting from crashes could only be articulated through understanding the wider context within which the grief occurs. It is for this reason that I took a contextual approach to the study of grief. Community psychology, with its emphasis on understanding individuals in their natural (non-manipulated) contexts (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001; Duffy & Wong, 2003; Thomas & Veno, 1992), provided a framework for contextual analysis.

Second, I observed that the classic bereavement theories were by and large constructed from data collected from North American, white, middle-class, middle-aged, widows grieving the loss of their husbands, often after a long illness or adapted from models of dying (see Center for the Advancement of Health, 2004; Schlernitzauer et al., 1998; Stroebe, 1998; Stroebe, Stroebe, & Schut, 2003, for reviews). I began to wonder about the degree to which these findings would transfer to other bereaved populations, such as those bereaved through crashes. I wondered whether or not the findings from the classic studies were being uncritically applied to people with different bereavement circumstances and I became concerned with this possibility. Crash deaths are sudden, unexpected, violent, and usually preventable (Hobbs & Adshead, 1997; Sleet & Branche, 2004; Stewart & Lord, 2002; Waller, 2001; World Health Organization, 2004; Zaza et al., 2001). As a result, the characteristics of crash deaths differ from many other reasons for death, such illness or old age. In addition, the victims of crash fatalities are of a significantly younger age than those who die from natural causes (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005; World Health Organization, 2004). A further characteristic of crash deaths is their 'hidden' or acceptable nature. Crash fatalities are generally not considered to be legitimate in the way that deaths through war, aeroplane crashes, natural disasters, or acts of terrorism are (e.g., Adshead, 1997; Browning, 2002; Clark, 2000; Clark & Franzmann, 2002; Di Gallo & Parry-Jones, 1996; Gregory, 1998; Mitchell, 1997; Tehrani, 2004; Vigilant & Williamson, 2003; World Health Organization, 2004; Williams, 1997), yet the experience can be just as devastating to those affected (e.g., Federation of European Road Traffic Victims, 1993, 1995; Lehman, Wortman, & Williams, 1987; Lord, 1987, 1996, 2000; Shanfield & Swain, 1984; Sprang, 1997; Tehrani, 2004; World Health Organization, 2004; Williams, 1997). For these reasons, the social, cultural, historical, and political contexts within which the bereavement experience is housed became increasingly important to me.

Congruent with my contextual line of thinking, I chose to explore the grief experience in the aftermath of crashes within the context of Western Australia. Research that attends to the context within which a phenomenon occurs is gaining increasing recognition, as an understanding of the context facilitates understanding of the experience under study. As a result, my research was developed from within the constructionist epistemology (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999). By focussing on a particular phenomenon within a particular context, I anticipated that my research would have greater practical implications in the delivery of services to those bereaved through crashes in Western Australia.

Aims and Research Questions

The broad aims of this research were to explore the experience of grief resulting from losing a loved one in a crash in Western Australia and to describe the influence of the contextual factors on the grief experience. The research questions were:

1 What is the experience of grief resulting from a crash?
2 What factors affect the experience of grief resulting from crashes? In what ways do they affect the grief experience?

3 Are there relationships between these factors? If so, what are they and how do they affect the grief experience resulting from crashes?
4 What are the implications for Western Australia in terms of service delivery pertinent to crash-related bereavement?

These emerged directly from the experiences discussed previously, and the interrogation of the research literature.

Research Design

In the study of grief following fatal crashes in Western Australia, constructionist grounded theory was utilised because the research aims were exploratory, applied, and situated within a non-manipulated context (Creswell, 1994; Denzin, 1972; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). The epistemology and methodology were chosen because they assist in uncovering the multiple perspectives that exist within complex social and psychological phenomena (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002; Strauss, 1987). Reality is ascribed through our interactions with the world (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Crotty, 1998). Social constructionism suggests that both the participant and the researcher are actively involved in ascribing and co-constructing meaning (Crotty, 1998).

Immersion into the area of study was required to understand the multiple perspectives. As such, data were drawn four main avenues, maximising variability in the data: in-depth, recursive interviews (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995) with 21 Western Australians bereaved via the death of a family member in a crash at least 12 months prior to data collection; semi-structured interviews with 10 people working in the setting relevant to road safety and the aftermath of crashes (e.g., Office of the State Coroner, Victim Support Service, Police); 'scoping and profiling' to familiarise myself with the context of road crashes, crash fatalities, and grief in Western Australia (e.g., I attended various government road safety meetings, a meeting of The Compassionate Friends (a mutual-help group for bereaved parents), and the unveiling of a crash fatality remembrance memorial); and the examination of public documents such as government websites, reports, brochures, mass media campaigns concerning road safety, and newspaper articles on road safety, crashes, and grief. The collection and analysis of data via multiple avenues aided my understanding of the setting and context of the crash deaths in Western Australia (Berg, 2001).

Data Collection

My position as neither an 'insider' in nor an 'outsider' to the research domain proved to be both a help and a hindrance in collecting data. Generally, it is thought that the recruitment of informants can be potentially difficult when the researcher does not occupy the position of an 'insider', largely because the researcher must first establish trust and rapport with the group. However, unlike other outsider-researchers (e.g., Pitman, 2002), I did not struggle with the recruitment of bereaved informants. I concluded that a result of being 'silenced' by those around them (see Breen, 2004, 2007; Breen & O'Connor, 2007), the bereaved informants were keen to 'voice' their experiences to someone who was willing to listen to them, even if I did not share aspects of their experiences.

My position as an 'outsider' was far more apparent in my attempts to recruit and interview the setting informants. These interviews were formal, shorter, and I was rarely offered refreshments. In addition, I experienced an acute case of gate keeping by the assistant of one of the people I was keen to interview. The gatekeeper first asked me to clarify why I wanted to interview her boss, and then requested that I email the questions/topics to her. After complying with her request, she informed me that the questions were 'not very good', and so she decided to answer the questions herself via email.

As a result of immersing myself in the context of crash fatalities in Western Australia, I became aware of some important language issues. Some bereaved people do not like euphemisms for death, such as 'passed on', 'passed away', and 'no longer with us' (see Wass, 2004). Furthermore, the term 'accident' is often considered offensive to people bereaved through the actions of another, because the term implies a random event that is unpredictable and inevitable rather than preventable (see Ball-Rokeach, Hale, Schaffer, Porras, Harris, & Drayton, 1999; Howarth, 1997; Job, 1999;

Loimer & Guarnieri, 1996; Sleet & Branche, 2004; Stewart & Lord, 2002, 2003; Vigilant & Williamson, 2003). Consequently, I was careful to use the words that were used by each bereaved informant to avoid using terms that they might find offensive.

To learn from each interview, I reflected on each by maintaining a journal. The following entry was made after interviewing 'Joan' (pseudonyms are used for all informants):

> I felt funny about it today – she was getting upset at the beginning, reading [to me] stuff she'd written not long after her son died, and I didn't feel sad at all, and that feels funny. I don't like it. I don't want to feel nothing, be desensitised. I feel that it is a great privilege to hear the stories I have heard. Most people wouldn't [hear them], either to protect themselves or would just never come across this number of people bereaved this way, so I do think it is a privilege. Also, I think I may have asked Joan a few leading questions. She was anxious at first, and not sure what to say, so when I elaborated on my questions, I may have been leading – need to check the transcript.

Insider-researchers have a tendency to rely solely or primarily on informants with whom they are familiar with and feel most comfortable with (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). However, I knew only three of the bereaved informants and had previously met three of the setting informants. The familiarity with three of the bereaved informants affected the interview with one of them. Although I did not ask her to do so, she referred to me in the third person, as though 'Lauren' was another person rather than someone she knew who also happened to be interviewing her. Upon revisiting the transcript and tape, I became aware of the interview's "artificial officiousness" (Kanuha, 2000, p. 443).

While the bereaved informants were keen to know why I was interested in the research topic, the setting informants appeared disinterested in my motivations. Some of the latter seemed to assume I was an outsider, as they said things that I do not believe they would sat to someone they knew was bereaved through a crash fatality. For example, the informant from the Office of the State Coroner stated;

> …the thing that binds all families in sudden death, be it road trauma or others, is simply the sheer horror and the initial denial that takes place, and intelligent people deny [their grief] by asking lots of questions without actually thinking through the relevance the answer is going to have, you know? … Really what it is, is the desire to purge their anger and their hurt on some poor unsuspecting bastard.

Our multiple identities, in terms of demographic characteristics as well as our role in the research, readily impact upon data collection, in terms of what is 'seen' and 'unseen' and what is considered 'important' and 'unimportant' (Langhout, 2006). In my mid-twenties at the time of the interviews, I believe my age was of greatest influence; this became particularly apparently when I wanted to explore with the bereaved informants the effect of their losses on their intimate relationships. The literature refers to the effect of bereavement, and particularly the death of a child, has on spousal/ marital relationships in term of their physical and emotional intimacy (Hagemeister & Rosenblatt, 1997; Riches, 2005; Riches & Dawson, 1996). Despite literature support, I felt uncomfortable probing the bereaved informants with specific questions about their intimate relationships. I might have felt able to do so had I been older at the times of the interviews, or had I been an 'insider' to their experiences. Yet, even without specific questions, I was able to access detailed information about their relationships. Some candidly described instances where they verbally, and sometimes physically, fought with their spouses because they felt they were not supported or understood. Natasha spoke of how she often screamed to her husband Jim that she wished he had died, rather than their daughter Jess: "I used to thump on his chest, and say, 'Why couldn't it be you? I could live without you, but I can't live without Jess!'". Similarly, Karen also spoke of quarrels with her husband where they blamed each other for their son's death:

> I've been through all of that, the guilt feelings, there's naturally guilt feelings

> yeah and then there's the blame and I've been there too… I know that I have had to forgive myself for any role [in his death]… You have to reach a point to go over it and over it [and] believe me, [I] did that millions of times, to see what, what if, what could have happened if this or what if that how could it have been that, how could the outcome have been different you know if we had changed this that or something else. And we fought about it, my husband and I, it's like 'oh yes well maybe you should have been looking after him'…

Although I regarded my age as a potential hindrance, my appearance as a young, naïve researcher facilitated access to information from the setting informants. Some make comments that I do not believe they would have shared with a researcher they considered to be experienced and polished. For example, when questioning the Road Safety Council informant over the nexus between politics and the state's road safety strategy, he commented:

> What [the Liberal-National party] didn't realise was that after two years the government was going to change and in came Labor. Being politicians, they looked at it and said 'we need a plan but we want it to be our plan' so what we had to do is basically go through a process of refocusing and relooking [sic] at it… So we didn't change the whole plan, because what you could say, was that one wrong? It wasn't, it was pretty right… Now, very soon, they're going to bring out their new strategy, under the Labor Government. I'm sure if they lose the election in two years time, we'll be doing the same thing again for the Liberal Party, but that's politics.

Furthermore, I questioned the Office of the State Coroner informant about the reasons why families do not perceive they are supported when viewing their deceased loved ones at the mortuary. For example, the bereaved informants reported that the mortuary employees spoke bluntly and clinically about their deceased loved ones, or were seen having a joke amongst themselves. The Office of the State Coroner informant justified the behaviour of mortuary employees in the following manner:

> Now 99 per cent of the time the viewings are done by the techies (technicians). The techies tell them everything, but they tell them in a fairly distant voice… People get annoyed and say 'oh the techie was polite but he was very cold, very distant' and you can't say to a family 'well in about an hour's time he's going to put a Stryker saw through her head. He can't really afford to get too close to you'.

Data Analysis

Insider-researchers are sometimes criticised for being advocates rather that 'real' or 'legitimate' researchers (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Kanuha (2000) wrote that "for each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding to a population that may not be accessible to a nonnative scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised" (p. 444). It might be argued that removing oneself from the research context might reduce these criticisms. However, it is naïve to think that (a) minimal exposure to the research context would automatically reduce or eliminate bias, and (b) from a constructionist point of view, bias can ever be truly eliminated. Like those accused of 'going native' (Kanuha, 2000; Harklau & Norwood, 2005; Pugh et al., 2000), some people (both in and out of the university setting) familiar with my personal experience questioned the credibility of my analysis, and stated would be 'biased'. Interestingly, not one recommended extra care in the analytic process because I do not have the experience of losing a loved one in a crash. Indeed, being 'in the middle' made it easier to keep questioning the research material, because I was not 'inside' or 'outside' of it.

Maximising Research Rigor

Rigor within the research process was maximised via the data collection and analysis procedures I engaged in as well as the adherence to a number of processes recommended by and for qualitative researchers. Traditional research outcomes like internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity are not considered appropriate in qualitative methodologies. Instead,

other terms are used, such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nagy & Viney, 1994). I utilised four main procedures in order maximise the research rigor.

First, I employed multiple sources of data and methods of data collection (Berg, 2001; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, Morse, 1994; Patton, 2002; Strauss, 1987). Second, as an audit trail, I kept a journal where I documented the daily tasks and memos (Etherington, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Morse, 1994; Nagy & Viney, 1994; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Third, I checked my interpretations with the informants to ensure accuracy (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I invited three bereaved informants to participate in a short second interview to clarify my interpretations of the data (Breakwell, 1995; Silverman, 1993). All three appeared satisfied with my interpretations. In addition, I sent all informants a summary of my results and invited them to provide comments and clarifications where necessary. Further, an article similar to the results summary was published in The Compassionate Friends Australian National Newsletter in July 2004 (Breen, 2004), and was an example of the transformational psychopolitical validity of the research (Prilleltensky, 2003). Similarly, I verified or 'trialled' the theory by presenting it to different audiences for comment (Strauss, 1987). Finally, I provided a detailed description of both the setting and the informants involved in the study so that readers could determine the credibility and transferability of findings to different contexts based on the level of similarity between research setting and other settings (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Nagy & Viney, 1994).

Conclusion

Despite the epistemological/theoretical/ paradigms we usually align ourselves with, papers where researchers explicitly discuss their position in their research are rare, even within community psychology journals where it might be expected (Langhout, 2006). Possible explanations for this scarcity include the notion that reflective papers require an adherence to a philosophical standpoint that is not dominant within disciplines such as psychology; engaging in a reflexive process is often seen as narcissistic and navel gazing; the belief that it has the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the research and researcher, and the process requires introspection, self-questioning, vulnerability, and humility (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Farnsworth, 1996; Harklau & Norwood, 2005; Kanuha, 2000; Langhout, 2006). In writing this 'autoethnography' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), I have highlighted the extent to which my role in the research influenced all aspects of the research process – notably, the selection of the research topic, the scope of the study, access to informants, the collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research rigor. This highlights the need to make explicit the researcher orientation.

Some talk about the role of the researcher as a continuum between 'complete participant/ member researcher' and 'complete observer' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Kearns, 2000). However, most theorisers fail to differentiate between those who being a research project from within the community they are intending to study, and those who become intimately involved in the community of study as a result of research process (DeLyser, 2001). An extreme view suggests we are all insiders; "as communicating humans studying humans communicating, we are inside what we a studying" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 743). Further, DeLyser (2001) asserted, "in every research project we navigate complex and multi-faceted insider-outsider issues" (p. 442). In the context of my study, where I positioned myself as neither an insider nor an outsider to the grief experience I was studying, I concur with other social and behavioural researchers who argue that the role of the researcher is better conceptualised on a continuum, rather than as an either/or dichotomy (see Hodkinson, 2005, for a review).

In embodying an insider role, an outsider role, or any role along the continuum, applied research encompasses particular challenges requiring careful consideration and appropriate responses. Because I was not an insider to the experience of grief following crashes, I immersed myself into the domain. I was able to take the time to do so because the research was a PhD project, which reduced the likelihood of becoming a parachuter (Gerrish, 1995) or seagull

(Drew, 2006). Similarly, because I was not an outsider, I benefited from the assumption that I was independent, unbiased, and objective, all of which remain important currency within mainstream psychology. I was also more likely to be more able to identify the key players, power differentials, differences, and dynamics that existed within the research domain, which are likely to be 'unseen' by insider-researchers (Pitman, 2002). My role as neither an insider-researcher nor outsider-researcher was particularly advantageous in the context of my PhD study. It maximised the advantages of each while minimising the potential for disadvantages. It also meant that I was able to benefit from both in my study of grief responses following crashes in Western Australia.

References

.Adshead, G. (1997). Psychological services for road accident victims are their relatives. In M. Mitchell (Ed). *The aftermath of road accidents: Psychosocial, social, and legal consequences of an everyday trauma* (pp. 217-223). London: Routledge.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005). *Cause of death Australia 2003 (3303.0).* Canberra, Australian Capital Territory, Australia: Author.

Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Hale, M., Scaffer, A., Porras, L., Harris, P., & Drayton, M. (1999). Changing the media production process: From aggressive to injury-sensitive traffic crash stories. In D. Demers & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Mass media, social control, and social change: A macrosocial perspective* (pp. 229-262). Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.

Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social scientists*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bishop, B. (2006). How irresistible is the seagull imperative?: Countering the 'dead hand of academe'. *Australian Community Psychologist, 18*(2), 86-88.

Bonner, A., & Tolhurst, G. (2002). Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nurse Researcher, 9*(4), 7-19.

Breakwell, G. M. (1995). Interviewing. In G. M. Breakwell, S. Hammond, & C. Fife-Shaw (Eds.), *Research methods in psychology* (pp. 230-242). London: Sage.

Breen, L. (2004, July). Doing grief research. *The Compassionate Friends Australian National Newsletter, 10*(2), 9-10.

Breen, L. (2007). *Silenced voices: Experiences of grief following road traffic crashes in Western Australia.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia.

Breen, L. & O'Connor, M. (2007). The role of the deceased in family disputes, dysfunction, and division: Case studies of road traffic crashes. In M. Mitchell (Ed.), *Remember me: Constructing immortality* (pp. 159-165). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Browning, R. (2002). Where are the protests? *British Medical Journal, 324*, 1165.

Burgess-Limerick, T., & Burgess-Limerick, R. (1998). Conversational interviews and multiple-case research in psychology. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 50*(2), 63-70.

Center for the Advancement of Health. (2004). Report on bereavement and grief research. *Death Studies, 28*, 491-575.

Clark, J. (2000). A short history of road safety. In G. Horne (Ed.), *Australian College of Road Safety yearbook* (pp. 3-5). Melbourne, Australia: Executive Media.

Clark, J. & Franzmann, M. (2002). "A father, a son, my only daughter": Memorialising road trauma. *Roadwise, 13*(3), 4-10.

Creswell, J. W., (1994). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St Leonards, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Dadich, A. (2003-2004). Self-help support groups and issues in research. *International Journal of Self Help and Self Care, 2*(1), 41-55.

Dalton, J. H., Elias, M. J., & Wandersman, A. (2001). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities*. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review*, 441-453.

Denzin, N. K. (1972). The research act. In G.

Manis & B. N. Meltzer (Eds.), *Symbolic interaction: A reader in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 897-922). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Di Gallo, A., & Parry-Jones, W. (1996). Psychological sequelae of road traffic accidents: An inadequately addressed problem. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 169*, 405-407.

Drew, N. (2006). The seagull imperative. *Australian Community Psychologist, 18*(1), 40-41.

Duffy, K. G., & Wong, F. Y. (2003). *Community psychology* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: Using our selves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Farnsworth, E. B. (1996). Reflexivity and qualitative family research: Insider's perspectives on bereaving the loss of a child. In M. B. Sussman & J. F. Gilgin (Eds.), *The methods and methodologies of qualitative family research* (pp. 399-415). New York: Haworth Press.

Federation of European Road Traffic Victims. (1993). *Study of the physical, psychological, and material secondary damage inflicted on the victims and their families by road crashes*. Geneva: Author.

Federation of European Road Traffic Victims. (1995). *Impact of road death and injury: research into the principal causes of the decline in quality of life and living standard suffered by road crash victims and victim families: Proposal for improvements*. Geneva: Author.

Gergen, K. J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.

Gerrard, N. (1995). Some painful experiences of a white feminist therapist doing research with women of colour. In J. Adleman (Ed.), *Racism in the lives of women* (pp. 55-64). Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.

Gerrish, K. (1997). Being a 'marginal native': Dilemmas of the participant observer. *Nurse Researcher, 5*(1), 25-34.

Gregory, R. J. (1998). Attitudes to death and the future changing our thinking. *Futures, 30*, 75-81.

Hagemeister, A. K., & Rosenblatt, P. C. (1997). Grief and the sexual relationship of couples who have experienced a child's death. *Death Studies, 21*, 231-252.

Harklau, L., & Norwood, R. (2005). Negotiating researcher roles in ethnographic program evaluation: A postmodern lens. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 36*, 278-288.

Hewitt-Taylor, J. (2002). Insider knowledge: Issues in insider research. *Nursing Standard, 16*(46), 33-35.

Hobbs, M., & Adshead, G., (1997). Preventative psychological intervention for road crash survivors. In M. Mitchell (Ed). *The aftermath of road accidents: Psychosocial, social, and legal consequences of an everyday trauma* (pp. 159-171). London: Routledge.

Hodkinson, P. (2005). 'Insider research' in the study of youth cultures. *Journal of Youth Studies, 8*, 131-149.

Howarth, G. (1997). Death on the road: The role of the English coroner's court on the social construction of an accident. In M. Mitchell (Ed). *The aftermath of road accidents: Psychosocial, social, and legal consequences of an everyday trauma* (pp. 15-32). London: Routledge.

Job, R. F. S. (1999). The road user: The psychology of road safety. In J. Clark (Ed.), *Safe and mobile: Introductory studies in traffic safety* (pp. 21-55). Armidale New South Wales, Australia. Emu Press.

Kanuha, V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": Conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work, 45*, 439-447.

Kearns, R. (2000). Being there: Research through observing and participating. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography* (pp. 103-121). South Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University

Press.
Langhout, R. D. (2006). Where am I? Locating myself and its implications for collaborative research. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 37*, 267-274.
Lehman, D. R., Wortman, C. B., & Williams, A. F., (1987). Long-term effects of losing a spouse or child in a motor vehicle crash. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 218-231.
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba. E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
Loimer, H., & Guarnieri, M. (1996). Accidents and acts of God: A history of the terms. *American Journal of Public Health, 86*, 101-107.
Lord, J. H. (1987). Survivor grief following a drunk-driving crash. *Death Studies, 11*, 413-435.
Lord, J. H. (1996). America's number one killer: Vehicular crashes. In K. J. Doka (Ed.), *Living with grief after sudden loss: Suicide, homicide, accident, heart attack, stroke* (pp. 25-39). Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
Lord, J. H. (2000). *No time for goodbyes: Coping with sorrow, anger and injustice after a tragic death* (5th ed.). Oxnard, CA: Pathfinder.
Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: Falmer Press.
Minichiello, V., Aroni, R., Timewell, E., & Alexander, L. (1995). *In-depth interviewing*. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Longman.
Mitchell, M. (1997). Death and injury on the road. In M. Mitchell (Ed). *The aftermath of road accidents: Psychosocial, social, and legal consequences of an everyday trauma* (pp. 3-14). London: Routledge.
Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 220-235). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Nagy, S., & Viney, L. (1994, September). *The rigorous application of qualitative methods to constructivist research*. Paper presented at the Australian Psychological Society Conference, Wollongong, Australia.
O'Neill, P. (1989). Responsible to whom? Responsible for what? Some ethical issues in community intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17*,323-341.
Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Pitman, G. E. (2002). Outsider/insider: The politics of shifting identities in the research process. *Feminism and Psychology, 12*, 282-288.
Prilleltensky, I. (2003). Critical health psychology needs psychopolitical validity. *Health Psychology Update, 12*(3), 2-11.
Pugh, J., Mitchell, M., & Brooks, F. (2000). Insider/outsider partnerships in an ethnographic study of shared governance. *Nursing Standard, 14*(27), 43-44.
Riches, G. (2005). Intimacy in couple relationships following the death of a child. *Grief Matters, 8*(3), 54-57.
Riches, G., & Dawson, P. (1996). 'An intimate loneliness': Evaluating the impact of a child's death on parental self-identity and marital relationships. *Journal of Family Therapy, 18*, 1-22.
Schlernitzhauer, M., Bierhals, A. J., Geary, M. D., Prigerson, H. G., Stack, J. A., Miller, M. D., Pasternak, R. E., & Reynolds, C. F., III. (1998). Recruitments methods for intervention research in bereavement-related depression. *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry, 6*, 67-74.
Shanfield, S. B., & Swain, B. J. (1984). Death of adult children in traffic accidents. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 172*, 533-553.
Silverman, D. (1993). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text, and interaction*. London: Sage.
Sleet, D. A., & Branche, C. M. (2004). Road safety is no accident. *Journal of Safety Research, 35*, 1731-74.
Sprang, G. (1997). PTSD in surviving family members of drunk driving episodes: Victim and crime related factors. *Families in Society, 78*, 632-641.
Stewart, A. E., & Lord, J. H. (2002). Motor vehicle crash versus accident: A change of terminology in necessary. *Journal of*

Traumatic Stress, 15, 333-335.
Stewart, A. E., & Lord, J. H. (2003). Some crashes are more unintentional than others: A reply to Blanchard, Hickling, & Kuhn. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 16,* 529-530.
Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Stroebe, M. (1998). New directions in bereavement research: Exploration of gender differences. *Palliative Medicine, 12,* 5-12.
Stroebe, M., Stroebe, W., & Schut, H. (2003). Bereavement research: Methodological issues and ethical concerns. *Palliative Medicine, 17,* 235-240.
Tehrani, N. (2004). Road victim trauma: An investigation of the impact on the injured and bereaved. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 17,* 361-373.
Thomas, D., & Veno, A. (Eds.) (1992). *Psychology and social change: Creating an international agenda*. Palmerston North, New Zealand: Dunmore Press.
Vigilant, L. G., & Williamson, J. B. (2003). To die, by mistake: Accidental deaths. In C. D. Bryant (ed.), *Handbook of death and dying* (Vol. 1, pp. 211-222). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Waller, P. F., (2001). Public health's contribution to motor vehicle injury prevention. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 21* (4 Supplement), 3-4.
Wass, H. (2004). A perspective on the current state of death education. *Death Studies, 28,* 289-308.
White, K. (2000). *Maintaining meaning in life: The central challenge for palliative care practice*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.
World Health Organization. (2004). *World report on road traffic injury prevention*. Geneva: Author.
Williams, M. (1997). The other victims. *Nursing Standard, 11*(46), 18.
Zaza, S., Carande-Kulis, V. G., Sleet, D. A., Sosin, D. M., Elder, R. W., Shults, R. A., Dinh-Zarr, T. B., Nichols, J. L., Thompson, R. S., the Task Force of Community Preventions Services. (2001). Methods for conducting systematic reviews of the evidence of effectiveness and economic efficiency of interventions to reduce injuries to motor vehicle occupants. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 21*(4 Supplement), 23-30.

Acknowledgements
This paper was drawn from the author's Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) research project completed in the School of Psychology at Edith Cowan University. I would like to acknowledge the principal supervisor, Dr Moira O'Connor (Edith Cowan University), associate supervisor, Associate Professor Margaret Mitchell (Edith Cowan University), and adjunct supervisor Dr Christopher C. Sonn (Victoria University). Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 'Lost in Translation: Critical Perspectives in Community Psychology' forum and the 'Psychology Showcase Inaugural Qualitative Research Conference: Issues and Processes in Qualitative Research', both in Perth, Australia. The author would like to acknowledge Dr Dawn Darlaston-Jones (University of Notre Dame) and the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft.

Address correspondence to
Lauren Breen
Centre for Social Research
Edith Cowan University
100 Joondalup Drive
Joondalup
Western Australia 6027
Australia
Email:l.breen@ecu.edu.au

Book Review

Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research
Ian Parker
2005
Maidenhead, Open University Press
ISBN 0-335-21349-9

Reviewed by
David Fryer, Adele Laing and Rachael Fox
Psychology Department
University of Stirling,
FK15 9QG Scotland

This stimulating little book communicates a radically subversive vision of the dominant contemporary (per)version of the discipline of psychology, a distillation of a vast amount of relevant critical scholarship from diverse sources and a sense of how to put such vision and scholarship to work in the nitty-gritty of fieldwork in order to contribute to the construction of a psychology which is other than "part of an apparatus of control and individualisation under capitalism" (Parker, 2005: 132).

Whilst the book is a devastating critique of the quantitatively dominated discipline of psychology, Parker does not refrain from critique also of qualitative methods or, at least, of the uncritical assumptions and claims of many qualitative researchers, though he points out that many of the thorny issues raised in the book in relation to qualitative methods (individualism, psychologism, essentialism, reflexivity, etc.) actually apply to any research method in psychology, qualitative or quantitative.

This book is not an introductory level methods textbook. It is more a book to promote critical reflection upon psychology as a set of problematic social practices (and upon their theoretical, methodological and ideological legitimation) than it is one to introduce novice researchers to qualitative methods in psychology. The book could, perhaps, have been less misleadingly entitled: An introduction to radical research via consideration of some issues in qualitative research.

Parker is "positive about the possibilities that different methods in qualitative psychology open up" (Parker, 2005: Preface) but he is not, here, referring to being positive about possible ways being opened up to understand the social world through fieldwork but about possible ways being opened up to de-power psychology (and thus the psy-complex) as a set of social practices. For Parker critique of methodology is key to critique of the discipline. His argument goes as follows: 1) contemporary mainstream psychology functions oppressively in the interests of the status quo; 2) what seems initially to be a monolith is actually built of sub-disciplinary bricks held together by the mortar of common methodology; 3) radical methodological critique can chip away that mortar; 4) to remove the mortar of common method would be to 'disintegrate' the discipline and thus depower it in its capacity to oppress.

Parker's discussion of particular methods is an extension and deepening of his critique of the discipline. Ethnography is discussed, fundamentally, as a way of constructing "an image of the conflicts and contradictions that structure relationship networks" (Parker, 2005: 47); an interview is fundamentally of radical interest because it "invariably carries the traces of patterns of power that hold things in place and it reveals an interviewee's, a co-researcher's, creative abilities to refuse and resist what a researcher wants to happen .... an encounter that reveals patterns of power and creative refusal of a set research agenda" (Parker, 2005: 53); narrative research is valued from a radical perspective because it "can help us explore how the self is made out of cultural resources and how it feels as if our lives must have a certain shape with

personal identity lying at the core" (Parker, 2005: 71); discourse analysis because it "provides an ideal opportunity for studying ideology in psychology" (Parker, 2005: 88) ... "the study of discrete 'discourses' which specify versions of the world and the individual 'subjects' who are supposed to live in it" (Parker, 2005: 89); psychoanalytic research because it "can be used to illustrate how what we feel to be so deep inside us is actually a symptom of life under capitalism" (Parker, 2005: 105); and radical action research because it is "the transformation of research into a prefigurative political practice" (Parker, 2005: 124).

Parker's discussion of method emphasises throughout that a key function of all radical research, whatever the method, is to reveal how psychological categories function to exploit and oppress by demystifying and bringing into focus people's resistance to such categorisation: it is "helpful to focus on the moments when members of a community or identity category challenge and refuse the attempts by others to make them fit into it. It is at those moments that we are able to see how the category functions to hold together a certain view of the world and, perhaps, to cover over and obscure real structures of exploitation and oppression" (Parker, 2005: 16).

Parker's discussion of method also communicates a deep loathing of the mechanistic ways the mainstream discipline likes to do research (mirroring a loathing of "the mechanistic way the discipline likes to imagine the nature of human thinking" (Parker, 2005: Preface)). Parker has contempt for the substitution of mechanical, unimaginative, repetitive, robotic, boring technique for innovative living research method and emphasises the constant creative reinvention of method in the process of any research worth its name.

Of course Parker's book is not flawless. We believe Parker's critique of community psychology (Parker, 2005: 39-40) is an attack on a straw man: in our view any community psychology worth the name is actually radical. The book makes demands of the reader: to appreciate the book's radical power as a critique of the discipline, the reader needs to be prepared to think critically about the pseudo-science currently paraded as psychology, as well as about methodology, ontology, epistemology and ideology. This is no easy task especially for readers who have been through disabling under-graduate and post-graduate psychology degree programmes and professional socialisation. However survivors of psychology 'education' who engage with the issues raised in this book will be rewarded by insight into radical and progressive perspectives into ways to construct and maintain a coherent progressive "creative and imaginative alternative to psychology" which would "produce a different kind of knowledge in a different way" (Parker, 2005: 1).

Preparation, Submission and Publication of Manuscripts

The Australian Community Psychologist publishes work that is of relevance to community psychologists and others interested in the field. Research reports should be methodologically sound. Theoretical or area review papers are welcomed, as are letters, brief reports and papers by newer contributors to the discipline. Contributions towards the four sections of the journal are sought.

The Australian Community Psychologist is published twice per year. Usually, the first issue is a themed issue, and the second is a general issue.

Articles

Contributions that are state of the art reviews of professional and applied areas and reviews and essays on matters of general relevance to community psychologists. They are between 4,000 and 10,000 words, including all tables, figures and references.

Research Reports

This section is for the publication of empirical research reports relevant to community psychologists. They are between 4,000 and 10,000 words, including all tables, figures and references.

Practice Issues

This section publishes individual manuscripts and collections of manuscripts which address matters of general, professional and public relevance, techniques and approaches in psychological practice, professional development issues, and professional and public policy issues.

Book Reviews

The journal publishes book reviews of up to 1,000 words. Books reviewed relate directly to the major areas of practice in community psychology.

Review and Publication of Manuscripts

The acceptable word processing programme format is Microsoft Word. All manuscripts are to be submitted electronically to the:

Editor
Dawn Darlaston-Jones
Email: ddarlaston-jones@nd.edu.au

If authors experience any difficulty with electronic submission, hard copy materials together with a disc copy should be sent to:

Dr Dawn Darlaston-Jones
School of Arts & Sciences
University of Notre Dame
PO Box 1225
FREMANTLE WA 6160
Australia

All contributions, including book reviews are handled by an appropriately qualified Associate Editor and all contributions are blind-reviewed.

Articles submitted for review must be original works and may not be under consideration elsewhere.

All manuscripts for consideration for publication in *The Australian Community Psychologist* must be formatted according to the instructions for authors below.

Instructions for Authors

The following constitutes advice to contributors that is relevant generally to all journal sections.

Every submission must include:

1. A cover letter stating the section of the journal to which the author(s) wish to submit the article.
2. The complete manuscript including title page, abstract, text, tables, acknowledgements, references and illustrations.

Written permission from the publisher (copyright holder) to reproduce any previously published tables, illustrations or photographs.

Manuscripts should be arranged as follows:

Title page
Abstract and keywords
Text
Acknowledgements
Disclosures if required

References
Short biography of author/s
Address for correspondence from readers (e.g., an email address)

Tables and figures should be placed in the correct position within the body of the text.
Number pages consecutively, beginning with the Title page as page 1.

Sections of the Manuscript

Title Page should contain:

Title: Should be short and informative. Recommended length is between 10 and 12 words.
Running Head: Short title with a maximum of 50 characters
Author: This should include the author's name in the preferred form of given name, family name.
Institution and Affiliations: This identifies the location where the author(s) undertook the investigation.
Corresponding Author: Provide the name, exact postal address with post code, telephone number, fax number and email address of the author to whom communications and requests for reprints should be sent.

Specific Formatting Requirements

Paper Size, Margins, Alignment
A4 page, ALL margins 2.5cm.
Spacing
All text double spacing, left aligned (not justified) unless otherwise specified.
Font & Size
Times New Roman, 12pt unless otherwise specified.
Paper Title
14pt, bold, centred, sentence case.
Place one line after the paper title.
Abstract and Keywords
12pt, italics, left aligned.
Place one blank line before and after the abstract.
The abstract must be no more than 200 words.
Place up to 6 (six) keywords.
Normal Text
12pt, Times New Roman double line-spacing, left aligned (not justified)
Do not leave line spaces between paragraphs but indent the first line of each paragraph.
Long Quotes (roughly, quotes of 30 words or more)
12pt, italics, indented 1 cm left and right
1st Level Heading
Sentence case, bold, centred, not italics.
1st Level of Subheading
12pt, italics, sentence case, left aligned.
Leave one line space before this level of subheading.
Do not number subheadings.
2nd Level of Subheading
12pt, italics, sentence case, left aligned. Text should continue on the same line.
Leave one line space before this level of subheading.
Tables, Figures, and Diagrams
Captions in 12pt and typed below the figure, as required by Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Fifth Edition. These should be black and white and inserted in the correct place within the body of the text. Do not allow a figure or table to be split over two pages or to be separated from its label or caption.
Diagrams, illustrations, graphs, etc, must be 'screen readable'. This means fully legible and readable on screen when displayed at widths that ideally do not exceed about 750 pixels and certainly should not exceed 1000 pixels.
Page Numbers
Insert page numbers at the top of the page, right aligned, beginning with the title page.
Footnotes
Avoid using footnotes.
References and Citations
Use the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association Fifth Edition citation and reference style. List references under the 1st level subheading,

The Australian Community Psychologist

Formerly Network

The Australian Psychological Society Ltd