Ensuring research integrity during data collection in a closed context – Vietnam case

5th WCRI 2017
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31st May 2017
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Vietnam as a closed context

• “a very act of conducting research, aside from its purposes or focuses, is itself a sensitive matter” (Morrison, 2006; Scott, Miller & Lloyd, 2006; Turner, 2010)
Vietnam as a closed context

2016 Vietnam Marine Life Disaster

- Government tightened the control grip on freedom of speech

- Lecturers exerted great fear, doubt, anger, discrimination, hatred and self-censorship

Asia Times, 2016; D.N. Pham, 2016; H. Pham & T.V. Vo, 2016
Challenges of a closed context

Gain access → Deficits of the system and “tainted” norms (i.e. corruption)

Recruit participants → Fear, doubt, hatred, silent refusal

Conduct interviews → Emotional outburst (i.e. discomfort and anger)

Methodological challenges

Ethical challenges
Focus of the inquiry

• How to ensure research integrity in a closed context?
• How to gain trust in a closed context to have access and participants for the study?
Concept of research integrity

• Integrity means honesty, truthfulness and sincerity … The root of ‘integrity’ in English derives from the Latin words ‘integer’ and ‘integeritas’ meaning whole or entire, integrating different parts of one’s true self.” (Macfarlane, Zhang & Pun, 2014, pp. 340)

• “Academic integrity … is on values, behaviour and conduct of academics in all aspects of their practice …” (Macfarlane, Zhang & Pun, 2014, pp. 340)

• “… the greatest responsibility for maintaining high standards of conduct – the working of scientists themselves.” (Alberts & Shine, 1994, p. 1660)
Reflexivity – “Metaphysical analysis”

Epistemological reflexivity

Technical strategy: writing research diary, do no harm

Emotional enmeshment

Ethical strategy: Relational ethics/ Ethics of care

Barnbaum & Byron, 2001; Bloor, Fincham & Sampson, 2007; Ellis, 2007
Reflexivity based on relational ethics

- Acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others
- Take responsibility for thoughts, speech and actions and their consequences

Act from our hearts and minds
Strategy: Be firm, not fearful

• Access negotiation

Corruption
Imposter author
Unethical incidents
Strategy: Be firm, not fearful

Be firm with my ethical values, not fearful of being unable to gain access, and explaining things in a clear and gentle way or suggesting an ethical alternative.
Strategy: Be firm, not fearful

Reach out to other people in the field. There are many good people around
Strategy: Be honest, not deceptive

- Access negotiation and participant recruitment

Neither a program nor a guise strategically aimed at gaining further access

“Friendship as method”

A level of investment in participants’ lives that puts fieldwork relationships on par with the project

“Radical reciprocal”

A move from studying them to studying “us”

Tillmann-Healy, 2003, pp. 735-741
Strategy: Be honest, not deceptive

Researchers should be the one to be open, honest and transparent first, to gain trust
Strategy: Be honest, not deceptive

Political disturbances → Great doubt and discrimination → Research topic: “post-colonial” → The genuine of my Vietnamese nationality → My supervisors’ nationality

L1SS: “Is it related to any political issues?”

R1MS: “I would participate if you prove that you are 100% Vietnamese, and not Chinese.”

L7MS: “Are your supervisors Chinese? What can you learn from a Chinese?”

TRUTH
Strategy: Be understanding, not judging

Be aware  my own hegemonic assumptions from the standard research norms

- Anger
- Hurt
- Humiliation
- Sadness
- Offendedness

Violations of ethics
Emotional outburst
Strategy: Be understanding, not judging

Hear, see and understand from the “others”’ perspectives and their contexts, and help them.
Conclusion

Be firm, not fearful

Be honest, not deceptive

Be understanding, not judging

Reflexivity based on relational ethics/ethics of care

Gain TRUST

Ensure research integrity

in a closed context
Conclusion

- Research integrity is also the integrity of a human being
- Only ethical research can make a difference

(Ellis, 2007)
References


References


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Thank You!
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