2-12-2017

Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning

Erlinda C. Palaganas
University of the Philippines Baguio, ecpalaganas@up.edu.ph

Marian C. Sanchez
Luke Foundation, mc07sanchez@gmail.com

Ma. Visitacion P. Molintas
Philippine Health Social Sciences Association, mvmolintas@gmail.com

Ruel D. Caricativo
University of the Philippines Baguio, ruelcaricativo@gmail.com

Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning

Abstract

Conducting research, more so, fieldwork, changes every researcher in many ways. This paper shares the various reflexivities – the journeys of learning – that we underwent as field researchers. Here, we share the changes brought about to ourselves, as a result of the research process, and how these changes have affected the research process. It highlights the journey of discovering how we, as researchers, shaped and how we were shaped by the research process and outputs. All these efforts were done in our attempts to discover and understand various social phenomena and issues such as poverty, development, gender, migration, and ill health in the Philippines. This article includes the challenges encountered in our epistemological stance/s and personal and methodological concerns shown in our reflexivity notes/insights. Indeed, it is when researchers acknowledge these changes, that reflexivity in research constitutes part of the research findings. It is through this consciousness of the relational and reflective nature of being aware of personal and methodological concerns that we honor ourselves, our teammates/co-researchers and all others involved with the research project. As researchers, we need to be cognizant of our contributions to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process. We need to acknowledge that indeed it is impossible to remain "outside of" one's study topic while conducting research.

Keywords

Reflexivity, Qualitative Research, Learning, Fieldwork

Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning

Erlinda C. Palaganas
University of the Philippines Baguio, Benguet, Philippines

Marian C. Sanchez
Luke Foundation, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines

Ma. Visitacion P. Molintas
Philippine Health Social Sciences Association, Baguio City, Benguet, Philippines

Ruel D. Caricativo
University of the Philippines Baguio, Benguet, Philippines

Conducting research, more so, fieldwork, changes every researcher in many ways. This paper shares the various reflexivities – the journeys of learning – that we underwent as field researchers. Here, we share the changes brought about to ourselves, as a result of the research process, and how these changes have affected the research process. It highlights the journey of discovering how we, as researchers, shaped and how we were shaped by the research process and outputs. All these efforts were done in our attempts to discover and understand various social phenomena and issues such as poverty, development, gender, migration, and ill health in the Philippines. This article includes the challenges encountered in our epistemological stance/s and personal and methodological concerns shown in our reflexivity notes/insights. Indeed, it is when researchers acknowledge these changes, that reflexivity in research constitutes part of the research findings. It is through this consciousness of the relational and reflective nature of being aware of personal and methodological concerns that we honor ourselves, our teammates/co-researchers and all others involved with the research project. As researchers, we need to be cognizant of our contributions to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process. We need to acknowledge that indeed it is impossible to remain "outside of" one's study topic while conducting research. Keywords: Reflexivity, Qualitative Research, Learning, Fieldwork

Conducting qualitative research, more so, fieldwork, changes a researcher in many ways. Through reflexivity, researchers acknowledge the changes brought about in themselves as a result of the research process and how these changes have affected the research process. The journey of discovering how researchers shaped and how they were shaped by the research process and output is an iterative and empowering process. More so when their positionality/ies is/are challenged and the researchers acknowledge that reflexivity should be recognized as a significant part of the research findings.

The term "reflexivity" represents a new chapter in qualitative research but is poorly described and elusive. As most investigators only focus on the varied approaches towards successful qualitative studies, the value of reflexivity has been widely neglected. Barusch, Gringeri and George (2011) identify several strategies that qualitative researchers use to enhance the rigor of their work: sample rationale (67%); analyst triangulation (59%); specification of problems or limitations (56%); careful representation of analysis (53%); use

of theory or conceptual framework (50%); observation or prolonged engagement (24%); thick description (16%); reflexivity (16%); negative case analysis (8%); and, external audits (7%). Barusch et al. (2011, p. 7) write, "The absence of reflexivity in this sample of recently published social work articles is surprising. Perhaps the authors feared it would be unprofessional or intrusive to disclose their personal characteristics, or perhaps they thought personal disclosure would be inconsistent with editorial demands."

Reflexivity pertains to the "analytic attention to the researcher's role in qualitative research" (Gouldner, 1971, p. 16, as cited in Dowling, 2006). It is both a concept and a process (Dowling, 2006). As a concept, it refers to a certain level of consciousness. Reflexivity entails self-awareness (Lambert, Jomeen, & McSherry, 2010), which means being actively involved in the research process. It is about the recognition that as researchers, we are part of the social world that we study (Ackerly & True, 2010; Frank, 1997; Morse, 1991; Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991). Reflexivity as a process is introspection on the role of subjectivity in the research process. It is a continuous process of reflection by researchers on their values (Parahoo, 2006) and of recognizing, examining, and understanding how their "social background, location and assumptions affect their research practice" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). The key to reflexivity is "to make the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit" (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2009, p. 45). This process determines the filters through which researchers are working (Lather, 2004) including the "specific ways in which our own agenda affect the research at all points in the research process" (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). However, this does not mean limiting what one can know about social realities. The researcher's positionality/ies does not exist independently of the research process nor does it completely determine the latter. Instead, this must be seen as a dialogue – challenging perspectives and assumptions both about the social world and of the researcher him/herself. This enriches the research process and its outcomes.

It is necessary to understand the principles of qualitative inquiry to understand the concept of reflexivity (Streubert Speziale & Rinaldi Carpenter, 2003; van der Riet, 2012). These principles include ensuring methodological cohesion, working inductively, being a responsive investigator, acquiring adequate and appropriate sample, and attending to relational ethics (Morse, Barrett, & Olsen, 2002). Practicing reflexivity is a significant component of qualitative research (Morse et al., 2002) but as a process, it should be embedded in all the principles (van de Riet, 2012) and "relate to the degree of influence that the researchers exert, either intentionally or unintentionally, on the findings" (Jootun, McGhee, & Marland, 2009, p. 42). Jootun et al. (2009) also expressed, "inclusion of a reflexive account increase the rigour of the research process" (p. 1).

Reflexivity entails several challenges. For instance, van der Riet (2012) identifies the challenge of how to manage the emotions of our research participants. She argues that total detachment is unrealistic and can hinder the research process. Further, she posits that researchers should be mindful of their behaviors and actions and should be aware of the "Hollywood plot" that makes the research findings seem more positive than they actually are (van der Riet, 2012, p. 31). Jootun et al. (2009, p. 45) also acknowledges that it is difficult not to influence and be influenced by the research participants. Nevertheless, the reflexive research recognizes that any finding is the product of the researcher's interpretation (Jootun et al., 2009, p. 45).

It is through the understanding and appreciation of the inter-relationship of personal and methodological concerns that we honor all those involved in the research project. Through reflexivity, we become aware of our contribution to the construction of meanings and of lived experiences throughout the research process (Ackerly & True, 2010; Delgado-Gaitan, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Pillow, 2003; Reay, 2007). Our reflexivity notes/insights reveal how we explored the ways in which our involvement in the

various researches influenced, acted upon, and informed the very studies we engaged at. Fieldwork is intensely personal; our positionality (i.e., position based on class, sex, ethnicity, race, etc.) and who we are as persons (shaped by the socio-economic and political environment) play a fundamental role in the research process, in the field as well as in the final text. Reflexivity must then be a part of our commitment. It must become a duty of every researcher to reveal and share these reflexivities, not only for learning purposes but towards enhancing theory building.

Methodology and Authors' Positionality

This paper touches on personal, epistemological, critical, and feminist reflexivity from two (2) major collaborative researches - "Assessing Development: Designing better indices of poverty and gender equity," of the Australian National University and the Philippine Health Social Sciences Association; and, (2) "Source Country Perspectives on the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel: Causes, consequences, and responses," of the Ottawa University, UP Baguio Foundation, and Health Futures Foundation, Inc. The article makes use of our reflections as four Filipino scholars engaged in the two projects conducted from 2010 to 2013.

As authors, we came from two major backgrounds – the academe and social development work – and are bounded by our common experience of working with marginalized and indigenous communities in the Philippines.

Erlinda Castro-Palaganas. I am a community health development worker having worked with farmers and indigenous peoples in the Northern part of the Philippines for many years. My journey started in the late '70's and joined the academe after acknowledging the wealth of experiences that can be processed with theories and shared with colleagues and students. My exposure to the realities of health development work made me a critical thinker and staunch advocate of people's rights, community participation, indigenous knowledge and practice and genuine community development. It is through these conditions that I was shaped as the researcher, teacher and development worker that I am today. It is where my reflexivities are coming from.

Maria Visitacion P. Molintas. I hail from a lowland province in the North, but I relate myself more with the indigenous communities of the Cordilleras where I have immersed as a student from the University of the Philippines, worked as a researcher, community organizer and development worker contributing to the continuing struggle of the indigenous people in the region. Espousing the social critical and participatory perspective, I have about 20 years of work experience in community development, particularly in areas of community organizing and participatory action research. I have a considerable experience in NGO work – managing, coordinating and monitoring community-based programs for institution and capacity building, health promotion, gender equality, policy advocacy and sustainable development through participatory processes and integrated approaches. These shaped my reflexivities on the indigenous people's lives and struggles.

Marian C. Sanchez. As a social development worker, my early consciousness was shaped by the poverty and economic struggles of the fisher folk

community in my home town in Pangasinan, Northern Philippines. My advocacy for health and gender rights is nourished by my exposure to the plight of indigenous peoples, the urban poor, the agricultural workers, and the overseas Filipino labor force. I have spent the past nine-years engaging with different marginalized communities and sectors through participatory researches and community based health-development programs. I am currently affiliated with Luke Foundation, Inc. an NGO with strong "Bias for the Poor." Any research or social development initiative must uplift people's dignity and their capacity to help themselves- this principle and the active struggle to constantly (re)learn it is the core my reflexivities.

Ruel Caricativo. I was a volunteer for a non-government organization (NGO) in the Cordillera Administrative Region in the Philippines for two years before entering the academe in 2013. I was part of an organization that works for promotion and protection of human rights and indigenous peoples rights in the said region. I entered the University of the Philippines Baguio as an instructor of political science at the College of Social Sciences. My reflections were partly informed by my experiences working with indigenous communities in the region, having seen their plight and struggle for better quality of life and a society based on justice and human rights.

As colleagues, we uphold the following principles in our practice:

(1) Feminist principle: In the tradition of feminist research, a study has the dual objectives of seeking new knowledge and, in the longer term, contributing to social change.

(2) Rights-based research: At the core of the methodology is the belief that the human rights of participants must be respected during the research process. Participants must have sufficient information to decide whether or not they wish to participate, and must be able to choose not to participate or to withdraw should they wish to do so.

(3) Participatory research principles: recognizes that people have expert knowledge and deep insight into their own lives and communities.

In the two projects therefore, our core objective was not merely the generation of data but the analysis of the intersections of power, socio-politics, and economics in the issues of poverty, ill-health and the need to enhance and uphold human welfare. We were deliberate in the inclusion and practice of self and methodological examination recognizing the value of van der Reit's position to "Treat the process of reflexivity as an opportunity to enrich your own research and improve the lives of people" (2012, p. 32). As a team, we regularly sat and engaged in the questioning of our personal behaviors and probed the gaps between "those readily stated as being foundational to practice" (Bolton, 2005, p. 12) and our actual field conducts.

According to Dowling (2006), reflexivity in the research process can take on several forms: "epistemological reflexivity," where the researcher reflects upon various theoretical assumptions and perspectives; "politics of location," where the researcher examines the political and social constructions that inform the research process; and, the "feminist approach" to reflexivity, which pushes the researcher to position and approach the research in

a feminist experiential standpoint. We adopted these three forms in organizing the themes in our reflection sessions. Subsequent discussions among ourselves and the review of our session documentations and available literature led us to the development of four general types of reflexivity: personal, epistemological, critical, and feminist. These types are discussed more thoroughly in the succeeding sections.

This article is thus a record of our learning and unlearning process and an open narrative of our pains and gains from "conscientisized qualitative practice." This is our contribution in mainstreaming reflexivity as a critical component of qualitative research.

The Journey: Towards a Process of Learning/Unlearning

Qualitative research aims to understand how meanings are constructed and probe into how the participants utilize experience to construct reality (Jootun et al., 2009, p. 44). In qualitative studies, researchers locate themselves with how their participants view the world (Lambert et al., 2010, p. 321). Reliability and validity are still and will remain appropriate concepts for attaining rigor in qualitative research. In the face of challenges posed by the blossoming of quantitative systems to qualitative research, Morse et al. (2002, p. 15) argued for "a return to validity as a means for obtaining rigor through using techniques of verification" and "return to recognizing and trusting strategies within qualitative inquiry that ensure rigor."

Researchers probe into the experiences of their participants and try to abstract and theorize inductively to reveal valuable insights that can be interpreted and applied to other cases. This process also influences not only the research participants but the researchers themselves. Qualitative researches are rich sources for experiences in reflexivity.

Personal reflexivity: Shaping and being shaped

During the research process, we often find ourselves ruminating on the ways in which our own aspirations, characters, values, philosophies, experiences, belief systems, political commitments, and social identities have shaped the research. We also pondered about how the research may have touched, affected and possibly transformed us, as professionals, as researchers and as persons. After all, Reay (2007, p. 611) argues that reflexivity is "about giving as full and honest an account of the research process as possible, in particular explicating the position of the researcher in relation to the research."

> My most important learning is to acknowledge that research has both its power and limitation for social change and development. I saw its importance in conveying ideas from those who have direct experiences of poverty to those who can render action in response to poverty. However, there were a number of times during the data collection when I felt I could do nothing but to empathize with the plight of the participants and assure them that the study will definitely serve as a tool for change if utilized accordingly by policy-makers and development implementers.

ଓଃ

> Having gone through the hands-on experience of sharpening my technical skills and ensuring the correctness of what I was doing, I realized I was not only challenged to develop my skills as a researcher but even my basic virtues as an individual. I had to find the correct frame and flow of questions, and

make sense of responses from the participants in order to draw the essential data comprising and supporting the research.

According to Jootun et al. (2009, p. 45), qualitative researches are prone to a degree of subjectivity since the "interpretation of the participants' behavior and collected data is influenced by the values, beliefs, experience and interest of the researcher." Reflexivity contributes to making the research process open and transparent. The awareness of the reciprocal influence of both participants and researcher/s on the process and outcome is important to ensure rigor in qualitative research (Jootun et al., 2009, p. 45). This is illustrated by the following experiences:

> While the process of coding and culling findings demanded tedious work, it showed me the value of being concise and accurate in identifying categories and data, and to be always mindful of detaching my own interpretation at these stages of data processing. It taught me how to be discriminating in selecting core and fundamental data from those that were non-essential to give due importance to the information provided by the participants. As I listened to the participants' stories and views of poverty, I came to appreciate how the participants can simply define poverty not only by the resources and capacity in their hands, but also by the quality of life they presently have. I admire the participants' resilience in dealing with poverty – how they could take pride in their struggles and find hope despite their hardships. In the process, I came to examine my own experience of poverty and became more appreciative of what I presently have.

> At the end of the day, however, I realize that through ages of social interventions, developers have constantly longed to see changes in the community but I realize that changes must take place first and fundamentally among developers on how they generate concepts and formulate programs. As the dawn breaks, it is correspondingly true that the community teaches us to change ourselves in our perspectives, equipping us with tools, appropriate in facilitating social change.

ᛞ

Sometimes, we researchers only see the periphery of what we are studying, probably because this is the only part we are interested to see. While hard, cold data from the bedrock of our studies, we cannot discount the important contributions of the experiences that produce these data. Our Bantay, Paracelis experience has pointed this quite vividly. The metanarratives related by our women and men of various ages gave us not only the data we needed but much more. They were told in tales that were hermeneutically and phenomenologically rich! They were "tender stories" told in poignant ways. There were stories of struggles and contradictions, of wanting to get out of the poverty cycle but felt helpless and powerless in the end. There were heartbreaking stories of exploitation and oppression…the moving story of being trapped in poverty and living in the world of poverty until they can no longer say what it is and what it is not. What could one say to this? …What could one say when you see and hear what they have to say about the economic deprivation of the people and the place? I could not but wonder how they survive each day and just sigh in exasperation. At certain points, one experiences a lump in one's throat realizing that at the

end of the day, we have nothing concrete to offer. Yet we are passionate about reciprocity issue in research? Was the relationship in the research and our partners really reciprocal?

Another experience illustrates how reflexivity develops during the research process. In the research conducted by Jootun et al. (2009), reflexivity was employed at the onset to maintain a certain distance from the research process but it has evolved to demonstrate how the researcher's influence the research process. In our reflexivity sessions, we noted personal insights that surfaced during the data collection:

> Much has been said and researched about poverty, but it is really frustrating to think that not much of it has really done significant impact to the lives of people in the community. Now, this research is being conducted in the attempt to provide further relevance, more so vitally important elements, concepts and ideas which we think should be there to fill in the blank spaces in the existing characterization of poverty.

> How could that research help us improve our lives? – is one question that confronted the team during the stakeholders meeting and in some of the group discussions. This question gives emotional weight to the conduct of the data gathering, especially since this is asked by people who long for urgent and immediate appropriate, actions but we know it would take several years on the timeline before we could actually see it materialize and make its impact on that social reality we long to address.

> Though it is equally important to listen to the sentiments of the participants, the research team had to be conscious not to dwell on them, and fall into the trap of emotionally propelled discussion, as this could bring about biases which could hinder the "objectivity"[1] of the process.

Epistemological reflexivity: Rethinking assumptions and implications

The concept of reflexivity has serious epistemological implications. According to Willig (2001, p. 10) and Dowling (2006, p. 11), researchers may find themselves asking one question after the other in the process of conducting the research such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be "found?" How have the design of the study and the method of analysis "constructed" the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation? These questions encourage or push the researchers to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us think about its implications to the research and its findings. The concept of reflexivity challenges the assumption that there can be a privileged position where the researcher can study social reality objectively, that is, independent from it through value-free inquiry. But it should be noted that objectivity, as the concept is used in this paper, pertains to adopting appropriate methodological tools and

---

[1] In the feminist methodological discussion vs. mainstream positivist conversation, objectivity focuses on method rather than on content. Knowledge is context specific and sense making is affected by the researchers' intersubjective meaning attribution. Qualitative researchers must be able to evaluate the impacts of being too sympathetic with participants' plights. Reflexivity and credibility in qualitative research also call for the need to maintain academic distance- to be not taken away by elicited emotions, researchers must retain the ability to see through participants' narratives and preserve the capacity to identify contradictions and issues in participants' responses.

techniques in doing qualitative research. Ackerly and True (2010) posits that researchers have to take seriously this commitment to reflexivity: constant reflections and review of theoretical approaches and perspectives.

> Health workers migration is not just a research subject but it is a phenomenon that affects the Filipino people. It is a phenomenon that deeply influences me as a researcher. In doing this research, I do not remain a passive observer; instead, I am also an active participant who tries to reconstruct this problem. This means that the perspectives that I utilized actively inform the research process. It should be noted that the research process is never neutral. But this does not mean a turn towards subjective and value-laden research process. I recognize that objectivity in research is a duty but it is not a virtue. A research cannot be entirely value-free.

<div align="center">ʘ</div>

> A methodological dilemma that I would like to pose has something to do with the interdisciplinary nature of the research. While I recognize the value of inter-disciplinarily, going through this feminist research process have made me more aware of the difficulties of such an undertaking. Coming from different disciplinal backgrounds and ideological perspectives could also be very problematic that I sometimes felt that perhaps we were making the research process more difficult and belabored… We were challenged in making our diversities a source of complementary insights, which in turn, provided us with deeper and broader understandings and insights.

> This research also gave me the opportunity to work with multiple positionalities of researchers and research participants. I came to recognize that our positionalities are constantly negotiated in creating ethical relations, which we encouraged and embraced in undertaking the challenging but rewarding field research… The multiple perspectives and voices generated a synergistic and expanded understanding of the concept of poverty.

Critical reflexivity: Unraveling political and social constructions in research

Reflexivity from a critical standpoint examines the political and social constructions that inform the research process (Koch & Harrington, 1998, as cited in Dowling, 2006, p. 12). This type of reflexivity is often employed in critical ethnography where the ethnographer is inevitably involved throughout the text and its creation (Muecke, 1994, as cited in Dowling 2006, p. 13). Critical reflexivity posits that the production of knowledge is entrenched in certain socio-political and cultural contexts. It is the task of the researcher to address ethical and political questions that shape the research process.

> We seem not to be able to comprehend the cycle of poverty in Bantay or in Paracelis. Where should the link in the chain be broken? Where does one start? Why do people in power seem not to care and hold on to that power for as long as they can? Simple questions we thought. We thought we know the answer. We thought we know the strategies. But why do we feel so frozen? Why do we feel we shouldn't be involved?... Examining oppressive forces means that one must look critically at the barriers and actions that effect

subordination of one group to another. Can we do it? Are we ready to pay the price for such action? Indeed, every step in the research project, we should ask ourselves the critical question: "Who benefits from this research?" This question and our answers to it represent our best possibilities for holding ourselves accountable to ourselves and our participants.

<div align="center">⚮</div>

The research allowed me to look into certain assumptions about human resources for health migration and the phenomenon of Filipino overseas migration, in general… For instance, "culture of migration" is identified by certain informants as a matter of fact, which means that they consider it as inherent in Filipino society… But this phenomenon is socially constructed and is informed by certain values held by those who would consider it as such. This claim is supported by the findings on social determinants of migration… Poverty, unemployment, and political instability are among the social determinants of migration identified by certain informants in this research… Certain power relations and power differentials inform the research process. This is evident in the substantial differences of responses of the key informants for this research. The authorities (i.e., government personnel) hold a particular set of values that partly determines their acceptance of migration of Filipino workers. It should be noted that this phenomenon is a deliberate government policy being enforced since the Marcos regime. On the other hand, informants from non-government organizations and health advocacy groups are critical of this policy and this phenomenon. This power differential deeply influences the research process (i.e., whose voice is worth our attention as researchers). The answer is informed by asking another question: whose voice would enrich the research findings *and* improve the lives of the people?

Reflexivity allowed us to be critical about what we heard, wrote and interpreted. How far we can go to interpret other people's lives and experiences. We had to be reflexive researchers, who does not only listen for "everyday processes and translation" (De Vault, 1990, p. 102) but must be able to give more voice to the participants, get close enough to what they are saying and their representation about themselves.

Feminist reflexivity: Reciprocity in research

Reflexivity from a feminist standpoint is also called a "performed politics" (Marcus, 1994, as cited in Dowling, 2006, p. 13). Recent discussions on reflexivity employed in feminist research look into power differentials within the various stages of the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, as cited in Dowling, 2006, p. 13; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007). This refers to how gender-based differences shape the research process. According to Dowling (2006, p. 13), reflexivity is important in feminist research because the researcher has to identify with the women research participants and must be constantly aware of how her values, beliefs, and perceptions are shaping the research process. This type of reflexivity assumes a partnership between the researchers and the research participants as it offers the "opportunity for raising new questions, engaging in new kinds of dialogue, and organizing different kinds of relations" (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 496). Pillow (2003, p. 187) calls this "reflexivity of discomfort" since it can disrupt the process of discovery.

Reciprocity and reflexivity are critical aspects of feminist research. Nevertheless, this type of reflexivity does not suggest an intimate reciprocity between the researcher and the participants. The former should suspend the belief that a more personal story reveals a more authentic story (Birch & Miller, 2000, as cited in Dowling, 2006, p. 14) and thus, avoid the so-called "Hollywood plot."

There were instances when the sharing of ideas and experiences became emotionally driven. Their expressions showed and reflected their burden in living in poverty situation, which made the participant, in hindsight, think of how the research could help in any way aside from what has been formerly explained. This is was in fact an ethical issue we had to contend with. The participants kept drawing us back to what we can do to help them ease their situation. And indeed, being better off than they are, it is indeed tempting to do something, dole out it may be. Would there have been a better way of soliciting data without being so intrusive?

℘

The Feminist Poverty Research aims to advance further the concept of poverty by exploring key areas that should be taken into account. This research is being conducted in the attempt to provide further relevant, more so vitally important elements, concepts and ideas which we think should be there to fill in the blank spaces in the existing characterization of poverty. It tries to dig deeper by looking at more specific household processes and relations which are vital components in the idea of poverty. Being involved in the process of gathering the data and preliminary write up, I saw the complexity of household relations, imbedded on the culture of the people. It reveals the complex art of power relations, and gender-based roles, on the household and community level define how the people are adapting to the social and physical environment. Behind these, I also realize both the potentiality and vulnerability of the people in response to fast and dramatic social changes and globalization. In the end, their response could be both beneficial and destructive.

℘

In employing existing theories and lenses on poverty and development, one could be caught in a dilemma of saying whether the existing culture among the people in the community have the adaptive traits of family unity and adaptive gender-based roles and expectations, or saying on another hand that the culture has failed to surface and make the people realize biased household power relations, which are perceived to hamper development and cultivate gender bias and inequality.

Researchers claim (Delgado-Gaitan, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mayo, Candela, Matusov, & Smith, 2008; Chaudry, 2000) that feminist research must take into account reciprocity. Researchers have to write and share how they experienced research, how they do their work, be it good or bad, and "make visible the questions, complexities, and processes of ding research" (Pillow & Mayo, 2007, p. 163).

Conclusion

The experience of conducting qualitative social science researches is a reiteration of our belief that researchers should portray aspects of social phenomena in their entirety and within the context of those experiencing them. We should give emphasis on the unique, holistic and dynamic aspects of human experience. We should also continue to uphold the presence of multiple realities, which we elicit using multiple ways of understanding. All these because we affirm the importance of addressing the issue of rigor or trustworthiness of qualitative investigations.

We continue to look at the impact of our studies at all points during the research process-including its impact on us. In the process, we are "conscientisized" and learn about ourselves as well as others (stakeholders, participants or co-researchers, etc). We were changed by many aspects of the research process: through what we learned in the course of listening well, through participation, and through our own reflexivities. As researchers, we emerged with new understandings, the origins of which were not entirely clear and/or were confusing to us. Reflexivity is indeed a journey of learning and unlearning.

Research is a dialogue. Our uninhibited discourses with the women and men of various ages and backgrounds opened up so many possibilities for us to look beyond data and explore the fringes rarely ventured into in research, and there, as social science researchers, we found a well-spring of information, wisdom and opportunities for emancipatory research.

References

Ackerly, B., & True, J. (2010). *Doing feminist research in political and social science.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Barusch, A., Gringeri, C., & George, M. (2011). Rigor in qualitative social work research: A review of strategies used in published articles. *Social Work Research Abstracts, 35*(1), 11-19.

Bolton, G. (2005). *Reflective practice: Writing and professional development* (2nd ed.). London, UK: Sage Publications Inc.

Chaudry, L. N. (2000). Researching my people, researching myself: Fragments of reflexive tale. In E. St. Pierre & W. Pillow (Eds.), *Working the ruins/feminist poststructural theory and methods in education* (pp. 96-113). New York, NY: Routledge.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (2003). Researching change and changing the researcher. *Harvard Educational Review, 63*(4), 389-411.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Dowling, M. (2006). Approaches to reflexivity in qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher, 13*(3), 7-21.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007). *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Piatelli, D. (2007). Holistic reflexivity. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 493-514). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Jootun, D., McGhee, G., & Marland, G. (2009). Reflexivity: Promoting rigour in qualitative research. *Nursing Standard, 23*(23), 42-46.

Lather, P. (2004). Critical enquiry in qualitative research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives, science after truth. In K. de Marrais & S. Lapan (Eds.), *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social services* (pp. 203-216). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lambert, C., Jomeen, J., & McSherry, W. (2010). Reflexivity: A review of the literature in the context of midwifery research. *British Journal of Midwifery, 18*(5), 321-326.

Mayo, C., Candela, M. A., Matusov, E., & Smith, M. (2008). Families and school apart: University experience to assist Latina/o parents' activism. In F. Peterman (Ed.), *Urban schools and democratic challenges* (pp. 103-132). Washington DC: AACTE Press.

Morse, J. (1991). *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Morse, J., Barrett, M., & Olsen, K. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(1), 1-22.

Parahoo, K. (2006). *Nursing research principles, processes and issues* (2nd ed.). Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pillow, W. S. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure: The use of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(2), 175-196.

Pillow, W. S., & Mayo, C. (2007). Toward understandings of feminist ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 155-172). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Reay, D. (2007). Future directions in difference research: Recognizing and responding to difference. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: Theory and praxis* (pp. 605-612). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Shaffir, W. B., & Stebbins, R. A. (Eds.). (1990). *Experiencing fieldwork: An inside view of qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Streubert Speziale, H. J., & Rinaldi Carpenter, D. (2003). *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

van der Riet, P. (2012). Reflexivity: A mainstay in promoting rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Philippine Journal of Nursing, 82*, 28-32.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Author Note

Erlinda C. Palaganas, PhD, RN, is a Professor, with the Institute of Management of the College of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Baguio; Principal Investigator of research covered by the paper namely: "Assessing Development: Designing Better Indices of Poverty and Gender Equity" and "Source Country Perspectives on the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel: Causes, Consequences, and Responses." Dr. Palaganas is the corresponding author; Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: ecpalaganas@upb.edu.ph.

Marian C. Sanchez, BASS, is a Research Associate of the research covered by the paper namely, "Source Country Perspectives on the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel: Causes, Consequences, and Responses." She has also conducted collaborative research with Ottawa University, UP Baguio Foundation, and Health Futures Foundation, Inc. and is currently the Executive Officer of the Luke Foundation. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: mc07sanchez@gmail.com.

Ma. Visitacion P. Molintas, is a Research Associate of the research covered by the paper namely, "Assessing Development: Designing Better Indices of Poverty and Gender Equity." She has also conducted collaborative research with Australian National University

and the Philippine Health Social Sciences Association. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: mvmolintas@gmail.com.

Ruel D. Caricativo, BASS, is an Instructor of the College of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Baguio; He was a Research Associate of the research covered by the paper namely "Source Country Perspectives on the Migration of Highly Trained Health Personnel: Causes, Consequences, and Responses." He has also conducted collaborative research with Ottawa University, UP Baguio Foundation, and Health Futures Foundation, Inc. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: ruelcaricativo@gmail.com.

Article Citation

Palaganas, E. C., Caricativo, R. D., Sanchez, M. C., & Molintas, M. V. P. (2017). Reflexivity in qualitative research: A journey of learning. *The Qualitative Report, 22*(2), 426-438. Retrieved from http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss2/5