

Ethics of sleep

I'd say she's been trained
in archaeology
to know to dig
intersecting trenches
to know to look
for changes in soil colour
denoting the passage of time
different ages.

Eventually they found the marker string
then a shoe, then the corner
of a blue striped sweater.
Gradually they uncover
a tangle of bodies
arms, elbows, legs
heads pathetically nestling
among fingers, faces.

I don't want to think
about their last fall
about the few who survived
the bullets
only to smother, drown
in this pit
among moans
and warm blood.

Now browned
blackened by death
in earth
they lie like dates
or figs
melding to one another.
Two hundred
men's bodies.

She says it's easier for her
if she doesn't meet relatives.
They seal driver's licenses
wedding rings, neck-chains into bags
scrub and measure bones.
On clipboards they calculate height and age
note hair colour -to prove what praying families
know but don't want to hear.

II

Our new computer is so fast

we can scroll up pages in a flash.

Still

it takes time to scroll past
three and a half thousand
names and addresses
ages, causes, locations and dates
of death.

Listening: story after story

Reading: obituaries, searching
in tangles of words, in messes of grief
among decomposing anger,
breathing the stink of fear
searching for missing addresses, ages
details, data, to us - searing punctuations
full stops in other lives.

At night, such archaeologists as we are
we lie awake
beside our sleeping husbands and wives
alone
thinking about what we are doing
thinking about what has been done
wondering would it really be better
if we could sleep?

Written in Belfast: July 1, 1997 after watching The Grave, a television programme on the exhumation of a mass grave in Bosnia, and thinking about our work researching the impact of the Northern Ireland conflict in the Cost of the Troubles Study, Northern Ireland.

Chapter 5:

Using Participative Action Research with war affected populations: lessons from research in Northern Ireland and South Africa.

Marie Smyth

This chapter describes the experience of conducting research, largely in Northern Ireland but also in South Africa, on issues of segregation, political violence and its human consequences. The chapter describes the researcher's experience of being researched as a resident of Northern Ireland, and how that influenced the choice of research paradigm for her own work. The implementation of that paradigm, participative action research, in the selected research projects is provided, and in conclusion, the implications of the paradigm and the context of the research are enumerated and explored.

Becoming a researcher

I trained as a researcher in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, during the early stages of what is referred to as the Troubles, when the violence was at its height. Over thirty years of conflict in Northern Ireland, censorship, including self-censorship, the culture of silence on the one hand, and resistance to that censorship and silence on the other divided the academic and research worlds. Certain topics were considered too controversial, and researchers and journalists who addressed them risked marginalisation. As an undergraduate, I had seen one of my lecturers driven out of Northern Ireland as a result of his research on policing. I had been active in the women's movement and in trade union and left politics, had my share of experiences of the Troubles, and had written journalistically on some taboo areas. However, I did not become involved in research on a full-time basis until after my move back to Northern Ireland from the United States in 1991.

I had had an ambition to live as an adult in a society that was not at war, so I moved to the United States, where I taught college and worked as a clinician in various mental health settings in Massachusetts. My ambition was not to be realised, since during my

time there George Bush declared war on Iraq. Suddenly, everyone was preoccupied with war, troop deployment and bombing raids. I was taken aback at my own anger at people who espoused support for war, without, in my view, any real appreciation of its consequences. Equally, I was frustrated by the assumption of my professional colleagues in mental health that large sections of the population of Northern Ireland (perhaps including me?) suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In spite of the plethora of research on Northern Ireland, I knew of no comprehensive research evidence on these questions.

Whyte (1990) commented after the first twenty years of the Northern Ireland conflict: 'it is quite possible that, in proportion to its size, Northern Ireland is the most heavily researched area on earth' (Whyte, 1990: p viii). As a resident of Northern Ireland, I have considerable experience of being on the receiving end of the attention of researchers sufficiently frequently to render me 'interviewed out' on certain topics. Whilst some of this experience was enjoyable and useful, much of it was frustrating. Rarely did I receive transcripts or drafts in spite of being promised, and only once did I receive a copy of the final text. I had experience of being misinterpreted, misquoted. On a number of occasions, misunderstandings, sometimes based on cultural differences, led the researcher to ludicrous conclusions, which I had seen only when they were already in print. As a research 'subject' I had developed doubts about the value of much of this research (see Whyte, 1983; Smyth and Darby: 2001). Nor was it clear what its contribution to positive social change might be, in a context in which the need for change was urgent as people continued to lose their lives.

I returned to Northern Ireland in 1991. That year, 101 people were killed as a result of the political situation (Fay, Morrissey and Smyth, 1999: p 137). In the light of my American mental health colleagues' comments, I conducted a small study on the long-term effects of Bloody Sunday on the families of those bereaved on that day, and was shocked to learn that I was the first researcher to ask them how they felt about their experiences. I met with them as a group, to feed back my findings, and drafted a constitution for them to form what became the Bloody Sunday Trust.

I lived in Derry Londonderry, taught on the University of Ulster campus, Magee College. As an extra-curricular activity, I began to participate in dialogue across the sectarian divide, which had to be kept secret, due to the dangerous and divided nature of the circumstances. Prominent Loyalists and Republicans met in the city and explored issues together, one of which was the movement of Protestants out of the city, and the consequent change in the city's politico-religious composition. This was to provide me with my first full-time research project, Templegrove Action Research Ltd (TAR) from 1994 to 1996, interrogating the census data, and conducting field surveys in two enclave areas. At the initiation of this study, the first ceasefires of the peace process were declared, and the sense of possibility of change was intensified. Parties to the negotiations talked of ceasefires, release of prisoners, opening up the city centres, unblocking roads, removal of army installations, disarming the police, and many other things that had been unthinkable.

As a result of my earlier research on the Bloody Sunday families, I was aware of the neglect of those who had been bereaved or injured, and began to believe that they should have a voice in the emerging peace process. Yet there were few opportunities for such people to meet, let alone develop a voice. They lived in a deeply divided Northern Ireland and had every reason to be mistrustful of one another, in the light of their many tragic experiences. Nonetheless, in the wake of cease-fires of 1994 onwards, I brought together a group of people from all sections of the population in Northern Ireland who had direct experience of being bereaved or injured in the Troubles. I was concerned that they had no voice, no lobbying power in a fast moving peace process. Furthermore, the growing political determination to have violence permanently ended seemed to be based on the implicit recognition of the damage done by the violence of the Troubles, yet there was no reliable collated evidence of this damage. Nor had the needs of those who had been bereaved, injured or otherwise affected been examined, needs that might have to be met should peace break out. Indeed, at that time, there was not even an accurate figure for the deaths due to the conflict.

Together with this group of people, I formed 'The Cost of the Troubles Study Ltd' (COTTS). This study compiled a database of all deaths due to the political conflict in

Northern Ireland, conducted, with the research officer, Marie-Therese Fay, a large number of in-depth interviews with people about the impact of that conflict on their lives. A survey of the population examining the impact of the conflict on health, well-being, mobility and other aspects of life was also conducted. The study data was also used to produce two exhibitions, one 90-minute film and several books, articles and reports. Subsequently, I conducted a study on the impact of the Troubles on young people, including a survey of young people's political attitudes that was initiated by a group of young people calling themselves the Joint Society for a Common Cause. More recently, I have conducted research on the militarization of young people in the Middle East and South Africa, which involved interviewing young combatants and former combatants. In the South African case, I interviewed former combatants, who were identified through contacts in a number of organisations. I travelled to townships to interview them about their experiences of armed combat. These data are being analysed at the time of writing.

Objectivity

Some researchers (for example, Knox, 2001) lay great store by achieving objectivity, whilst others (for example Feldman, 1991; Nordstrom and Robben, 1995) are more reflexive. In a divided society, impartiality or objectivity is not a stance that anyone in Northern Ireland can easily claim. Even foreign researchers and journalists tend very quickly to identify more with one side or the other (see Smyth, in press). In the Derry Londonderry study on segregation, researching life in two enclave communities led me to formally explore working as an explicit part of the research with a co-researcher from the other side of the sectarian divide to me. However this is done, whether by working deliberately with the 'other' community, or by making explicit the religio-political identification of the research team and discussing the implications of those identifications for the analysis, I remain convinced that it is essential to the conduct of proper research in Northern Ireland. None of us are above the situation. This is an ethical issue, in that it bears on the researcher's capacity to observe and interpret certain cohorts without distortion, and the rights of that cohort to relatively undistorted representation. It is also a methodological issue, in that my preferred solution is to ensure the mix of the research team, and to make the identity of the researcher and his or her relationship to the subject area an explicit part of analysis.

Methodological orientation

This chapter will describe some of the research experience that ensued and the ethical lessons that might be drawn from this experience. However, it is notoriously difficult to focus exclusively on ethical aspects to the exclusion of methodological considerations. Indeed, the solutions to ethical challenges are often methodological alterations or innovations, hence the two are sometimes inextricably intertwined. My orthodox education in qualitative and quantitative research provided basic knowledge and training in research methods and approaches. However, my training in research did not equip me to consider the rights of the respondent, nor did it demand that I consider the appropriation of information and the subsequent marginalization of the respondent from the process of analysis as problematic. Thus, the design and orientation of my research from the 1990s onward owes much to approaches described by Reason and Rowan (1981) (new paradigm research) Roberts (1981) (feminist research), Van Manen (human science research) and later Reason (1994) (human inquiry). All of these approaches is concerned with balancing the power relationship between the researcher and those studied, with improving the accountability of the researcher to those researched, and to ensuring positive benefit to more than the researcher's career. Reason (1994) summarises these aims thus:

I use the term human inquiry to encompass all those forms of search which aim to move beyond the narrow, positivistic and materialist world-view which has come to characterize the latter portion of the twentieth century. While holding on to the scientific ideals of critical self-reflexive inquiry and openness to public scrutiny, the practices of human inquiry engage deeply and sensitively with experience, are participative, and aim to integrate action with reflection. ... (Reason, 1994: p 10)

In the context of researching Northern Ireland, I shared some of Reason's other vision:

I have been much persuaded ... that the purpose of human inquiry is not so much the search for truth but to heal, and above all to heal the alienation, the split that characterizes modern experience.' (Reason, 1994: p 10)

However, my belief was that robust scientifically collected data that could withstand scrutiny from an inclusive research team and that had been collected and analysed according to reflexive principles could make a positive contribution to understanding and thence to dialogue on topics of division. In particular quantitative data, censuses and their statistical analyses can provide challenges to political stances, and counteract rumours that often fuel conflict in divided communities. The discipline adopted was to ‘find the facts, and face them’, however much they contradicted one’s own loyalties or orientation.

Level of involvement of those studied

Someone once commented that poverty in an age of affluence is being unable to write and having others write about you. Some of my motivation to become a researcher was to write about my own community and society, and the problems it faces in a way that is useful. I wished to move out of the passive position of being the ‘researched’ into one with more control, more power – that of the researcher. I have worked on research topics that have arisen out of my membership of the local community as much as out of my academic interests. Topics have been selected by identifying issues that concern me, that appear to be neglected, and which could stand some illumination. After I began working as a researcher, others approached me with topics, such as the group of young people who asked for help in researching their own age group’s political attitudes across Northern Ireland. From the outset, the relationship between researcher (me) and those researched is affected by whose idea it is to conduct the research. All of the projects described have met with enthusiastic participation by participants and board members, and this has assisted with the issue of ‘ownership’ of the research itself, The New Paradigm Research Manifesto describes:

A much closer relationship than that which is usual between the researcher and the researched: significant knowledge of persons is generated primarily through reciprocal encounter between subject and researcher, for whom research is a mutual activity involving co-ownership and shared power with respect both to the process and to the product of the research... The shared language and praxis of subject and researcher create ‘the world’ to be studied. (Reason 1994: p489)

The research is conducted in accordance with participatory action research principles, which have entailed a management structure involving a range of people with direct experience of the effects of the Troubles. There are ethical considerations related to entering this field of research that confirmed the desirability of this approach. One of the most devastating after-effects of trauma is the sense of disempowerment that it can bring. Working according to a principle of partnership is an attempt to avoid further disempowering those whose lives and experience we set out to research and document. We identified the need to deal responsibly for how we deal with the vulnerabilities of those whose experiences they seek to portray or understand.

Attempting to democratise the research process, by involving individuals from the researched population was one of the strategies employed in order to attempt to address this issue. This entailed, for example, involving participants in the project management and in monitoring the ethical aspects of research practices; in analysis by discussion and by reviewing our findings and analysis. It also entailed a detailed process of providing transcripts to all interviewees; discussion and agreeing of transcripts; collaboration with interviewees on issues such as anonymity, and presentation of findings.

The exception to this regime has been the research in South Africa, where distance from the field has limited the level of participation of interviewees in the study. However, transcripts of tapes were sent for their review, as with other interviewees, and a number of interviewees have become involved in subsequent research events.

Levels of participation

I was uncomfortable with seeing my fellow citizens, friends and those who welcomed me into their community as merely containers of data from which the data must be extracted as efficiently as possible. If for no other reason than a wish to avoid the humiliation of getting it so badly wrong, I wished to set up structures whereby I could be accountable - at least formally - to the people who were being researched, while the research was ongoing.

The research on segregation was conducted under the auspices of Templegrove Action Research Ltd (TAR), a limited company without share capital and a recognised charity (Northern Ireland does not have a charities register). A group of people from community leaders both sides of the sectarian divide, who had been involved in dialogue about segregation, formed the board of directors. They were the grant holders for the research and the employer of research staff. I sought and obtained secondment from the university on the basis of paying the cost of my replacement out of the grant, and acted as the full-time executive director of the project. When the project was complete, the board voted to transfer the remaining assets and equipment to a new board, composed of the group of people I had called together who had been bereaved or injured in the Troubles. The name of the company was changed to 'The Cost of the Troubles Study Ltd '(COTTS). In the latter stages of the work on segregation, I had designed and fund-raised for a study of the effects of the Troubles on the population. As before, COTTS was the grant holder, and employer of the project staff. Again, I was seconded from the university, to whom my salary was paid for the duration of the study, to act as Director of the company and the study. Later studies were conducted under similar arrangements, with the board of the organisation being drawn from the population being studied. A study of young people presented difficulties for this method of working, since one cannot be a company director under the age of 18. However, various surrogates were found, representatives of children's advocacy organisations, older young people and so on.

There was an issue in my relationship with other board members about differentials in levels of knowledge about research and about the running of the project, and consequently about my accountability. Whilst some board members had held similar positions in other organisations, others had never acted in that capacity before. Similarly, they knew varying amounts about research, but in most cases, I had more knowledge and information than any of them. In both the TAR and COTTS studies discussed all aspects of the project, including project design, fieldwork, staffing, data analysis, dissemination, as well as the routine aspects of staffing and finance. Board members were sometimes frustrated by the amount of routine business involved in running an organisation, and were more interested in the 'meat' of the study. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in all of the studies, in order to maximize credibility and thus the policy impact. However, few board members

were familiar with statistical methods, and it was necessary to find straightforward ways of explaining sampling, generalisability of research findings and other such concepts.

Since the research results were likely to be of more than academic interest, collaborative relationships with local policy makers and service deliverers were also developed from the inception of each project. A research advisory group was established for each project, and representatives of donors, policy makers, and service providers were invited to participate in that group, which monitored the research design, piloting, fieldwork and other data collection, analysis and documentation and dissemination.

The board members were representative of the population being researched, although a few were also interviewed or surveyed as part of the fieldwork. For the most part, however, their role was to ensure that the research took account of the interests of the population in all its diversity. On reflection, both the TAR and COTTS board members participated intensely in the study. The design of the board meant that internal conflicts in the board also absorbed time and energy. However, the broad representativeness of the board made this inevitable at that stage of Northern Ireland's history, and there is some evidence that the experience of board members working together on the board facilitated more positive interactions beyond the board.

In retrospect, this method of working, of giving actual power over the research project to those who are being researched had undoubted advantages. The credibility of the research with the population was enhanced, the researchers were immersed in the field and were provided with many insights into the issues they were studying, yet it was very labour intensive for the researchers. Such an approach requires additional resources in terms of the skills and time of the researcher in order to be feasible. Other approaches such as those described by [Tarleton](#) et al in [chapter 6](#) and [Nichols](#) in [chapter 1](#) provide worthy comparitors.

A separate set of procedures was used in obtaining informed consent of participants.

Consent

Standard protocols of informed consent were used in both interview and survey research. However, in addition, interviewees were provided with transcripts and allowed to review their input and remove any parts that, on reflection, they did not wish included. On occasion, particularly in relation to the research with young people, the researcher advised an interviewee to withdraw a statement, or anonymize an interview, where safety or confidentiality were likely to be compromised. Having given consent to being interviewed, filmed or otherwise represented, participants usually exert no further control over the manner in which the footage, sound-track or data is deployed. This material may be used again, usually without consultation with those who generated it, when documentary media material is being compiled, or in further research. The interviewee or the “subject” does not usually exert much influence on the angle of the journalist or the analysis of researcher. In all of these studies, the board as proxies for participants, and the advisory group monitored the data analysis, received and discussed preliminary reports, and read and commented on drafts of final reports. For participants, consent for participation was regarded as an ongoing negotiation, with the point of no return being a particular publication, or in the case of the film, the final edit.

A further issue arose in consent to the archiving of the data at the end of the study. Here, interviewees were approached individually and asked to instruct researchers whether or not to archive their data in the Linenhall Library political collection, whether to anonymize it before doing so, and what length, if any, embargo should be placed on it. A small number of participants wished all data relating to them to be destroyed, and their wishes were implemented. Survey data, being anonymous, was less problematic, is archived in a number of places and available to other researchers.

The decisions made by the board here, are normally made by researchers alone or by ethics committees who do not have responsibility. The board made the decisions about the research process and about archiving, not out of any formal liability, which was limited by our company structure, but out of a consciousness of their role as proxies for the research participants, their knowledge from their own personal experience of what it is like to be bereaved or injured or otherwise affected by the conflict, and their duty to anticipate objections or sensitivities. As researchers, we constantly consulted the board on the approach we were using, asked them to anticipate how it might be received, and problem-solved with them on finding better

ways of carrying out the research, with due regard to the vulnerabilities and circumstances of those we were researching.

Research design and data collection

A further cohort of people participated in the field surveys in both the TAR and COTTS studies. In the case of TAR, two surveys, each of an enclave community were conducted. In the case of COTTS, a Northern Ireland wide survey was conducted. In both cases, interviewer-administered questionnaires were used, and self-completion questionnaires were ruled out because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, and the potential for the subject area to arouse distress or suspicion in participants. The guidance from our board was that we had an ethical responsibility to ensure that participants who might be distressed or apprehensive by the subject matter of the survey were provided with information about our identity and intent, and information about relevant support services by the survey team. Leaflets that provided information on support services were prepared and distributed to survey participants. Publicity on TAR and COTTS preceded each survey, so that information about the study and its purpose, the identity of the researchers and the proposed use of the results was in the public domain and available to survey participants.

The TAR surveys were small, contained in one community, and elicited information about life in enclave communities. Much of the fieldwork was conducted by the researchers directly. In the COTTS survey, it was necessary to recruit and train a field force. Special training was provided for survey interviewers, and they were given information on the location and remit of supportive services, so that they could refer participants to the appropriate source of help should the need arise. Survey interviewers on the COTTS study reported spending much longer on interviews than the scheduled time, since some participants were keen to talk about their experiences. For security and quality control reasons, we kept track of interviewers, and some would 'go missing' only to be found hours later having listened to a very sad tale from a participant. Some of these stories collected by survey interviewers were moving, sad and emotionally demanding to listen to. As a result, regular group debriefing meetings were established for the field force, and these proved to be useful in supporting the field force, but also provided a useful additional quality control mechanism, and additional qualitative data.

In the TAR study, a public hearing was also organised, to elicit experiences of being in the minority in the city, and to create public discourse about the issue of minority – majority relations. The Guildhall was booked, a panel of judges selected, the event was advertised, and support was offered to groups and individuals to come forward and give evidence. The proceedings were documented and the report presented to a number of bodies including the city council (Smyth 1996c).

The conduct of the in-depth interviews presented a further set of challenges. First, there was a demand for interviews. People phoned the research office, volunteering to be interviewed, they wanted to talk. Many said that they had not spoken about their experiences before, and reported feeling better after doing so to the interviewer. Word travelled among families and friends that we were interviewing, and new recruits came forward. We interviewed every one who wished to be interviewed. However, some of these interviews we would not have sought out, since we tried to achieve a spread across gender, age, religion and location, and some of our volunteers were not in categories that assisted us with our spread.

Impact on the researchers

All of the interviews were conducted by either the full-time research officer, Marie Therese Fay, or by me. Many of the stories that we listened to were heartbreaking, horrifying and traumatic. Often we were in awe at the capacity of interviewees to survive such tragic and traumatic experiences. After many interviews, we would find ourselves thinking about the interviewee for days. We made regular times to discuss our experiences with one another. We found ourselves helping people with simple issues, wanting to help other people but not knowing how. We confronted our own helplessness in the face of daily doses of human tragedy and misery. It became important to establish clear boundaries around our role, and although we continued to perform services for people, we recognised the danger of becoming too involved in service provision, at the expense of our research role. We also recognised that in some ways, our performance of services for interviewees was designed to meet – not their needs – but our own need to help people in order to avoid facing our own helplessness.

On reflection, both of us experienced strong emotional reactions to the in-depth interviews. Both of us became angry at the inaction of politicians, political parties, government for allowing the interviewees to suffer, and for not doing more. We shouted at the television, we overworked, we didn't sleep well. Sometimes we cried with interviewees, and sometimes we waited till the interview was over, and cried later. We had truly entered the world of the victims of Northern Ireland's Troubles. We were, to some extent, in technical terms traumatised by our fieldwork, in human terms, our hearts were broken. The poem at the beginning of this chapter was written out of that experience, and poses the question, would it be better if we didn't feel this way? Ultimately, I concluded that no human being could meet, listen and respond to the people we met, listened and responded to without being deeply affected. Sleep disturbance, grief, anger and preoccupation with our interviewees were welcome, if uncomfortable, signs of our humanity. Our relationship to our board members shifted as a result of our fieldwork. We knew more, understood more.

Data ownership

Some of the data collected, such as the list of those killed in the conflict, was compiled from a number of sources. The database of deaths contained data on the name, address, age, gender, religion of those killed, the address at which they were killed and the identity of the perpetrating organization. The COTTS board took the view that the information was sensitive and should not be made generally available, since it could exacerbate tension or grievance. To date, we have not released the personal data on deaths, although we have analysed the database statistically (see Fay et al, 1999). At the end of the project, the board appointed three trustees to manage these data, and to whom any decision-making about access to the data could be referred. These arrangements would be unacceptable to some researchers, who regard research data that they have gathered as their property. However, when the data relates to such sensitive matters that impact so profoundly on the lives of others, as a researcher, I wish to be advised and informed by those with expertise in those issues. The unfortunate experience of many families caught up in the Northern Ireland conflict is one of having no control whatsoever over footage of their family member's funeral, or of photographs of gruesome injuries or circumstances. These arrangements were intended as an antidote to that powerlessness and lack of control, as a mechanism to try to ensure that the project did not replicate some of the practices of

the media, which relatives found upsetting and distressing. It is noteworthy that the board have not prevented the researchers using the data for any purpose, although they have, on occasion, refused requests from other organizations for access to it.

Analysis, write up and dissemination

Written reports were prepared and drafts circulated to board members. However, in many instances, these were not read carefully, or indeed at all, as the work of the project progressed and the researchers' relationship with the board and advisory group members developed. At the point when reports were being prepared, almost all the issues arising from the research had already been discussed with board and advisory group members, and an analysis evolved through these discussions that fed back into the research, and data collection. This in turn would inform subsequent discussions with the board and advisory group. Board members were familiar with the overall content and direction of reports without reading them because of their participation in these discussions. In both studies, this process was invaluable. My proximity to the data was increased, my perspective improved, and my understandings and conclusions were tested and broadened by those with personal expertise and lived experience of the subject area.

Dissemination of results of the studies was the subject of much discussion on both the TAR and COTTS projects. The goal of making the study results as accessible as possible to a large number of people required creativity in designing the dissemination strategy. In the case of the COTTS study, the results and outputs of the study were to be used to raise public awareness of the human suffering caused by political violence, so the dissemination methods had to reach a broad public audience, as well as policy makers and service providers. In both studies, a variety of outputs were produced, to meet this need. Exhibitions were compiled, using excerpts from interviews, photographs, and graphs and charts from the survey results. Professional videos were made, and interviewees agreed to be interviewed on camera. The videos were designed to be used for a number of purposes including training of service providers on the needs of those affected by the Northern Ireland conflict. We produced academic publications, alongside journalistic writing for local print media, and books of edited transcripts, personal accounts from interviewees of their experiences (see Smyth: 1996f; and Smyth and Fay: 2000). All publications, films, exhibitions and

reports were launched, and all participants invited to these occasions. In both TAR and COTTS, efforts were made to place the project outputs in prominent public positions, so the Guildhall in Derry Londonderry and the Great Hall in Belfast City Hall were chosen as venues for exhibitions. The then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Dr Marjorie Mowlam, opened the COTTS exhibition in the Great Hall. Such occasions were useful in raising the public profile of the work, and thereby the level of public awareness of the issues.

Evaluation: lessons learned and recommendations for future work

Accountability to the researched population:

Both the main projects described in this chapter were managed by an organisation set up for that purpose and composed of directors drawn from the researched population. As a model, this is not always feasible, as was discovered when the children's research was embarked upon. Further concerns about this model relate to the amount of researchers' time and energy is devoted to servicing the board, and improving their participation, sometimes at the expense of the actual research. Further concerns about this model relate to the level of expertise available on, for example, finances, within certain populations. Any 'slack' or uncompleted work left by the board also falls to the researcher. In subsequent work, this model has been amended so that the board is made up by one third academics, one third voluntary sector representatives and a third drawn from the researched population. However, difficulties about levels of board participation in certain aspects of the organisation continue.

Financial management, the university and my ex-career

A further set of issues relates to the relationship between the academy and this kind of research. Being on the academic staff of a university which is subject to research assessment exercises (RAE) where monies earned in research grants are counted in the university's favour, there has been a distinct lack of enthusiasm for having an organisation other than the university be the grant holder, since the money can not then be counted in the RAE. To date, no resolution to this difficulty has been found.

Support for people who participate

It is necessary to provide access to and information about support services for participants in a research field in which unmet need is likely to be uncovered. This entails researching available services and ensuring their bona fides before referring to them, or passing on their contact details. It is also important to note that many participants experience the interview itself as a supportive experience.

Healing or opening wounds

For a very small number of participants, the research was not a positive experience. In one case, an adult female was interviewed as part of COTTS, and she spoke in interview about losing a member of her immediate family in the conflict. When she went home, she told her family about her interview and about talking about the death of her family member, thus breaking a family taboo, since the family had never spoken about their loss. In some cases, in spite of our best efforts, sometimes participants lose or suffer as a result of their participation in our research. This must be honestly acknowledged, and proper risk assessments conducted prior to the commencement of the study, so that such risks are minimized.

Principle of least harm

The aim of research must be that it will do no harm to participants. However, as discussed above, sometimes participants do experience difficulties or suffering as a result of participation. This is a dilemma in researching traumatic fields of inquiry, where participation can be re-traumatising, or disruptive of the status quo in participants' lives. The challenge that faces the researcher is one of balancing the potential harm to participants with the potential benefit to them. Where benefit can be gained for participants, perhaps it can morally off-set some of the harm, which in any event the researcher must attempt to minimize.

Because we cannot know in advance the potential psychological or social risk in such research, fully informed consent becomes an important way of setting up a contract with participants about the potential risks and responsibilities.

Sometimes participation is not necessary

Whilst valuing maximum participation in research, it is important also to realise that sometimes participation is not as important as doing your job as a researcher, and that it is quicker, and more effective to revert to more orthodox divisions of labour.

Dependence

In conducting research amongst vulnerable populations, the researcher has a great deal of power, which can seduce the researcher into fostering dependence in participants. Where support is offered, for example, there is a danger that the researcher, driven by the emotional impact of the research, will over step the role of researcher to the extent where dependence is created. Critical monitoring of this issue is required in research of this kind. This issue has been addressed in other chapters in this volume, by [Nichols et al](#) in chapter 1, their discussion of service-user led research, [and](#) by the [Domestic violence research group](#) in chapter 3.

Working with victimhood

With the emergence of ‘victim politics’ in Northern Ireland (Smyth, 2000) it became clear that victimhood was a problematic state, particularly if it became a static, competitive with the needs of others, and resistant to growth or change. Some of those who have suffered as a result of the Troubles have difficulty in trusting anyone from outside their immediate group. A tendency to conspiracy views and at times suspicion of outsiders and even insiders can verge on paranoia. This requires researchers to work to gain the trust of individuals and communities; not on a one off basis, but by making themselves accountable in ways that do not compromise the standard of the research, and can in fact, improve it. Research must also be transparent, open and accessible to local people; in such communities where there is such suspicion or past negative experience of researchers or the media, transparency and openness are of paramount importance.

Payment of South African participants

The poverty of South African participants in the study on young people raised a number of ethical issues, one of which was the issue of payment. Some participants asked for payment, yet paying for data is taboo for most researchers. A compromise was reached where participants were compensated for any out of pocket expenses, they were given food at interview, and a donation was made to a local organisation that worked in their community. In this way, the value of their participation was respected, without unduly warping the data collection by introducing payment of some participants.

Impact of the research process on the researchers

Earlier the impact of the COTTS research on the two researchers was described, and since then, a number of studies have examined the impact of working in the field of victimhood on human services workers. Interviewer workloads require careful monitoring, so that interviewers are not over-exposed, and debriefing and support should be built in to the research design. Stress management strategies were introduced in COTTS, although with hindsight, earlier introduction of these measures was called for. However, these measures may not be sufficient to entirely prevent impact on the researcher, since it is the researcher's identification with those she is researching that causes the impact, and this identification is a central part of the connection between researcher and researched.

The boundary between participant and researcher has become, in my experience, permeable and fluid as the working relationship between participant and researcher increases in depth and breadth. This deepening and broadening will inevitably follow if meaningful ways of equalising the power differential between them are found. This chapter has described my limited experience of attempting to find ways of including participants in the governance of the research. The methods used here have undoubted benefits, whilst presenting the researcher with a new set of problems. However, the essence of the research process itself is problem-solving and identifying new and creative solutions to hoary old problems. To gain and retain the privilege of being admitted into those lives and experiences is worthy of the most creative and sophisticated research practice we can develop in order to ensure that the coming together of researcher and researched is of mutual benefit.

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Appendix 1

This set of principles came out of the discussion among participants at the Quality in Human Inquiry Conference in Bath 1995 and are included here with acknowledgements to the creativity of that group. They have not been, developed, made theoretical or sophisticated, and scarcely edited. They come, as it were, direct from the stimulating discussion of a group of scholar/practitioners deeply concerned about the nature of participation in human inquiry.

When do the (action) researcher's good intentions slide into colonial smothering?

1. When there is no dialogue about what the problem is and what questions are to be asked
2. When there is no passionate conflict at some point in the action/inquiry about what is at stake in defining the theory and practice
3. When the whole process is too efficient
4. When the researcher is naive about power (does not recognise that s/he is inevitably involved in power relations on multiple levels as are the other participants)
5. When the Initiating researcher(s) romanticise/idealise the 'subjects' (other participants)
6. When the initiators don't test whether their 'good' intentions are in fact good from others' points of view (when they don't untangle researcher's intentions from others')
7. When the initiating researchers do not develop trust with other participants
8. When they don't take the time to develop a relationship, to inter-act with respect, and/or to confront unrealistic expectations.
9. When the researchers cannot suspend their plan in the humility of unknowing and experience the miracle of learning something truly new.
10. When the researcher works unwarily within the myth of victory rather than awaredly with the rune of ruin.
11. When you are not 'naturally' there, with an honesty and plausibility that can make you an insider, even in your absence, rather than merely a short-term outside.
12. When the research is treated as an individual affair, rather than a group and

communal affair.

- 13 When you don't (repeatedly) work through feedback and representations of the results with the subjects
14. When you are not sensitive from moment to moment not to create dependency.
- 15 When you don't appreciate the interweaving of complex, inter-level, inter-categorical systems and the playing of multiple roles with the re-discovering of the simple primary, secondary, and tertiary issues at stake.