

## Staying Native: Conspiracy, Compromise or Collaboration?

Robyn Barry

Faculty of Education and Social Work University of Auckland, New Zealand. r.barry@auckland.ac.nz;  
robyn.barry@actrix.co.nz

When a researcher holds membership within the research setting, social and ethical issues are challenging not only to the researcher, but also the community of researchers and the participants. Traditional research practices and the hegemonic hierarchy of knowledge production are at times vigorously enforced. Some are reluctant to legitimise other less conventional methodologies and approaches. Yet Denzin & Giardina (2007) call for qualitative inquirers to openly challenge these hierarchies of knowledge: *“Qualitative researchers have a moral, ethical, and professional obligation to insert themselves into this space and be heard”* (p.12). I am not issuing a challenge here, but rather taking up the responsibility of expanding methodology when doing so offers new understanding. This paper offers a relatively novel research methodology likely to be of use to others who have access to a research site only because they are involved in it.

My PhD research is a case study of a social housing model for older women, whereby five unrelated women share a sponsored and managed house. I started off as a Trustee of the organisation who built this house, and then volunteered to facilitate the social aspects of this housing model, motivated by the fact that I identify with the older women participants: it could be me living there. The researcher role was the last one I adopted and is subservient to the others. I am firmly situated in the community of research and my involvement gives me access to this research setting. In this study, the fact that the house is a private space, home to the women who live there has a significant influence on the way I conduct this research. Although the setting is a new social housing model, it is not a social experiment, nor is it a social milieu within which to test theories and concepts. The research is situated in a context of discovery which entails theorising based on the data rather than a context of justification whereby data is collected to justify a theory. This presentation illuminates a methodological perspective that is congruent with my particular research setting and objectives. I use examples from the field to illustrate this perspective in practice. Complexities associated with doing research *with* and *for* the community of research are illustrated and explained, as are the protocols of relational based approaches in such a research setting. Ethics is embedded in practice, situated in my responsibilities to those involved in the research. Operating between multiple position, selves and disciplines I respond to the various situations, choosing practices that maintain a duty of care. Fluidity and flexibility are essential traits. Relationships, reciprocity and respect are at the heart of this methodological perspective.

**Keywords:** Multidisciplinary. Transformative Research. Relational. Collaborative Research.

### References

Denzin, N.K., & Giardina M.D. (Eds.) (2007) *Ethical Futures in Qualitative Research: Decolonizing the Politics of Knowledge*. Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press

