Linking the Intercultural and Grounded Theory: Methodological Issues in Migration Research

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Abstract: Connecting intercultural research with Grounded Theory was advocated in the early history of intercultural theorising and includes the development of researchers' intercultural competencies. Such competency comes to the fore where intercultural theory places an equal emphasis on home and host cultures in migration research. In this context we have found a Grounded Theory approach particularly suitable for disentangling complex interlinkings within migration experiences and their individual outcomes. Grounded Theory allows for the exploration of various theories in different fields and the emergence of new or deeper interpretations of intercultural experiences, including where research has not engaged deeply with or avoided intercultural contexts. The use of software, based on Grounded Theory, provides the resource for systematically exploring the inter-related nature of data. In addition, engaging in intercultural research, in particular, raises questions around our practice as social science researchers: adherence to ethics guidelines, for instance, can be in some conflict with the relations we build with members of communities whose cultural values, for instance around friendship or trust, impact on the norms of both our own and institutional expectations. This leads to reflection on the relationship with research participants in terms of our own intercultural experiences and position.

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1. Introduction

The intersection between theoretical approaches and their applications in intercultural research are the focus of this paper. Theoretical approaches present the intercultural context which examines both long and short-term aspects of cross-cultural adaptation stemming from migration to Ireland. This context of emerging intercultural identities and competencies lays the foundation for the following discussion which results from a range of issues that emerge from the

practicalities of carrying out intercultural research in this area, namely around data-gathering and its implications for the relationship between researcher and research participants. This raises ethical concerns as well as self-reflexivity of researchers. In addition, the context of such research holds implications for data analysis where rich data engages a researcher with the task of disentangling a web of deeply interlinked relations. [1]

With the interdisciplinary nature of such research, we have found that the concerns of intercultural studies draw on those found in the social sciences when research projects are contextualised, such as the transnational experiences of Polish migrant women or the integration of a heterogeneous group of Vietnamese refugees into a more homogeneous society. Within such contexts, there is an interdisciplinary dynamic in which theories from social science still set the larger framework to processes of cross-cultural adaptation and intercultural communication. For this purpose, we have found a grounded theory approach, including Atlas.ti software for analysis, particularly suitable as it allows for the exploration of various theories in different fields and the emergence of new or deeper interpretations of intercultural experiences. This resulting paper highlights our dual standpoint on the practicalities of carrying out social science research from an intercultural perspective and concludes with our individual reflections on this process. [2]

2. Theoretical Concerns

As researchers working in a qualitative framework, we have reviewed current intercultural theories, noting that there is a range of theories in intercultural research (see MODY & GUDYKUNST, 2001; WARD, BOCHNER & FURNHAM, 2001 for a range of applicable theories) as well as new synergies with the field of cross-cultural psychology (CUSHNER, 2008) and arguments over the type and depth of research to be undertaken in this field (DAVIS, NAKAYAMA & MARTIN, 2000). Consequently, we have drawn on several theories to interpret findings as no one particular theory appears to apply to individual and group intercultural experiences. However, we have found models which do have a robust explanatory force in our specific intercultural research areas relevant to this paper. One area focuses on the long-term process of cross-cultural adaptation by members of a small group of Vietnamese refugees and their family members; the other focuses on the more immediate experiences of Polish migrant women drawn to work in Ireland's globalised economy. Both studies are qualitative and the first (SHERIDAN, 2004) involved 18 interviews with a mix of Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese participants. These included some of the 212 individuals who had arrived first in Ireland in 1979 as well as family members who arrived later as part of family reunification. The investigation was of long-term cross-cultural adaptation and ranged across two generations and interviews took place in the space of the Irish-Vietnamese Centre or in participants' homes. The study of Polish women (STORCH, 2008a) draws on 30 interviews involving Polish migrant women who arrived shortly before or after EU accession on May 1, 2004. This group of female Polish migrants was motivated to migrate by both personal and economic reasons (STORCH, 2008b). They form part of the substantial Polish

community in Ireland today, which forms the largest migrant community there. For comparative purposes, a smaller group of women was included who had arrived in Ireland in the 1980s. These women were primarily motivated to migrate by personal reasons as they had Irish husbands who they had met previously in Poland. [3]

We found that at the individual level, Young Yun KIM (1988, 2001a, 2008) offers a model that follows the process of cross-cultural adaptation starting prior to arrival in the host country or contact with the host culture. This equal consideration of both cultures provides the sociocultural contexts which frame cross-cultural encounters between both communities and individuals: adaptation, occurring at the psychological level, is a dynamic communication process where individual and environment meet. Adaptation develops from a stress, learning and growth dynamic and leads to the development of host communication competence. There are broad dimensions contained in the model focusing on communication within and across host and ethnic communities and the individuals within them, which affects this process of cross-cultural adaptation and, which ultimately leads to a transformation of an individual's identity. For Young Yun KIM (2001b, p.269) such change occurs "regardless of differing ideological views" as "some form of new learning, accommodation, internalisation, and convergence occurs among those who remain, willingly or not, in some degree of communicative interaction with the host environment." The outcome of this process that includes changes in the migrant's original identity is a larger intercultural identity (KIM, 2001a) that also includes the development of intercultural competence. [4]

From her own research of migrant communities, Young Yun KIM (1989, p.103) writes:

> "The adaptation process, as such, is multidimensional and interactive, and, by implication cannot be fully understood when one focuses on only one of the adaptation dimensions without understanding the other interrelated dimensions as well. The psychological, sociological, and other disciplinary approaches to individuals' adaptation must therefore be integrated, so that these approaches as a whole may enable us to offer comprehensive descriptions and explanations of the adaptation process- what happens to individuals as they strive to carry out their life activities in an unfamiliar sociocultural milieu." [5]

For example, Steven GOLD and Nazli KIBRIA (1993) note that in the range of sociological research on the Vietnamese in the USA, there would be a simplistic reference to culture to explain how the Vietnamese became a widely-perceived "model minority" at the expense of other highly relevant social factors which affect adaptation (see also STARR & ROBERTS, 1982; DESBARATS, 1986; YU & LIU, 1986 and for omissions of culture and identity among other factors see the critiques following BERRY, 1997). In addition, findings would be over-generalised when one cohort of Vietnamese, the easily accessed, wealthy, well-educated 1975 group's experiences were generalised across the heterogeneous group of the 1979 and later arrivals. This is similar to the range of individual experiences of

Polish migrant women whose sociocultural characteristics have different effects on the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Such substantial differences begin to reveal themselves in the pre-arrival phase. The women arrived in Ireland for a variety of reasons, including economic compulsion, striving for personal and financial independence and personal reasons, such as marriage to an Irish husband. In addition, they are equipped with different levels of preparation and pre-knowledge about life in the host culture, so that their communication within this unfamiliar environment, including both the host and ethnic cultural environment, is determined by their individual pre-arrival experiences and socio-cultural characteristics. KIM (2001a) examines both host and ethnic social communication, which are placed at the centre of the adaptation process. Communication within the new environment is influenced by the migrant's personal communication competence, the pre-arrival phase, and this overall environment is central to the outcomes of the migration process. Consequently, exploration of the interrelatedness of the process of cross-cultural adaptation, which is individual for each migrant, requires an open and flexible approach that is focused on the migrant's actual experiences. [6]

Grounded theory allows for such an approach, as it approaches data detached from preconceived ideas, placing the actual data, that is the interview or stories told by the interviewees, at the foreground of the research. Thus, this paper does not examine specific issues pertaining to grounded theory (see KELLE, 2005 for instance) but discusses those that stem from our engagement with Anselm STRAUSS and Juliet CORBIN (1998) and Kathy CHARMAZ's (2000, 2006) constructivist approach (see GLASER, 2002; BRYANT, 2003 for discussion) and its application in our intercultural research. Bernard BLACKMAN (1983) had already considered that grounded theory approaches would contribute significantly to intercultural research in terms of theory, conducting research in a systematic manner and the charting of researcher experiences and perspectives resulting from intercultural contact. Consequently, our use of grounded theory also relates to concerns around our own positions in relation to the research. Of importance with research with the Vietnamese was the fact that a researcher can draw on his or her own experiences during their analysis (STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1998, p.5) as this forms the basis for making comparisons. In addition, Kathy CHARMAZ (2000) had already noted that they (STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1998) proposed giving voice to respondents (CHARMAZ, 2000, p.510). Thus, our interest is in the linking of an intercultural perspective which draws on the interrelatedness of the cross-cultural adaptation process with grounded theory. This link creates affirmations of existing theories in our research and the creation of theory which explains the specificity of our own research findings in the field of intercultural communication. [7]

3. Data-Gathering: Participants, Culture, Language

The process of data-gathering with both research groups, the Vietnamese and Polish migrant women in Ireland, would present challenges for any researcher who is bound by specific requirements such as those outlined by a university's ethics committee which incorporate ideas of best practice within social science. In addition, a researcher has a particular relationship with research participants which presents intercultural challenges. For instance, in-depth research with Vietnamese in Ireland implies the investment of a long-term approach: a long record as a known and, eventually, trusted person which then provides the basis for a renewal of such bonds and the opportunity to contact individuals in a semi-public sphere. This is in contrast to Alison D'ANGLEJAN, Gisele PAINCHAUD and Claude RENAUD (1986) who used interpreters to explain their research and were surprised to find individuals declining to participate or not keeping appointments. Although they had used a standard sociology approach, they did not expect such reactions especially as they had stressed the academic nature of their research. Knowledge of Vietnamese communication practices is thus implicit in the case of making interview appointments with some research participants as such appointments can be broken without forewarning, though taken up again at the next encounter. In such an instance an interviewer may not be so close in friendship terms as to be informed of a broken appointment but this action does not preclude an interview at a later date. Consequently, a researcher has to wait for interview opportunities and also persevere for the interview to come to fruition. [8]

Within intercultural research, language becomes an issue when interviews are conducted in a language that is not the interviewees' mother tongue (see also the articles of SCHROER (2009), TRAHAR (2009) and TEMPLE and KOTERBA (2009) in this special issue). For this reason, those chosen for an interview often have strong language skills. As Jaber HOLSTEIN and James GUBRIUM (1995, p.19) consider, the assumption of competence can ignore categories of people so that they have no voice as they are considered incompetent to produce a narrative. Such a perspective precludes a Vietnamese participant's pre-interview preparation of translating key terms into English in case they were needed during the interview and which would be part of the meaning-making process between researcher and participant. Thus, with regard to the Vietnamese, the development of communication competence would be a key feature of the long-term process of cross-cultural adaptation so that interviews were carried out in English, the language of the host society. Alison D'ANGLEJAN, Gisele PAINCHAUD and Claude RENAUD (1986) also used the language of the host country as a research strategy in a study that included adult Vietnamese immigrants who were leaving language classes to find work. They chose an interview format as participants would encounter such a situation in real life once job-hunting. They included themselves as part of the interaction with the wider society that their interviewees would encounter. From this perspective, Vietnamese participated in an interview in English rather than using an interpreter from the community. Amia LIEBLICH (1993) for instance found the presence of an interpreter intrusive regardless of communication problems. Using a member of a community where people said they all knew each other or knew of each other would also have been

unethical. One member of the community would be privy to everyone else's stories. Some things might not be spoken of precisely because of the presence of that member of the community. Face, a significant part of Vietnamese culture, could have played a major role and would have destroyed the interview (see WEIDEMANN, 2001 for a full outline and discussion of face). [9]

Within research amongst Polish migrant women in Ireland, who are often young, independent and perceivably well-prepared, in particular in terms of language, for their life in Ireland, there were fewer but still important language issues. The overall level of English amongst the women was very high, which facilitated interviews in English considerably. Similar to the Vietnamese migrants, language was seen as a key factor in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. However, a small number of women, who had often arrived within the last year of the research, did experience some language difficulties. Such difficulties, for instance, occurred when women asked for repetition of a question or when they wrongly replied to a question. To solve such issues and overcome a language barrier, different ways of acting are required. These include prior translation of all key words into Polish so that key questions could also be asked in Polish and including Polish in the interview process when language became an issue during the interviews, as the following three extracts from two interviews demonstrate. The first interview is with a Polish woman, who followed her Polish husband to Ireland after EU accession. K is Katharina, the interviewer, and the initials are participant ones:

> K: And are most of them women?
>
> T: Most of?
>
> K: Are most of your friends – koleżanki ale przyjaciółki – women – kobiety?
>
> T: Yes.

The next extract is from an interview that was conducted with a woman who has a Polish husband and they both arrived after EU accession. She was interviewed with a friend, a single Polish woman who also arrived after EU accession and who also appears in the final extract:

> K: What did you know about Ireland or about life here before you came to Ireland?
>
> W: I don't, I don't know. ... Jaki jest wyspa?
>
> K: Island.
>
> W: I know, it is island, I know it is scenery, I know the weather, it's awful ... (laughing) I know this. And I hear the Irish people is very nice, but I think the English is better, but I don't know, I am here too short maybe. And... what else? Food is different ...
>
> ……………………………………………………
>
> K: Who do you spend time with? After work?
>
> E: Z kim?
>
> K: Tak, z kim spędając czas?

> E: After work, I'm coming here, sometimes I read book, sometimes I go to the my sister-in-law, sometimes, like yesterday, we go to the city centre, after my job ... Yesterday is something in the city centre ... parade something?
>
> W: Parada, you know what's parada?
>
> K: Yes, a parade.
>
> W: Ehm, kids and young people, eh, clothes, white ...
>
> E: Angels. ... [10]

When Polish was included in the interview, the women had a choice to reply in Polish or English. Once they had understood the question, they would, however, often switch back to English and respond within the limits of their English language abilities as demonstrated in the above examples. When Polish was included in their responses, they were afterwards translated back into English by the researcher, or they remained in Polish as the answers provided by the women were understood. Another strategy was to reformulate questions in English when difficulties with understanding a question occurred, and responses would clarify whether the participant had understood or not. In most cases, this option was chosen first before including Polish in the interview process, and it often made the inclusion of Polish unnecessary. [11]

Finally, by inviting participants to join the research, the issue of names and naming also arose particularly with reference to Vietnamese participants. The term "Vietnamese" is a convenient one to refer to this small group, which had an official number of 823 people (REFUGEE AGENCY, 1999/2000) according to the final official statistic on this "community". However, it homogenises a group where there is in fact great diversity and where cultural variation, resulting from partition in 1954, flowed from the political cultures of the former North and South Vietnam. These resulted in differentials in relations with the ethnic Chinese communities within Vietnam as well as across some religious groupings. Such differences and their resulting consequences are carried over with resettlement into the host culture to a greater or lesser degree by individual members of the new "Vietnamese community". As a result, an intercultural researcher needs in-depth knowledge of this background particularly when they surface during an interview (see also SHERIDAN, 2007) as this extract demonstrates between V as researcher and W as Wendy, a young ethnic Chinese woman whose family originally fled to China as refugees:

> V: They were difficult times for your family. So, you were 4 years old when you went to China. What was it like growing up?
>
> W: Well, when we went back to China, that time there was the … Mao Tse Tung ... What do you call in English?
>
> V: The Cultural Revolution was just finished.
>
> W: So we had a very hard life in China.
>
> …………………………………………

> V: You learnt Mandarin and you speak Cantonese ... but you don't really speak Vietnamese?
>
> W: No, just learning from home, just a bit. We are speak [dialect] as well. In Guangdung they speak *Kejia*.
>
> V: Oh, I think in English we call it Hakka.
>
> W: Yeah, Hakka.
>
> V: So you speak Hakka. I think quite a lot of people speak Hakka, also in Hong Kong. And your parents speak Hakka? And your brother? [12]

These are very straightforward examples but clearly draw on the intercultural competencies of researcher and participant to create a comfortable interview environment where careful probing reveals the heterogeneous nature of a group of individuals labelled "Vietnamese" for convenience. [13]

4. Ethical Issues

Recent critique on ethics committees has been offered with regard to institutional power over research projects by Research Ethics Committees, and in particular the legalistic issue of consent forms (ISRAEL & HAY, 2006; CAHILL, 2007). Within the area of participatory research, the response to this and other issues has emphasised the necessity for cooperation between all parties, including ethics committees and researchers. This includes educating ethics committees about the ethical commitments already embedded in research models (CAHILL, 2007). This is applicable to all social and other science, where ethical commitment is an intrinsic part of any research project. For instance, when cultural issues, such as religious or cultural traditions present individual challenges to a research project (ISRAEL & HAY, 2006), these require adequate responses from ethics committees and researchers alike (McGINN & BOSACKI, 2004; ROTH, 2004; COUPAL, 2005). Such matters amplify once cross-cultural relations become involved and individual researchers are faced with situations that their more "traditional" social science counterparts did not have to face. Certainly, in the Irish context, early research in a changing social landscape (FANNING, VEALE & O'CONNOR, 2001) required considerable change in researcher tactics by moving from a participatory action research approach to individual or household visits in order to research child poverty among asylum-seeking families. [14]

In research with Polish migrant women, the formality posed upon signing a consent form became an important issue. Some Polish migrant women felt uncomfortable when faced with this legalistic document. This concern has been raised by other researchers, such as Deborah MARTIN (2007) who explained that her participants felt "disempowered when clearly uncomfortable when faced with a legalistic document" (MARTIN, 2007, p.324) which she asked them to sign before the interview. Two Polish women did not feel the need to sign the consent form, but were still willing to take part in the research, as we had already established a mutual relationship that made them proud to take part in it. Their behaviour may be culturally anchored as their socio-political cultural background

had partly been formed during Communism. One woman explains her distrust of the phone and how she avoids speaking about important things because their family phone was tapped during Communist times. It is her father's distrust of the phone that impacts upon this woman's own distrust, as a result of surveillance by the secret police during the Communist era:

> A: My father told us: 'Never say anything important over the phone.' And it's funny, even now, when I'm on the phone, without even thinking, I am very short, very efficient, kind of, you know. [15]

Growing up in a repressive system created distrust towards its official institutions. The formality of a legalistic document may then undermine trust in both research and researcher. Elena YU and William LIU (1986, p.487) comment in depth on this and other research issues with Vietnamese refugees in the USA where research participants were otherwise willing participants:

> "The threat of communism—real or imagined—was the substance of much of their government's propaganda against the enemy from within and without. Survey research was underdeveloped, sociologists unheard of for the most part, and government statistics not always obtained by interviewing. Unaccustomed to expressing their opinions outside close circles of family and friends, unfamiliar with polls and surveys, and overwhelmed by the complex legal structure of this country, the refugees could not help but feel confused and frightened when asked to sign the consent form. Indeed, our experience in the study of Vietnamese refugees attests to this fact." [16]

This is similar to experiences with the Vietnamese community in Ireland (SHERIDAN, 2004), who had also come from a Communist culture where signing documents aroused great suspicion. [17]

Asking potential participants to sign a consent form can thus question the trust that has previously been developed between the researcher and the interviewee (ROTH, 2004), particularly when the interviewee's communication experience has been shaped by communication patterns in a totalitarian society (MAMALI, 1996). However, Kathleen ST. LOUIS and Angela CALABRESE BARTON (2002, p.6) add that "unless trust is established, participants may not give researchers a full picture of what it is the researchers are trying to understand". This point is also made by Alison D'ANGLEJAN, Gisele PAINCHAUD and Claude RENAUD (1986) as they noted how threatened some of their 113 Vietnamese participants felt and that this was a limitation on their research. Such suspicion is also evident in an official government survey, of the Vietnamese and Bosnian community in Ireland by Cathal O'REGAN (1998), using standard sociology tools including two Vietnamese translators from outside the state. O'REGAN (1998) notes that there was no time to create the necessary rapport with members of the Vietnamese community; had this been possible he considered that Vietnamese participation in the research would have been greater. In addition, O'REGAN (1998, p.31) discusses the issues of research surveys not being familiar to the Vietnamese

and of face as well as the fact that the research began "around the time of the celebrations of the Vietnamese New Year". [18]

Without question, interviewing largely depends on creating trust, rapport and mutual commitment within a short period of time (GERSON & HOROWITZ, 2002), which can be eliminated in a second when confronting the interviewee with this legalistic form. Thus, within intercultural research, the cultural implications of such a legalistic document that is generally required by Research Ethics Committees, should be taken into account in the decision making process about whether such forms are necessary at all times or not and, as a consequence, what other forms of agreements are acceptable. For example, what was of significance to Vietnamese research participants was not plain language statements or consent forms but the pre-existing relationship between the researcher as a known and trusted person and where spoken agreements carried weight. What was particularly distrusted was the signing of the consent form, a social science transaction designed to protect both parties. Such signing was carried out in terms of a somewhat distressing favour which worked to undermine trust and some participants did not sign, dismissing the process as irrelevant in the face of trust. Consequently, in such an intercultural environment both researcher and research participant have to accommodate to each other to satisfy research and cultural expectations. On the part of the researcher, this requires a good level of intercultural competence, that is, the awareness of culture-specific issues relevant to a particular cultural group and its members' engagement in the research process. [19]

5. Data Analysis: Revealing the Intercultural

As Anselm STRAUSS and Juliet CORBIN (1998) and Kathy CHARMAZ (2006) consider that grounded theory is a method rather than an orthodoxy, our interpretations and use of it differed (see *FQS 3*[2] including BONG, 2002). However, for both of us, the "interrelatedness" that KIM (1989) refers to was evident throughout the process of coding and interpretation of the data. Firstly, differences emerged with the main contrast being a far greater number of codes and categories being created with the Polish migrant women data set and which can be viewed as a potential hazard of using both grounded theory and the technology which permits the creation of a great number of codes. Aiming to stay in close relationship with the actual data, an immense amount of codes, over 5,000, was generated in the process of analysis, which subsequently was difficult to fit into categories. This is linked to the strong focus on process to portray the meaning and actions of a story told by interviewees, when coding each line or each incident of data (CHARMAZ, 2006). Reducing the vast number of codes to a number of useful categories turned out to be a challenging endeavour. To avoid such "overcoding", a potential drawback of using grounded theory, the creation of categories earlier in the analysis process may be helpful. This would, however, impede on grounded theory practice, as later coding could then be influenced by preconceived categories (CHARMAZ, 2006; STRAUSS & CORBIN, 1998), not allowing for new phenomena to develop. [20]

Alternatively, another grounded theory technique, namely theoretical coding, is a way to minimise the risk of "overcoding" to some extent. Through theoretical sampling researchers seek and collect data to elaborate and refine categories in emerging theory (CHARMAZ, 2006). It is the process of elaborating and refining developing theory by going back to the field. This tactic was used with data-gathering from Vietnamese participants and began after the first ten interviews were completed. From an initial, approximate process of mapping codes on a large sheet of paper, three main interlinked categories appeared: culture, language and identity and all three were also linked to family-related codes. The concept of family had at first appeared as a main category but this was changed and was incorporated into codes that led back to the three categories. Interview questions were changed and the enthusiastic responses in a further five interviews confirmed this approach. A further two interviews were carried out and they again confirmed this approach and they were then stopped at this point as in addition, they were extremely time-consuming to arrange and eventually carry out, a point also raised by O'REGAN (1998). From our experience, it appears that theoretical coding should thus be carried out after coding and categorising smaller amounts of data, so that additional data are collected to feed already existing categories. In total, 296 codes were created with the Vietnamese data using this approach. [21]

Being able to break up the data to the extent that grounded theory allows also holds the benefit of building complex categories, such as the category of home within the Polish data. This category includes, for instance, the following codes:

Category	Codes include
Home	attachment from home
	associated with family
	associated with children
	associated with friends
	linked to childhood in Poland
	in Ireland—negative
	in Poland—distant
	emphasising the role of the mother at home enjoying independent life
	feeling good
	home in PO & life/home in IE
	linked to life in IE

Table 1: Example of a category with a selection of codes from the Polish data set (STORCH, 2008a) [22]

Another example is the category of "friendship" which holds different conceptualisations in Polish and Irish culture, as was revealed in the interviews. The category of friendship was described as a complex system with many layers; the women used Polish expressions to distinguish the meanings of these different types of friendship, as there are no equivalents in English.

Type of friend:	Description of friendship:
przyjaciółka	best, closest friend(s)—Polish—only a female friend—similar importance as family, is perceived a member of the family, long shared time and experiences, honesty, trust, openness, open private sphere
koleżanka (female noun)/ kolega (male noun)	just a friend, mate, pal—Polish, Irish, international—male and female friends—friends, whom one shares private sphere, sharing some time, but not all secrets
znajomi	acquaintances—Polish, Irish, International—male and female —acquaintances, e.g. colleagues, closed private sphere
colleagues (koleżanka/ kolega z pracy)	Polish, Irish, International

Table 2: Taxonomy of Polish friendships (STORCH, 2008a, p.200) [23]

The perceived lack of such differentiation in Irish culture, where everyone is perceived as a friend, demonstrates the intercultural aspect of such research. Having uncovered the layers of friendship in Polish culture in the interviews, these formed substantial codes under the category "friendship". They shed light upon the Polish concept of friendship and the difficulties emerging in communicating within the host culture, where such concepts appear not to exist. This example demonstrates the interrelatedness of the coding process and interpretation of the data in intercultural research. Lastly, with this complexity of final categories, that also included apt memos, the writing of the first draft of data analysis, being the immediate step after the creation of final categories and memo-writing (CHARMAZ, 2006), was largely facilitated. [24]

In terms of the Vietnamese data, Atlas.ti was essential to the concern with interrelatedness that Young Yun KIM (1989) refers to; to illustrate this, the issue of loneliness is taken from the data. Firstly, loneliness is understood as a psychological state and as evidence of stress as in Young Yun KIM's (1988, 2001a, 2001b) model from which learning and growth would follow. There were twenty primary documents in the data set: eighteen are the interviews and two being sets of observations and reflections, one in the private sphere of the home and, the other, observations of the public space of the Vietnamese-Irish Centre. These observations and reflections were written immediately following visits. There were 23 coded instances, and quotations, of loneliness. The coding could be a simple tag for a line from an interview such as:

Codes: [loneliness]

D: First time … feeling lonely, no friend [25]

In addition, segments were coded as many times as necessary to draw out all the relationships that loneliness involved to see if and where it changed over time. The following short extract forms part of a long discussion on loneliness with Wendy:

Codes: [loneliness] [loneliness and language] [marriage migrant language]

V: So your sister-in-law, did she try to learn English before she came?

W: No, she's learning English in here.

V: Does she feel lonely?

W: Yeah. [26]

The next extract is also with Wendy:

Codes: [isolated] [loneliness] [loneliness and employment]

W: No. I know nothing about Ireland because, you know, in here we are need … working really hard and difficult to find out something different to do. Like, it depends, this Saturday I have a day off. When I wake up I say 'can I find someone go with me for the day' but I think today I can't find anyone because today's a busy day for the Chinese take-away. Everyone's working! So I just stay at home all days.

V: But you prefer to go out and do something?

W: (Agreement and short silence).

V: So you feel a little bit lonely … [27]

The codes are thus interlinked to a range of different factors and the criss-crossing of their paths are untangled systematically (BLACKMAN, 1983) for the affirmation and development of intercultural theory. Here loneliness links not only to the making of friends but to the barriers to friendship such as language and the specific loneliness of marriage migrants; these all interlink in terms of the development of host communication competence (KIM, 2001a, 2001b). With regards to time, loneliness and language issues were evident for the arrivals in 1979 but also for new arrivals such as Wendy as well as marriage migrants. [28]

Atlas.ti was invaluable as the nuances of the interrelatedness of experiences could be explored to see where, in terms of Young Yun KIM's (2001a, 2001b) model, learning and growth could develop as well as the sociocultural factors which impeded it from the perspectives of both own and host cultures. As the inter-relatedness of the data became evident through coding, the strength of using Atlas.ti emerged as it was possible to gradually clarify the nature of the links across categories and understand the nature of the relationships, where, for example with the Vietnamese data, the category "language" produced a number of codes in relation to employment, language learning and language loss which were also aligned to over twenty years of cross-cultural adaptation. Atlas.ti's facility for creating networks was also exploited as a way of creating visual

images, for instance by drawing up all the quotations for a code and then exploring the nuances across them all. This visual exploration would also be the basis for the writing of segments of text. Researcher creativity thus takes the available technology and uses it in different but fruitful ways of interacting with the data during the analytical process. [29]

True to grounded theory, the literature review followed analysis so that (inter)cultural explanations and theories were linked to the data and findings validated in terms of existing theory or explored as the potential emergence of something new. This may appear simplistic but though there is a wealth of academic literature on the 1975 and 1978/79 Vietnamese refugees or "boat people" there is no description of processes of cross-cultural adaptation and as Elena YU and William LIU (1986) note, the existence of culture, let alone any definition, is absent as the focus is on concrete issues such as employment and housing which are neutral measures. They note that culture is seen as being "conceptually difficult" (YU & LIU, 1986, p.496) and state that in the American context: "the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugees decided to avoid any discussion on the cultural adjustment of refugees even though the latter type of adjustment accounts for much of the problems encountered by refugees" (YU & LIU, 1986, p.496). This would apply to the Irish context, where, as Piaras MacÉINRÍ (2002) states, there was no understanding or concern with (cross)cultural issues when the Vietnamese arrived in Ireland in 1979; this is a point of relevance to Young Yun KIM's (1988, 2001a, 2008) process model which includes both host and newcomer. Grounded theory thus provides the opportunity to see if there were cultural processes underlying over 20 years of adaptation by members of the community. The analysis did indeed find cultural explanations at affective, cognitive and behavioural levels (see SHERIDAN, 2008a, 2008b). Family for instance relates to Geert HOFSTEDE's (2001) dimension of collectivism and the coding process was able to reveal the subtleties of the links embedded across the three main categories over time. For example, there was evidence at cognitive and behavioural levels in terms of how family was defined and in the decisions participants made about their actions or curtailing certain activities as well as reactions to family preferences with regard to the choice of marriage partners (SHERIDAN, 2007, 2008a, 2008b). [30]

6. Reflexivity

Positionality and reflexivity have become important issues in migration research in particular (see for example BORKERT & DeTONA, 2006 and GANGA & SCOTT, 2006 in *FQS 7*[3] and MRUCK & BREUER's [2003] introduction in *FQS 4*[2]). Carrying out research across communities, researchers' positionality is very complex and multifaceted (GANGA & SCOTT, 2006). In the Irish context there has been a certain reliance on using members from within an ethnic or cultural group such as a study of Polish migrant workers (KROPIWIEC, 2006) and Chinese students in Ireland (WANG, 2006). Maren BORKERT and Carla De TONA (2006) have criticised the tendency to define a researcher as an insider or outsider according to her/his nationality. Instead, insider and outsider positions within a research process can be identified alike and develop further during that

process. A migrant researcher can thus be an outsider to a particular migrant community, but share insider views in terms of being "the Other" within the larger host culture or other socio-cultural characteristics with research participants. Our own positions place us between host communities and research participants. In effect, we mediate between the two during the development of researcher-participant relations such as language teacher to members of a community prior to the research. [31]

Questions about reflexivity have particularly been raised in the area of feminist studies: "reflexivity in research involves reflection in self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics in the research process, and researcher accountability in data collection and interpretation" (SULTANA, 2007, p.376). Farhana SULTANA (2007) argues in favour of positionality that allows the researcher to reflect on how one is inserted in the networks of power relations and that influences methods, interpretations, and knowledge production (SULTANA, 2007). In addition, she argues that such ethical concerns can only strengthen researchers' commitment to carry out good research that is based on building relations of mutual respect and recognition. Kathleen ST. LOUIS and Angela CALABRESE BARTON (2002), who have carried out research with immigrant groups, discuss positionality in relation to the researcher's subjectivity, which they describe as two related concepts. They define subjectivity as the life experiences a researcher has and the social, cultural, and political factors that influence the individual and how she/he engages in the research. Aspects of these issues surface in our individual reflections which follow. [32]

6.1 Reflecting on researching Polish migrant women (Katharina STORCH)

In my research with Polish migrant women, my presence probably formed the most important ethical concern. When reflecting upon my positionality, what was particularly important was my own cultural and socio-historic background of having grown up in another former Communist country and of being a migrant. Consequently, these experiences also made me an insider in some areas of the women's socio-cultural environment. As I openly included my own socio-cultural background in the interviews, I was considered an equal partner in the interview process. This became evident, for instance, when women asked about my own experiences to obtain confirmation that I had understood what they explained, as shown in the first example below:

> Z: What about you, do you spend time with German people?

> K: I do. I live with an Irish girl and there used to be a Belgian girl, and we spent most time together. But I think my best friend here would be German, East German as well.

> Z: I think it also about the culture and the way people are brought up. I don't have anything against Irish people. I like them, because they are open and friendly towards us. But I didn't like … We understand each other better with Polish people. Even for

that reason that I said before, with Christmas, the cultural background, the tradition is the same. [33]

Within this open atmosphere, the women then felt comfortable to tell their stories. [34]

In contrast, I was perceived as an outsider within another socio-cultural field, as I was neither a member of their ethnic community nor a member of the host community. Being considered as an outsider in national cultural terms, however, placed me in an ideal position to create a platform for this specific group of women to describe their migration experiences. For instance, this allowed the women to openly criticise the host culture and they could also present their negative views towards their in-group:

> K: What is important for a Polish woman?
>
> M: I think, the Polish you meet over here are different than the Poles in Poland. I think there is a distinction. As I said, the Poles to me come across here as 'money, money, money, work, work, work'.
>
> K: And that wouldn't be the same in Poland?
>
> M: I do think this is driven, but you see I am talking for my own family experiences. Where, you know, I find the warmth and the time with them, and I don't find the same of, generally speaking, of people I meet. They are driven by work and money. I think, the Polish you meet over here are different than the Poles in Poland. I think there is a distinction. As I said, the Poles to me come across here as 'money, money, money, work, work, work'. [35]

In this last extract, the participant openly criticises members of her own ethnic group, knowing that I am not a member. This is in contrast to Deianira GANGA and Sam SCOTT (2006), who argue in favour of insider researchers as having greater awareness of the social divisions, for instance, in terms of age or permanence of migration experience, than outsider researchers. The outsider view, however, turns out to be an advantage as it allowed the women to openly discuss aspects of behaviour of members of their own group which may not have occurred with a researcher selected for insider status. [36]

6.2 Reflecting on researching members of the "Vietnamese community" (Vera SHERIDAN)

Two particular aspects of my own position affected research with members of the Vietnamese community. Firstly, I had, coincidentally, been a refugee as a child from a former Communist country which is now a member of the EU. However, this fact caused me great concern as I tried initially to be a detached researcher until I discovered others who had revealed this aspect of themselves to peers such as Ron BAKER (1990) who placed communication at the heart of his own personal narrative as a child refugee, which he presented to professional colleagues. As I had willingly assimilated into my country of resettlement, the UK, there was never any need to draw attention to the fact unless relations with

others progressed beyond the superficial. However, the major problem I always face is the following question: do I tell the story? Do I let a newcomer into the story or take the easier option of keeping it hidden as it avoids too much private revelation. In contrast, this story became beneficial as interviews with participants touched on aspects of people's lives that were deeply felt despite the passage of time. I found myself referring to my own story, or, in one case, being asked to tell mine fully before a participant narrated his own sensitive experiences of being a refugee as a young child. Here, reflecting in terms of a critical incident (see BOUFOY-BASTICK, 2004) I realised the power and strength of my own story particularly as without this mutual exchange there would have been no interview at all. In this regard, I was an insider to a particular type of experience which clearly helped me gain access to the stories that people told while simultaneously positively reaffirming aspects of my own. [37]

Secondly, I was also a stranger in the Irish context so that individuals felt able to speak of both positive and negative experiences in the host country. Not being a member of the Vietnamese community, I also encountered discreet critiques of it as well as vigorous defensive contradictions of such critiques. In addition, I was drawn into the cultural web of reciprocity as an experienced member of the wider society with specialist knowledge who could help out in some ways. Such help ranged from setting up internet accounts to showing how to access state services and information. This vertical relationship of equals was time-consuming but in this way I was not involved in a power relationship that closes off real communication. I often felt that I was pulled in two directions like Concha DELGADO-GAITAN (1993) as I did what was "right" culturally by one group but strayed from what was culturally the norm as a researcher. For instance, I felt caught in the border zone of being known, trusted, and working on culturally valued and trusted verbal agreements. But, like a good, honourable researcher, I had also produced a consent form. An "official" consent form document immediately creates a different impression and relationship (as I knew). Countries of origin with monolithic regimes have different attitudes to documents requiring signatures: they arouse suspicion (as I knew and felt ashamed for trying to impose such a horizontal power relationship). Inevitably, both researcher and researched become caught in this border area between different cultural expectations. [38]

7. Concluding Remarks

Researching a group of people who are culturally different, some of whom also had tragic experiences, is difficult, emotionally draining and time-consuming. Research papers can also gloss over such cross-cultural difficulties, particularly when from their own experiences, Elena YU and William LIU (1986, p.493) considered writing about methodological problems as "controversial". Naomi NAGY (2000), Alison D'ANGLEJAN, Gisele PAINCHAUD and Claude RENAUD (1986) and Elena YU and William LIU (1986) do, however, present candid discussions of researcher intentions and the ensuing reality. Elena YU and William LIU (1986) present a detailed analysis of research with Vietnamese refugees that detail suspicion of researcher motives, misconceptions concerning

research methods and researcher problems defining ethnic group membership and locating interviewees among others. Clearly, engaging in cross-cultural research raises questions around our practice as social science researchers and the time frames we impose on carrying it out. [39]

Specifically, adherence to ethics guidelines, for instance, can be in some conflict with the relations we build with members of communities whose cultural values, for instance around friendship or trust, impact on the norms of both our own and institutional expectations. It appears that a researcher also requires intercultural competencies and the necessity to engage in self-reflexivity with regard to positionality and its impact on intercultural relations and communication with research participants. Bernard BLACKMAN (1983, p.290) was moving towards self-reflexivity in intercultural research and writes of the "researcher who engages in the systematic study of his or her own reactions" and that such study can develop through the constant comparative method of grounded theory. Finally, researchers should not be afraid of a creative rather than a slavish use of grounded theory. Such a perspective provides a systematic approach to disentangle the webs of interconnectedness that underlie cross-cultural relations and evolving competencies in intercultural research. [40]

Acknowledgements

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