
The New Research Agenda for a Cultural Psychology

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Abstract

Qualitative methods are the investigative tools of choice for the field of cultural psychology, in which the study of meaning is central. The process of cultural psychological research calls for an approach that emphasizes the quality of the relationship between researchers and participants. We argue for the importance of this relationship in the development of the validity and usefulness of such work. Methods within this framework often include dialectic communication, respect, participatory partnership, inductive reasoning, and the taking of extra time as necessary. In this paper, research projects with urban Canadian street youth, Inuit prison inmates, and Inuit community members experiencing a youth suicide epidemic are provided as case studies that highlight the relational motif in qualitative research.

The field of cultural psychology, alive in various forms for quite some time, has been burgeoning since about 1990 (Bruner, 1990; Cole, 1990; Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990). Cultural psychology is a multi- and interdisciplinary crossing but primarily involves the epistemological middle ground between psychology and anthropology. Some of its roots stem from the earlier work of Luria (1976), Mead (1934), and Vygotsky (1962). Arising also from the growing subdisciplines of psychological (e.g., Bock, 1994, 1999; Shore, 1996; Shweder & LeVine, 1984) and cognitive (e.g., D'Andrade, 1995; Hutchins, 1996; Strauss & Quinn, 1997) anthropology, cultural psychology has developed out of a dissatisfaction with psychology's psychic unity or universalist model of the mind (Shweder, 1990), cross-cultural psychology's treatment of culture as an independent variable rather than as a process

(Greenfield, 1997), and psychology's self-limiting ethnocentric logic (Seeley, in press). Cultural psychology includes or overlaps with a number of fields of investigation within psychology, including situated cognition (Kirshner & Whitson, 1997), social and shared cognition (Nye & Brower, 1996; Resnick, Levine, & Teasley, 1991), and intentionality (Rosen, 1995). Its focus is on the understanding of not only how mind constitutes culture but more importantly of how culture constitutes mind. Cultural psychology examines the process of the social or cultural construction of the person – including thoughts, emotions, motivation, development, identity, and other psychological constructs. “Culture” in cultural psychology encompasses collective identities, meanings, experiences, and practices, and is usually conceptualized, in the Kroeber-Kluckhohn sense, as “collective symbolic discourse” (Kuper, 1999, p. 16). In keeping with the more recent trend in anthropology, culture goes beyond reference to traditional exoticism and moves, both in focus and definition, to the inclusion of less distant “others” within the same landscape, and may encompass beliefs, traditions, and ideologies with respect to such collective categories as age cohort, gender, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and even workplace (Augé, 1994; Kuper, 1999).

At the centre of cultural psychology is the study of meaning. It leans on the hermeneutic or interpretive side of psychology. Thus, of utmost importance is the understanding of meaning from the participant's (“native's”) point of view. Bruner (1990) writes that cultural psychology also “seeks out the rules that human beings bring to bear in creating meanings in cultural contexts. These contexts are always *contexts of practice*. It is always necessary to ask what people are *doing or trying to do in that context*” (p. 118). Qualitative research methods, through a process that can be both inductive and deductive, allow for the understanding of such rules people have for making sense of their worlds specific to various domains of enquiry. We agree with Ratner (1997) that “[t]he task of inferring mental activity from extensive expressions is the central and distinguishing concern of qualitative methodology” (p. 59), and that it is a highly suitable methodology for cultural psychology. Accessing extensive expressions in the form of narratives people use to interpret their worlds is one of the focal points in the

psychological study of meaning.

This article is a look at the application of qualitative research methods to cultural psychology in three ongoing studies. We will show how qualitative approaches can help bring meaning into the open, or make it at least more accessible in the research arena. The following case studies are included without intention to provide an analysis of the narrative data. They are presented as examples of process rather than content per se, particularly of the richness of narratives gathered through *relationships* fostered in cultural qualitative research. We would like to engage the reader, albeit briefly, in this process, and to consider some of the commonalities in the relationship between researchers and those being researched across the three studies. Different types of qualitative studies exist (Rogers, 2001), and there are different meanings of “participation” in participatory research (Heron & Reason, 2001). The case studies that follow differ along a number of dimensions, besides their having been drawn from different populations, including the participatory roles of those being researched and the action strategies being planned as outcomes.

In order to set the stage for the brief description of these studies, we shall begin by highlighting seven teachings we have found to be crucial in making this form of inquiry (see Maxwell, 1996; Smith, Harré, & Van Langenhove, 1995): (1) The relationship between researcher and participant becomes dialectical or interactionist, actively developing along the way as knowledge unfolds (Riegel, 1978). The mutual disclosure of personal history and experience, for example, can add great depth to this process. (2) Negative experiences with researchers affect the memories and attitudes of certain groups; researchers have often assumed a position of knowing what is best for the participant or even assuming knowledge of the participant; researchers have communicated the purpose of the study in ways that have been unfamiliar to the participant; and researchers have left without feedback or further contact. Several groups, including some First Nations and Inuit communities in Canada, have banned outside researchers. Respect is finally being added to the list of requirements in ethical procedures documents. (3) Through the involvement of participants toward an outcome they desire for their group, a study can be participatory. Asking participants about their goals, working these into the project, providing participants with feedback and themes from the analysis of their narratives, and incorporating their feedback into the write-up takes one beyond the usual research role in psychology. This can include involving participants as co-investigators. (4)

Some populations who may be difficult to reach or who are often quite inaccessible to study can be approached in this manner. (5) Although the process may be deductive, we favour induction in that we search for the participant’s own words and meanings of concepts rather than assume we know what our otherwise common terms mean. As one of us learned from Inuit youth, the word “bored” for some means a combination of sadness and agitation related to personal loss. (6) The extra time taken with each person or group goes a long way toward establishing the rapport necessary for understanding and trust to develop. We take the time to tell the person about ourselves and about the nature of and reasons for the project. We hold that it is important for researchers and participants to understand each other. (7) If we are establishing good relationships, word spreads about us and the study, and others will not only be more likely to be open to our invitation but we may even be approached by some who would like to participate. These seven teachings run through the following case studies, though each study involves different populations, contexts, and analyses. Thus, these central elements/teachings would appear to form a “common core” of the types of research relationships inherent to the qualitative research approach to cultural psychology.

Street Youth in Toronto and Vancouver: Sean Kidd

Street youth have received little attention in the research literature and are overlooked or trivialized in most social forums (Shissel, 1997). These youth commonly come from troubled and abusive family backgrounds, have stressful and traumatic experiences on the street, and often suffer from mental health problems (Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Bao, 2000; Yoder, 1999). Over three years I have developed a program of research that examines the narratives and meanings street youth associate with suicide. The topic of suicide served as an entry point into discourse with street youth regarding the sociocultural and personal problems they face.

To this end, I interviewed approximately 140 street youth in agencies and on the streets of Toronto and Vancouver. As these interviews progressed, my stereotypical understandings of people who were homeless, involved in prostitution, and addicted to substances were repeatedly challenged and broken down. My stereotypes were generally negative, having been taken up from cultural forums regarding individuals on whom society places labels such as prostitute, drug addict, and criminal. Through many very positive and interesting interactions with these youth my understandings of street youth and their lives came to be

based more upon my conversations with them than upon my hitherto naïve prejudices. My research framework fundamentally shifted from an individualistic, suicide risk-factor approach to a sociocultural focus with an agenda of increasing awareness and empowerment in line with what has been called action research (Stringer, 1999). The following is an example of the kind of story that challenged my beliefs and has provided insights into the problems street youth face and the tragic solutions many pursue.

Okay... personal experience... you can see all the scars on my hands, and wrists, and arms and... I've got them all over. Not to mention a lot of internal damage from overdosing... well... purposely trying to overdose. Basically I was 14 when everything started to go wrong. I turned to knives. Razors. Especially on the street. Life became really horrible. Because when you are 14 and you are with people who are like 17. I didn't know how anything worked. I put myself in a really risky situation and I just didn't know how to deal. I was being used and I didn't know why. I was being used as a drug runner to get people their drugs. I was being pimped off. Not to other people, but to them. They were using me for whatever they desired. And, in my mind I didn't mind. But when I was finally brought home... I went down to 60 pounds. I was not eating. And I was feeling absolutely horrible about myself. I didn't want to continue on any longer. It was really hurtful, because when I finally got taken home and it clicked in my head... "hold on, they were using me," I felt this big [holds fingers close together]. When home life got bad that's [suicide] what I turned to. When street life got bad, that's what I turned to. One of the most major attempts that I did, was... I actually had hung myself. And I wasn't breathing. I was unconscious. I was blue and purple from the neck up. I remember like two minutes, and I couldn't breathe... and suddenly I had this overwhelming urge that I wanted to live and I couldn't undo what I did. If my mom hadn't found me, I would be dead.

There were three key elements inherent to qualitative inquiry that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences of street youth. The first was the development of common goals and agreement about the medium through which those goals might be achieved. I explained to the informants that my goals were to help develop suicide intervention/prevention programs for street youth, to attempt to educate mainstream society about the problems faced by street youth, and to advocate for their rights. Had they thought that an academic paper would be the only outcome of the study, it is unlikely that they would have shared their experiences in any depth. They were, however, willing to make a major effort if it

could potentially help improve their lives and the lives of other street youth. Their understanding of how this would be achieved was to have their stories heard and we agreed that my role would be as a kind of ambassador, bringing their narratives to those who might make a difference.

The second important element was the interview format. In the interviews, the participants were given primary control of the process. I quickly learned that, paradoxically, asking fewer questions resulted in more information. I would periodically introduce topics and follow where they led. I did not directly question the participants about painful and personal areas such as history of sexual abuse. Instead, I brought up the topic generally and left it up to them to determine how deeply they wanted to share their experiences. The interviews, in many cases, became conversational where the participants incorporated into the topic at hand questions about my own experiences. Such an approach, I feel, had a substantial influence when working with this group for whom power and control were major themes arising from past experiences of abuse, violence, and survival on the street.

The third component was the dynamic process of the qualitative interview. Developing rapport was vital in an area such as suicide, which taps into very personal narratives of abuse and suffering. The street youth whom I interviewed often gave me the impression that they were testing me. They asked me questions and watched closely how I reacted to what they had to say. Without a sense of trust, the interviews would likely have been superficial and limited in scope. Overall, the result of this approach was a group of informants who were motivated to share many painful experiences, guiding the interview to far deeper levels than I had thought possible before the study began. That the participants had a positive experience with the interviews was evident in the way that many described the study to their friends and suggested that they also do the interview. Also, I felt welcome socially as they included me in their conversations, greeted me on the street, and occasionally invited me to join them on the sidewalk.

The effect on me was also considerable. I became motivated to repay their trust and do my utmost in making sure that their voices are heard in the research community, public and government forums, and among the people who work with street youth. Following a qualitative content analysis of the interview transcripts, a process which incorporated feedback from the original participants, several steps were taken: (1) A suicide intervention/prevention brochure specific to street youth was distributed among street workers in Vancouver and Toronto.

Another brochure was designed for street youth themselves in “zine” format and included some of their stories (a zine is a brief photocopied brochure/newspaper commonly used by underground or counterculture groups to distribute their stories, art, and opinions). (2) Several research papers have been and continue to be written that are being sent both to academic journals and to outreach workers. (3) Efforts will be made to disseminate this information among high school teachers to help with prevention efforts. (4) I have begun a program of awareness building that includes writing articles for newspapers, contacting radio and television sources, and developing a legislation-focused report to be sent to relevant government officials.

Inuit Prison Inmates: Kate Burkhardt

The nature and magnitude of criminal activity amongst Inuit of the Nunavut Territory of Canada demonstrate alarming trends (Griffiths, Zellerer, Wood, & Saville, 1995). Yet, little research has been conducted to identify forms of intervention and prevention that would be effective with this unique population. My project was designed to utilize perspectives of Inuit inmates toward understanding their criminal involvement and to develop rehabilitation strategies that would most directly meet their needs. The objectives of this study necessitated the use of a qualitative research method, specifically participatory involvement and collaborative interaction (Holstein & Gumbrium, 1995; Kvale, 1996). Through the use of open-ended and culturally appropriate communication, guided by adherence to Inuit direction, I was able to gather accounts that proved invaluable in my attempt to understand Inuit criminality. Inuit offenders who have been largely alienated from research processes because of their ethnic background and status as “criminals” thus were empowered to play an active role in this process.

Upon my presentation of a general information session at the Baffin Correctional Centre (BCC; Iqaluit, Nunavut), the inmates were initially sceptical of my project. They suspected that I, like many researchers previously, would utilize my study to obtain academic credentials and then abandon my work in the Arctic. Contrary to this expectation, my integration into the prison routine, including accepting invitations to join in during mealtimes and recreational activities (e.g., pool and board games), led to casual interaction and informal conversation, enabling the inmates to get to know me in their environment. Rapport was gained with the offenders as I became an ordinary person to them who had a genuine interest in their lives. This interaction was beneficial to me, as well as to the

offenders. I was able to confront my stereotyped ideas about “criminals” and the sources of their behaviour. The offenders in turn began to understand that we had a common objective: to find solutions for the distinct social difficulties encountered in the far North.

Narratives were gathered from the inmates through the use of semistructured interviews, which helped the offenders to provide information most relevant to their unique personal histories. Putting it another way, they were able to co-construct the interview. The offenders related a broad array of stories about their backgrounds, as well as diverse and innovative strategies regarding correctional initiatives in Nunavut, information that would have been impossible to anticipate without their input. The following segments of one of the narratives richly illustrate the experience of being an inmate – an illustration that is typical of the reports:

I mean it's very bad to me [being incarcerated at BCC]... Cause, I don't belong here... Like, I don't want to go back in and out to BCC because I have to take care of my parents... I have to help them out because they need me. I know that. Because they have been telling me not to go back there again, and that means a lot to me... The Land Programs [hunting and traditional skills] helped me out a lot... When I'm just sitting here the time goes very slow. When I'm out there, time goes fast. Looks like, you don't think about [the past abuse] when you are doing something. But when you are just sitting here doing nothing, until you get out, you think about it a lot. Bad things... Like, when I was going in school everything was okay to me, but there was one teacher who came in... used to assault me and that's why I was thinking about him... I'm not like that. I don't want to be like that.

Through the analysis of the narrative categories, subcategories and central themes of the inmates' experiences were conceptualized. These categories addressed education, communities of origin, describing oneself, relationship with women, *Qallunaat* (White people), personal crime, experience at BCC, recommendations for treatment, and hope for the future. Ultimately, the analysis paid attention to several broad aspects, including context, causes, intervening conditions, centrality, and consequences of the phenomena of interest of each interview. Overall, the result was that through their participation in this method of inquiry, the Inuit inmates were able to communicate what they were feeling and how intensely they were feeling it, in terms of alienation, frustration, powerlessness, and abandonment.

It would have been difficult to gain such entry into the offenders' lives through more conventional inves-

tigative modes of inquiry and analysis. On a broad scale, there was a good fit between the qualitative strategies employed in this study and the Inuit culture in that oral storytelling is the traditional form of communication within Inuit society. Furthermore, as many of the inmates were limited in their academic knowledge and spoke Inuktitut as their mother tongue, standardized psychometric procedures would have prevented them from having an integral role in the construction of this project. Within the interview format, they could describe their lived experiences in their own words. Inmates were given an opportunity to provide feedback regarding my results in order to verify my interpretations. The result was that the offenders indicated confidence that the project would benefit Inuit inmates, like themselves, incarcerated at this correctional centre in the future.

In the interest of promoting rehabilitation, each of the participants received a condensed version of the completed study to assist in their journey of recovery. In addition, the results of my project were given to the Nunavut Department of Corrections, as well as to several community agencies that provide services within the justice domain in hopes of improving treatment strategies. Through the implementation of the suggested rehabilitative measures, as BBC is currently attempting, I believe Inuit offenders may be facilitated in taking steps toward cultural and personal healing and their ultimate recovery.

Inuit on Wellness, Sadness, and Suicide: Michael Kral¹

The Inuit of Nunavut have a suicide rate of almost seven times higher than the Canadian national rate, surpassing the highest rates recorded by the World Health Organization (see Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Good, & Kleinman, 1995). Almost all the suicides are those of young people, and in recent years they have been as young as 12. This public health problem is now considered an epidemic, having begun in the early 1980s and increasing every year (Kral et al., 2000). Modernization/westernization has affected the Inuit in a massively life-altering way only over the last 40-50 years; Nunavut is one of the last colonial frontiers, as one Mohawk colleague told me. Current Elders have lived on the land for most of their lives and speak little or no English; their children were removed from the

outpost camps and often placed into residential schools; their grandchildren, the youth and young adults of today, are now or have been in the federal school system and most live in communities that until recently were referred to as settlements. These grandchildren are in many ways disconnected from their Elders and increasingly from their traditional culture, as generations are becoming suddenly segregated. Youth are taking their lives in large numbers in Nunavut.

I have been directing a multidisciplinary project on meanings of wellness, sadness, and suicide among the Inuit. The project began at a conference on suicide in Iqaluit, Nunavut, attended primarily by Inuit people and held in both Inuktitut and English. The idea for the study emerged from group discussions at that meeting, and an Inuit steering committee was formed along with a southern academic research team, who together planned the study in detail. Interviews were conducted in two communities by Inuit and *Qallunaat* fieldworkers with 90 Inuit between the ages of 14-94. The Hamlet Councils and other agencies and individuals in the two communities were involved in the planning long before fieldwork was begun. Local Elders and youth committees participated in finalizing the open-ended, semistructured interview protocol. Sampling was done in a variety of ways, including the use of local radio – a major mode of communication in Nunavut communities, word-or-mouth, telephone, informal socializing, and even walking uninvited into peoples' houses after the fieldworkers became better known (this is normative). Many community groups became involved in the project, given the serious concern Inuit have about suicide in their communities; in fact, groups having anything to do with youth, culture, education, Elders, and health or social services were invited to participate at some level in the running of the project. Level of involvement among these groups varied from assisting with the development of the oral survey to methodological and related suggestions.

Everyone I met in the North knew personally at least a few and often many people who had taken their own lives. It can be said that Nunavut is a culture of survivors. One young Inuk man spoke to me of his high school experience, and his story is sadly all too common. Two themes in this brief excerpt were repeated by many participants: that suicide begets suicide (see Kral, 1998) and of young Inuit being caught between two cultures (see Condon, 1987).

They were dropping like flies. There were lots. I knew everybody, I knew their names. Most of them, or some of them, used to be my classmates. I knew their families, friends. I mean, I used to go out with these guys, play

1 The project described in this section was funded by NHRDP/Health Canada. Research team members have included J. Bruce Minore, Eva Adams, Simona Arnatsiaq, Laurence J. Kirmayer, John D. O'Neil, Ronald J. Dyck, Christopher Fletcher, David Wallace, Henri Migala, and Kristianne Allan. Inuit Steering Committee members have been Eva Adams, Simona Arnatsiaq, Raurri Qajaaq Ellsworth, Rosie Ellsworth, Louis Akearok, Annie Nataq, Geela Giroux, Udlu Pishuktie, Okie Kunuk, and Sheila Levy.

around, laugh around with them. And the next thing you know, they're dead. Committed suicide. And for what reason? Last year we lost someone again. She committed suicide. She was a funny, outgoing person, she was... [Q: What was going on in her life at the time she died?] One thing, she had a friend that committed suicide. For whatever reason. Yeah, they were very close. First he committed suicide, and then a few suicides later, she committed suicide. All I know is that she missed a friend very badly but that friend committed suicide... [later Q: So you were saying that there was nothing to do for (young) people during that winter, mostly?] Yeah, just sitting around, walking around town, doing nothing. [Q: Did they have other things to do?] Well, help out with their families, but once you hit puberty you think you're all on your own. I guess they had nothing to do. They got stuck in two cultures. Like they really didn't know what to do with their lives once they finished school. They lost most of their culture, like going hunting... [Q: What about you?] I used to try and go with my dad during the winter, or spring or summer, go out hunting with him. Trying to stay in school was the main thing I tried... I had to keep in mind that I had to keep up with the Inuit culture. My family members tell me that even though I'm in school, that I shouldn't turn White, so I had to keep up with that, go out hunting with my dad. Kept me busy instead of staying home too long... I kept going out hunting with my dad. Try to remember what my culture was like, although we lost, well, more than half of our culture now. We don't know what to do, we get stuck out there. Mainly the words are getting lost. [Q: The language?] Yeah, the language, most of the language. We don't use much of the language since we're not out on the land anymore. We're not using it as often as they used to. Like we don't use our language as much as we used to anymore. Like some older people would correct us on what to say, like how to say it and the meaning of that word would be difficult to remember because we don't use it anymore.

The four fieldworkers met every morning to discuss the previous day's interviews. We modified the interviews accordingly, and thematic analysis was done daily through this process. Major themes apparent for both positive and negative emotions centred on the importance of talking, the family, the land, and traditional knowledge or *qaujimajatuqangit*. These themes were related back to each community with phone-in discussion via the local radio prior to our leaving. More detailed analysis of these stories will be discussed with members from these communities together with our partner agency, the Nunavut Social Development Council (NSDC), which is responsible for social and cultural development in Nunavut. A report is being written that will include feedback and recommendations from the communities and NSDC to

the Nunavut government, to help with the ongoing re-organization of community wellness and suicide prevention programs in keeping with the meanings and cosmologies of the people living there.

The NSDC and Nunavut government, and the communities, will be using this "living" report in their own way as they see fit. The road to increasing wellness will stem from the wisdom already in the communities. This project has been a partnership between academia and communities, between Inuit and *Qallunaat*, but always under the guidance of an Inuit steering committee. In this case, the qualitative method fits well with a participatory, action-oriented approach to community-based research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Other partnership projects have already emerged from this ongoing study.

Well beyond any formal partnership (and most are relatively informal) is the fundamental importance of personal relationships in this sort of research. This project has taken longer than any of the research team had initially anticipated. Yes, the funding period expired. But the taking of time has allowed dialogue and relationships to develop so that no one felt "rushed" by another. Are we in this for the long haul? If we were not, there would be no project. Or it would be a very poor one typical of the many fly-by-night research studies done with Aboriginal populations. I lived with the Inuit during the winter and spring, went onto the land with them, shared country food (my favourite is raw seal), and have been invited to go hunting when I return. We laughed and cried together, played music together, and I learned to drum dance. I wish I had been able to stay much longer in the North. I continue to be in regular touch with my primary partners and contacts, now friends, and have planned additional research with them based on these preliminary findings. I look forward to my return to Nunavut.

Conclusion

The seven teachings described earlier were evident to the researchers in each of these studies. We all spoke with participants/informants who had had negative experiences with and/or expectations of university researchers. Each of us was "tested" numerous times for our trustworthiness and genuineness. The nature of our interview questions changed along the way on the basis of feedback from participants, and in one study the primary research question itself was co-constructed by community members and researchers. In this way, inductive reasoning complemented the research questions throughout the process of these studies. We believe that this process facilitated the

involvement of new participants in each study, as many of those who had been interviewed helped us contact others who might not otherwise have participated. Finally, although our time commitment had external constraints (thesis deadlines, grant deadlines), we each made return visits to our respective fields over a period of time ranging from one to four years, and we are still visiting, in contact or collaboration with – one of us even living with at the time of this writing – the participants in the field.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) has articulated, in her highly acclaimed book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, some of the critical questions necessary for research within Aboriginal communities:

Whose research is it?... Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed and framed its scope?... How will its results be disseminated?... These questions are simply part of a larger set of judgments on criteria that a researcher cannot prepare for, such as: Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything? (p. 10).

We would extend these questions to researchers beyond those in Aboriginal communities, beyond those working with street youth, into the very domain of their own research passions. It is crucial to establish whose research agenda one is following, in order to determine whose perspective will be represented in the interpretation of the data. Thus, the analysis of narratives can be very rich. Yet much of this richness depends upon the depth of the relationship established between researchers and participants. This is the *relational motif* of qualitative research. For a study of meaning-making in cultural psychology, the primacy of the process underlying the research relationship cannot be overemphasized. We have provided a sketch of this process, which goes well beyond the often awkward formality of signing a consent form. While complexities and challenges exist in this relational turn in research, we have chosen to highlight the positive. The qualitative process we have outlined shows promise in bringing one's area of interest to life through the interactive understanding of another person or culture's perspective.

The active involvement of researchers with participants is fundamental to the qualitative method. Researchers must be particularly aware of personal biases and the manner in which their studies are conducted, as such factors can dramatically influence both the gathering and subsequent interpretation of data. Our studies have not only informed us about the

nature of our investigations, but have taught everyone involved, the researchers and participants, more about ourselves. While some participants may have held negative opinions toward research, through our use of qualitative techniques we hope that such perspectives may begin to change.

Cultural psychology places emphasis upon how culture and context make up the mind. Through the tools of qualitative research, psychology can set as one of its goals an understanding of the cultural components of experience and identity. Such methods can help promote respectful partnerships between researchers and participants. The studies described briefly in this article represent a new wave in contemporary social research where the boundaries between "us" and "them" are becoming increasingly blurred, with research questions being shared between researchers and participants. In this regard, integrity can be better incorporated into cultural psychological research. The approaches described here in the discovery of meaning are, we believe, a closer approximation to subjective accuracy and thus validity in social research. Qualitative methods, with a focus on the relational motif in research, may provide a prospective momentum to what is becoming a more deeply contextualized psychology.

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Résumé

Les méthodes qualitatives sont les outils d'enquête de choix dans le domaine de la psychologie culturelle, où l'étude de signification prime. Le processus de recherche en psychologie culturelle fait appel à une stratégie qui met l'accent sur la qualité des relations entre les chercheurs et les participants. Nous mettons de l'avant l'importance de cette recherche dans le développement de la validité et l'utilité d'un tel travail. Dans ce contexte, il faut notamment souvent compter sur une communication dialectique, le respect, le partenariat participatif, le raison-

nement inductif et le fait de prendre le temps nécessaire. Dans le présent article, les projets avec des jeunes Canadiens de la rue, les détenus de prison inuits et des membres de la communauté inuit qui font face à une épidémie de suicide parmi les jeunes sont présentés en tant qu'études de cas qui mettent en valeur le motif relationnel en recherche qualitative.

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