Working with emotion: issues for the researcher in fieldwork and teamwork

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This paper addresses the role of emotion in the qualitative research process and in
particular, the effects of emotional experiences on the researcher. Drawing briefly on the
literature, we show the importance of emotion for understanding the research process.
Whilst this literature acknowledges the emotional risk for research respondents, there is
little evidence providing in-depth understanding of the emotions of the researcher. We
consider theoretically and empirically, the significance of emotion throughout the duration
of a research project. Using our own personal experiences in the field, we present a range of
emotional encounters that qualitative researchers may face. We offer suggestions for
research teams who wish to develop strategies for 'managing' emotion and effectively
utilizing 'emotionally-sensed knowledge'. We conclude that unless emotion in research is
acknowledged, not only will researchers be left vulnerable, but also our understandings of
the social world will remain impoverished. The challenge therefore is how to construct
meaning and develop understanding and knowledge in an academic environment that, on
the whole, trains researchers to be rational and objective, and 'extract out' emotion.

Introduction

The development of a sociology of emotion has identified the significance
of emotion in everyday life, yet the role of emotion in the research process
(part of a researcher's everyday life) is still not accorded the recognition it
deserves (Young and Lee 1996). This paper highlights the importance of
understanding emotion as a crucial part of the research experience and
addresses how research teams need to develop strategies to 'manage' the

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emotions of researchers for the duration of the project. In doing so, we demonstrate theoretically and empirically, that 'emotionally-sensed knowledge' is an indispensable part of the research process.

The fact that fieldwork can involve emotional experiences on the part of the respondent is now fairly well understood and those of us who carry out qualitative research involving in-depth interviewing are well aware of the ethical issues that are raised when we tap into areas that are emotionally sensitive for the respondent. That is, we are conscious of the ethical issues that are concerned with the respondent's experience. Yet, the researcher is also involved in the interview and is not immune to emotional experiences in the field. This is a problem that needs to be addressed as it constitutes a risk to the well-being of the researcher. However, although emotional issues are often mentioned in fieldwork accounts, the literature on research methodology aimed at sociologists and other social scientists working at the 'coal face', tends not to include emotional distress among the dangers which researchers may have to face (see, for example, Punch 1994: 85).

In part, this omission may be because it is understood that perhaps we tend intuitively to 'screen ourselves out' of projects which deal with what we recognize as personal danger areas. For example, some of us would avoid research on child abuse because we know ourselves to be deeply affected by accounts of children in distress encountered through the mass media. However, we cannot always anticipate emotional challenges, as they frequently arise as the result of discourse that is only indirectly related to the focus of the research.

The importance of protecting the respondent from emotional threat regularly appears in methodology texts. However, these warnings fail to acknowledge that when a situation evokes emotions on the part of the respondent, it might also be an emotional experience for the researcher. Furthermore, when detached from the situation we often feel, perhaps naively, confident that we will handle the situation appropriately. The challenge of face-to-face interviews may even be regarded as a refreshing change from tussles with sociological theory, and those of us who are drawn to qualitative research may be particularly attracted to the human experience which fieldwork involves.

Where the literature does discuss the issue of emotionally charged interviews as problems for the researcher rather than for the respondent, it is in terms of protecting the researcher's project rather than her or his self; i.e. the problem is viewed in relation to the integrity of the data, rather than the sensitivities of the researcher. Thus Fontana and Frey (1994: 367), reiterate the 'traditional' concern that establishing close rapport may create problems for the research as the researcher may loose his or her distance and objectivity, over-identify with the individual or group under study, and 'forgo the academic role'. Yet, however 'scientific' sociologists may claim their methods to be, the researcher is not merely an instrument to facilitate data collection. We can and do react. And while we endeavour to ensure that our data are unsullied by our personal feelings, can we ensure that our personal feelings are unaffected by the data? Our own personal experiences of fieldwork tell us that we cannot.

When we were all colleagues in a Research Unit working in a variety of research teams, we frequently found ourselves discussing the issues raised by emotional responses in the field. First, these experiences range from uncomfortable to traumatic and we recognize the potential in qualitative research for emotional experiences that can affect us long after the interview is over. At worst, as well as being personally disturbing, they can have profound effects on our future involvement in social research if they are not properly acknowledged and managed. This paper represents a step towards acknowledging the emotional dangers for the researcher that are inherent in qualitative research and the development of ways of coping with them. Second, the emotionality of the research process is a vital part of the investigation. The emotions of the respondent and also those of the researcher are likely to influence and inform our understandings of the topic under investigation. By discussing the role of emotion in research we aim to explore some of the ways in which emotion impacts on our understandings of the data.

We begin with a brief discussion of the literature which addresses the role of emotion in the research process. We then give accounts of three examples from our own experiences in the field and describe how we dealt with these challenges at the time and their aftermath. Finally, we offer some suggestions to help research teams 'manage' emotion and develop an understanding of 'emotionally-sensed knowledge' in research.

Background

Emotion can be defined simultaneously and inseparably as a sensuous, cognitive and social/cultural experience (Burkitt 1997, Lupton 1998) or as Williams (1998b: 750) so poignantly puts it, 'Emotions, in other words are *emergent* properties, located at the intersection of physiological *dispositions*, material *circumstances* and socio-cultural *elaboration*' (his emphasis).

Emotions are one domain of the research process which can be divided into three inter-related components. First, there is the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) of a researcher. For instance, during fieldwork the researcher may encounter emotionally disturbing situations, such as witnessing a respondent who is experiencing psychological distress. Researchers may find themselves in situations where emotional support for the respondent is called for. Through encounters and experiences in the field, a researcher may also reflect on their own lives and personal situations which in turn, may induce feelings about their sense of self. Second, there is the role of 'emotionally-sensed knowledge' in the research process. This refers to the epistemology of emotion, where emotion contributes towards understanding and knowledge. The researcher uses their emotion in the field, in discussions with colleagues, during personal reflections and when analysing the data, to gain insight and give meaning to their interpretations of the subject that they are investigating. Third, there is a sociology of emotion. This relatively new and growing field has been described as the 'leading edge' of contemporary social theory (Bendelow and Williams 1998). A researcher may describe the types of emotion that respondents

express and they may also interpret the nature of the rules that govern the presentation of feelings, which are subject to these rules, within particular social settings (Bendelow and Williams 1995, Bendelow and Williams 1998, Cahill & Eggleston 1994, Gurney 1997, Jackson 1993, Williams 1998a).

For the purposes of this paper, we focus particularly on the emotional labour of researchers. We aim to examine the ways in which researchers carry out emotional labour and at the same time, examine how research teams can support researchers in dealing with emotion. At the same time, we offer some personal reflections on the role of emotionally-sensed knowledge in research.

Emotional labour in research

Emotional labour may be defined as the type of work that involves feelings and may be contrasted with physical or task-oriented labour (Hochschild 1983, Phillips 1996). Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of emotional labour to describe the management of feeling that a range of jobs in modern society demand. For instance, she describes the ways in which flight attendants manage their emotion and the 'feeling rules' which provide a context for this emotional labour. Her main focus is on the ways in which emotions are increasingly commodified in capitalist society and on the effects that this has on those engaged in emotional labour. Other professional groups, particularly those who work closely with other people, may also implicitly recognize that much of their work includes an emotional component (see, for example, Nias 1996 for a discussion of emotions in teaching; Meerabeau and Page 1998 for an example of emotional labour in nursing). This aspect of the job however, is often perceived as less important than cognitive or technical abilities. In nursing, for instance, emotional labour is often glibly downgraded to notions of female intuition, tender loving care and having a good bedside manner. As a consequence, the caring and affective aspect of nursing is denigrated to secondary status (Phillips 1996).

The concept of emotional labour is useful for understanding the role of a researcher. Although researchers need to learn various 'techniques', for example budget management, team work, writing styles, interviewing skills etc. the overwhelming majority of these 'technical' aspects of the job also incorporate emotional labour (Kleinman and Copp 1993, Young and Lee 1996). However, the emotional labour of a researcher is undervalued and at worst, ignored altogether. Why there is a lack of recognition of emotional labour in traditional research methods is partly explained by Laslett (1990). In a compelling biographical account of the late American sociologist, William Fielding Ogburn (1886–1959), she explains why sociologists at the beginning of this century supported a positivist, scientific study of society that was supposedly free from emotion. She suggests that this was partly due to historical events, institutional developments and cognitive interests, but she also believes that a positivist paradigm had emotional meaning for Ogburn's personal life. Similarly, she argues that this 'unfeeling knowledge' that was constructed by men and based on 'cool rationality' was

partly an assertion of manhood in response to changing gender roles and relations and was thus a reaction against femininity. In a man's world, there was no role for acknowledging emotion in research methods or in the creation of knowledge because it was soft, subjective, irrational, passionate, dangerous and potentially out of control: in sum, feminine.

A feminist interpretation of the predominance of positivism and the absence of acknowledging emotion in research methods is not the only account. The interpretative paradigm also challenged this way of thinking because it turned attention towards the significance of personal experiences, attitudes and beliefs and contested the premise that social 'facts' had any existence independent of the interactions and constructions of members of society. Thus, it prepared the ways towards acknowledging the role of subjective experience in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

Emotional risks for respondents

One of the ways in which qualitative researchers began to acknowledge the emotional domain in research was to take account of the emotional risk for respondents. The emotional risk for respondents, especially for those involved in sensitive topics, is now widely accepted (Lee 1993) and the need for researchers to adhere to ethical guidelines is well established. For example, the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (1999) states:

> In many of its guises, social research intrudes into the lives of those studied. While some participants in sociological research may find the experience a positive and welcome one, for others, the experience may be disturbing. Even if not exposed to harm, those studied may feel wronged by aspects of the research process. This can be particularly so if they perceive apparent intrusions into their private and personal worlds, or where research gives rise to false hopes, uncalled for self-knowledge, or unnecessary anxiety. Members should consider carefully the possibility that the research experience may be a disturbing one and, normally, should attempt to minimise disturbance to those participating in research. It should be borne in mind that decisions made on the basis or research may have effects on individuals as members of a group, even if individual research participants are protected by confidentiality and anonymity.

Various strategies have been recommended to reduce respondent distress and provide a degree of protection. For example, researchers should: be vigilant in anticipating problems, render appropriate support, arrange appropriate referrals, debrief after the interview, offer rest breaks during interviews, provide immediate therapeutic intervention, pace the interview so that topics emerge gradually and use distress mitigation strategies such as alcohol during the interview. It has also been proposed by Atley and Rodham (1998: 280) that the interviewer should inform the respondent that they understand their distress and should offer to discuss the issues in detail after the interview. Indeed, they even suggest that it is unethical to fail to provide such an opportunity and say, 'Researchers embarking on a project that focuses on sensitive issues would not be fulfilling their obligations to respondents if they did not ''debrief'' the respondents and talk through the complex issues and feelings they may have aroused.'

Many researchers may find this problematic. First, it assumes that therapy and debriefing sessions actually work. Second, it implies that a researcher is capable of discussing these issues and has counselling skills. Third, it presupposes that researchers have an inclination to give counselling and support, and fourth, it ignores the potential of any emotions aroused in the researcher and the support that he or she might need. Despite these reservations, we recognize that counselling may be one of the ways in which respondents and researchers choose to manage some of their emotional experiences, particularly those they find distressing. Although the potential for evoking respondent distress is now commonly accepted, it is also acknowledged that involvement in research may be beneficial. Hutchinson *et al.* (1994) for example, have categorized the many benefits to participating in research for the respondent, these are: catharsis, self-acknowledgement, sense of purpose, self-awareness, empowerment, healing and providing a voice for the disenfranchised.

Researchers' emotions

Whilst the interpretative paradigm placed subjective experience at the heart of sociological research, it was feminist methodology that made the role of researcher's emotion explicit to the research process. For example, Stanley and Wise (1983) show how the practice of research engages the researcher in an act of self-reflexivity. That is, researchers simultaneously draw on previous theoretical ideas and experiences, develop and construct new theoretical ideas and re-create themselves in the process, and the idea that research practice was an emotional, personal journey became increasingly acknowledged.

One area where the emotions of the researcher have become increasingly acknowledged is in the field of health (Atley and Rodham 1998, Ellis and Bochner 1999, Kitwood 1997, Lee-Treweek 2000, Mills and Coleman 1994, Young and Lee 1996). Within dementia research for instance, Mills and Coleman (1994: 214) recognize that listening to older people with dementia can pose difficulties for the researcher. They acknowledge that some of the negative and powerful feelings displayed by the respondent may occasionally transfer 'themselves to the researcher, who during these times' may feel 'helpless, vulnerable, and forlorn'. Other researchers have also begun to locate the role of emotion in research. Kleinman and Copp (1993) provide an in-depth account of some of the emotions experienced by qualitative researchers. They mention that qualitative researchers may feel foolish and vulnerable compared to their quantitative colleagues because of the overwhelming predominance of a positivist paradigm in research. Through personal vignettes, they also show how feelings about research participants, collecting data and the writing process, can evoke positive and negative emotions. Lofland and Lofland (1995: 46–65) describe common situations for participant observers that may cause emotional distress. For example, researchers may feel uncomfortable if they deceive the people being observed when they do not totally reveal the true nature of their study. Furthermore, researchers

may actually loathe the people they are observing but are compelled to hide these feelings. Alternatively, researchers may feel a great impulse to help the people in the investigation and, 'must often struggle with the personally painful question of whether to throw in the towel on doing research and give themselves over entirely to ''helping'' or to remain in the field as a chronicler of difficulties'. (Lofland and Lofland 1995: 51). Lofland and Lofland make some suggestions for how researchers can deal with these emotional distresses. First, actually knowing that emotional distress is a natural part of the research experience may lesson its impact. Second, researchers should keep in contact with fellow researchers and friends with whom these problems can be discussed or they should keep a personal diary.

Through an exploration of her own experiences as a researcher of intimate and sensitive topics, Brannen (1988) argues the need for protection of both respondent and interviewer. She offers an in-depth exploration of how the interview situation may adversely affect the respondent, the interviewer and the data and from her account we can see how the three are interrelated. For example, Brannen says that we need to approach sensitive topics gradually in the interview to reduce the chances of upsetting the respondent. She recognizes that both respondents and interviewers may potentially exert power in the interview and that respondents, particularly if they are working class and female, are open to exploitation. This can be reduced in non-directive, in-depth interviews where there is more opportunity for the respondent to dictate the content and form of the data. Furthermore, the respondent is vulnerable if the interview takes place within ear-shot of others and is also unprotected if she/he has no say in how the findings are re-interpreted, disseminated and used. To protect the researcher from being drawn into the respondent's problems, Brannen suggests that a second researcher can be present who remains silent and is not in visual range and this may ease the intensity of the one-to one relationship. She also accepts that the researcher may get caught up in his or her own feelings during the interview or may feel constrained in their role as researcher because they want to help the respondent. She recommends that 'researcher-support' needs to be formalized in the research process to improve psychological well-being and morale. However, she believes that this task will be difficult because the interview is given low status in the research process. Brannen is aware of the role of emotion in the research process and suggests that whilst we are interpreting the data, we should acknowledge that the respondent's account is, 'shrouded in emotionality' and will be ambiguous and contradictory.

Emotionally-sensed knowledge

Likewise, a researcher's account of respondents' experiences will also be 'shrouded in emotionality'. As researchers listen to, and attempt to understand and interpret respondents' lives, they will be using their cognitive and emotional functioning. Hochschild (1983:32) touches on the role of emotion for understanding the social world when she says that 'we

infer other people's viewpoints from how they display feeling'. Hochschild (1983: 31) suggests that emotion has a 'signal function' just as hearing and seeing, which act as clues 'in figuring out what is real'. Whilst an emotional way of knowing may be contrasted with an objective, scientific approach, it is more appropriate to perceive our emotional and cognitive functioning as inseparable. Williams (1998b) contends that feelings and passions continuously threaten to overspill or transgress the rational control, mechanical and reasoned logic of contemporary society. Rather than counter-posing human emotion and rational thought, Williams (1998b: 761) instead believes that, 'without emotions, social life, including our decision-making capacities and our ability to make informed choices amongst a plurality of options, would be impossible'. In doing so, he reminds us that we are not just rational and reasoned beings but are also highly emotional. Game (1997) also focuses on the role of emotion in the development of human thought and is sceptical about a sociology of emotion, believing that it will simply lead to the objectification of emotion. That is, emotion will become just another social phenomenon that can be studied using objective and systematic 'emotion-free' methodologies. Game argues that sociologists must recognize that emotion is the way of knowing the world. Knowledge is not something objective and removed from our own bodies, experiences and emotions but is created through our experiences of the world as a sensuous and affective activity. Game's main point is that emotions are the means by which we make sense of, and relate to, our physical, natural and social world. In this sense, emotion has epistemological significance because we can only 'know' through our emotions and not simply our cognition or intellect. From a similar position, Ellis and Bochner (1999) argue for the centrality of emotion in research. Using illness, death and dying as a case study, they claim that the dominant paradigm of medical social science is a methodological orientation where the significance of emotional and bodily experience is minimized and where respondents' and researchers' experiences are not easily conveyed by conventional concepts or abstract knowledge. This means that research tends to teach us the 'outcomes' from the experience rather than providing us with a fuller appreciation of the 'processes' and details of the experience. Researchers are trained to use the distanced, academic voice of the medical social sciences and provide windows into events in respondents' lives but rarely into their emotions. Through emphasising the conceptual and theoretical, we avoid emotional vulnerability and close down a way of learning about our social world.

Drawing on her own experiences as a researcher on childbirth, Wilkins (1993: 94) argues for researchers to understand the social and emotional and thus autobiographical sources of their academic insights. In doing so, she rejects the 'intellectual cover-up of emotion, intuition, and human relationships in the name of expert or academic knowledge.' Instead, she shows through her own autobiographical account, how a researcher's emotions constitute key cognitive and analytic resources and are thereby capable of yielding important sociological insights. She draws two conclusions from her personal experiences. First, a researcher's emotional response has the ability to alert them to the meanings and behaviours of

those she or he is interviewing. Second, emotion has an interpretative function because it enables the researcher to gain intuitive insight and subsequently inchoate knowledge arises. Similarly, Lee-Treweek (2000) uses her emotional experiences during fieldwork in a nursing home as data to explore the emotion work and emotion rules of auxiliary nurses in a particular social setting. She concludes that the emotion of the researcher often mirrors those experienced by the researched.

In these ways, the roles of emotional labour and of emotionally-sensed knowledge have been increasingly acknowledged in social research. In the remainder of this paper we wish first to illustrate, through our own fieldwork encounters, some of the range of emotions which are evoked for qualitative researchers. We then discuss the implications of these experiences for the research process, research management and team-working.

Experiencing emotion in fieldwork

Being upset

During an interview when two or more people meet, and whatever is discussed, there will be an emotional dimension. Emotions are inescapable because how we make sense of the world and our interactions with others is an emotional relation. Researchers investigating sensitive topics are aware that the interview will be an emotional experience. However, all encounters between respondents and interviewers will inevitably be emotional. During an interview, researchers may only acknowledge the emotions of the respondent and they may even deny the existence of their own emotional response. Having said this, researchers may find it impossible to ignore their emotions if they are overwhelming. One emotion that emerges in an interview that can prove difficult for a researcher is when they themselves become personally upset. An interview can be an upsetting experience for a number of reasons, for example a respondent's story may evoke upsetting images because it reminds the researcher of their own personal experiences or they empathize with the respondent's sad story.

During an interview, one of the authors found a respondent's account of the death of their father particularly upsetting. The respondent's father had died only a year before the interview took place and he was evidently quite emotional when talking about it. The death of anyone's father is usually an occasion for sadness and the author easily empathised with the respondent's loss. However, what she was not expecting and not prepared for, was her own emotional response to observing someone in an interview being tearful and evidently upset. When she saw that the respondent was starting to cry, she asked him if he wanted the interview to stop. This was equally for her own benefit as it was for the respondent's because she was unsure of her own emotional response to the situation and was worried in case she also began to cry. For what seemed like a very long time but was only a matter of a few seconds, the respondent 'pulled himself together'. What was acutely uncomfortable for the author was observing someone

attempting to control their feelings. It was not so much the death of the father that was upsetting the researcher but the fact that it had caused so much obvious grief for the respondent and that he was trying so hard to suppress his feelings.

Even after the interview the author tried to resolve her emotional response to the interview situation by crying in the private confines of her car and by describing to close friends and colleagues at work what had happened. Furthermore, on subsequent interviews she intentionally tried to avoid emotionally distressing situations by deliberately failing to establish rapport and empathy. It was only after several weeks had passed that she felt confident enough to once again try to establish rapport and trust and open herself to the risk of being emotionally distressed. However, she still could not quite come to terms with the intimacy of the interview situation where two complete strangers had shared an intense emotional experience.

Getting angry

Another of the authors was involved in in-depth interviewing for a study of aspects of the division of domestic labour among young couples. The study was longitudinal and each respondent was interviewed twice, once before setting up home together and once again a few months after they moved in together. The men and the women were each interviewed separately. One woman described how, before they married, her husband had cooked her many meals and that this had been a feature of their courtship. Now that they were married he no longer cooked but expected her to. He complained about the amount of money she spent on food but had high expectations of what he would be served. He felt that eating out was extravagant (eating out had been another feature of their courtship) and could not understand her desire to eat out when they ate so well at home. The respondent was clearly upset and felt that she had been 'duped'. The researcher felt angry with the husband.

The author had 'established rapport' already at an earlier interview so by this time interviewer and respondent were chatting away like old friends; when good rapport is established this is how an interview is experienced by a respondent. However, the business of research required that the interviewer did not behave like an old friend. It may have *felt* appropriate to both interviewer and interviewee that the author express a negative opinion of the husband's attitudes and behaviour, for example: 'What a bastard! Why do you put up with it?' However, the research demanded that she merely made sympathetic noises and asked (in as non-leading a way as possible) 'And how do you feel about that?'

The author's difficulties were compounded by having to follow up this interview with one with 'the bastard' himself. Her anger aroused, but sufficiently controlled by her professionalism, the danger remained that being confronted by an unrepentant young man extolling the virtues of marriage to a wonderful cook would be too much for her.

In the event, the author found that just as she had established rapport with the wife at an earlier interview, so she had with the husband so that, when they sat down to talk, he was not longer 'the bastard' but the man who was generously helping her with her research. And indeed, his discussion of who did what and why made very interesting data. The young man described the division of labour exactly as his wife had, clearly took it for granted that this was as it should be and complained that his wife sometimes tried to bully him into cooking a meal. (However, on listening to the tape of his interview the following day he became 'the bastard' again.)

So no harm done? On the contrary; the author felt disgusted with herself for feeling angry with someone who had kindly given up their time to be interviewed. The relationship between researcher and respondent is a parasitic one, but this is mitigated by our own sense of rapport with the respondent, so that the exchange at least *feels* equal. This perception was threatened when the researcher felt angry with the respondent and initially she had to put on a front to ensure that rapport was not lost. The author was left with a bad taste in her mouth. She recalled a lecture on methods of social research which she had attended as an undergraduate in which the lecturer had described the nature of qualitative research as inherently manipulative. He had argued that a requirement of good qualitative researchers was that they be cynical and manipulative. She had resisted this notion and felt sure that her own research efforts would not require these personality traits, and indeed could not, as she did not have them. In this interview she was confronted by the knowledge that, to some extent, she did.

Over-empathising

Finally, a further area which can prove emotionally difficult for a researcher is when rapport goes too far. Empathy and understanding are basic social skills which, appropriately used, should characterize good qualitative interviewing as well as indicating respect for respondents' accounts. Sometimes, however, either the particular topic or the emotions it evokes in a respondent can result in a sharing of experiences which are so close to those of the researcher that the maintenance of any kind of professional detachment becomes extremely compromised. Here, her own feelings begin directly to enter into the interaction and the need to share experiences as a friend or supporter becomes irresistible. Usually these reactions can be contained and may simply be stored up for afterwards when they might be shared with a supportive colleague or, as we are trained to do, rationalized, analysed reflexively and seen as data in their own right. Sometimes, however, the interactive characteristics of the in depth interview become extremely powerful and the researcher's reactions to a particular respondent's story or expressed needs result in the desire to share her own story overwhelming the need to continue exploring that of the respondent.

Another of the authors had this experience recently when she was interviewing women about combining paid work and parenting. In

previous research she was accustomed to exploring a wide variety of issues about family life and encountering respondents struggling with challenges and problems that she too had faced, indeed she was carrying out such interviews during the year when her own marriage was failing. However, she was unprepared for the emotions evoked some years later by a particularly articulate and distressed respondent who was then in the first year after marital breakdown and was facing and making many painful decisions about her own and her children's lives. Here, in the face of respondent emotion, the author's early decision in the interview to show empathy by acknowledging that she 'really understood' and had 'been there too', resulted in the respondent to some extent putting the researcher in the role of sounding board and advisor. This resulted in the author trying to continue to conduct an interview, which was not just about marital breakdown, whilst simultaneously avoiding introducing too much of her own strongly felt reactions or giving the sought for advice. Changing the topic too much seemed callous as did resisting the personal engagement and this was combined with a rush of sisterly empathy borne out of painful shared experience. In this situation the author resorted, somewhat ineffectually, to well-worn tactics of body language to indicate sympathy and saying that she had things to say which might help but could these be kept until after the interview. The extent of her emotional turmoil was shown by her at one stage saying, ' I've got a lot I can say about this but I am supposed to be the interviewer here'. Somehow, the author subsequently spending time afterwards with the respondent and suggesting they meet up again for a chat did not seem an adequate response either as a person or as a professional and the author still has not satisfactorily resolved either the emotional response for herself or the feeling that she did not acquit herself appropriately with the respondent.

Emotion, data and the researcher

At this relatively early stage of raising these issues, we offer some personal reflections on the relationship between emotion and data in our fieldwork experiences. One aspect of emotional labour that each of the authors discussed in their fieldwork accounts was establishing rapport with the respondent in the interview setting. This example of emotional labour is widely recognized as an important part of the qualitative interviewer's role. It is assumed that the establishment of rapport, which involves making the respondent feel relaxed, showing empathy and understanding, looking interested in what the respondent has to say etc. will encourage the respondent to 'open up' and talk about their experiences. The ways in which the respondent and researcher establish rapport is implicitly constructed whilst they engage in interactions during the interview. The extent to which emotional labour has to be genuine in the interview setting is far from clear. We do not know for instance, whether a researcher who simply puts on a good act is just as effective at encouraging respondents to convey their thoughts and feelings as one who is genuinely interested and empathises with the respondent's experiences. What is evident from our

own experiences in the field however, is that this aspect of emotional labour (whether genuine or false) may influence our interpretations of respondent's lives, may influence the data collected and may affect our professional and personal identity.

First, respondent's emotion may be used as data. In one of the examples described above, a young man discussed the death of his father with the interviewer. This discussion was shrouded in emotionality and had several implications for data collection and interpretation. The young man's own emotions during the discussion of his father's death alerted the researcher to the significance of his death. Rather than simply listening to the words being said, the researcher was also interpreting how the young man made sense of the death of his father by observing his emotion. It was quite clear by the respondent's distress and by what he was saying, that his father's death was a traumatic event for several reasons. For example, the young man sensed the loss of his father as being one where he now had to take a responsibility for his mother and elder sister. He also felt that he had lost someone in his life who could give him sound advice. The young man had not only lost a father but also had to re-negotiate his male role within the family. Without observing his emotion, it is doubtful that the researcher would have interpreted the significance of the death of his father in the same way.

Second, the emotionality of one interview setting may influence how a researcher manages emotion in the next. The particular interview situation described in the previous paragraph evoked an emotional response from the researcher which in turn, influenced how she conducted the next consecutive interviews. The researcher deliberately failed to establish rapport with the following interview respondents as a way of making sure that they did not 'open up' too much about their personal experiences. As a form of protection, this particular researcher managed her emotion by stifling opportunities for the respondents to talk about distressing events in their lives. When the respondents gave her clues about their experiences, she found herself deliberately failing to probe any further. As a consequence, it was likely that the data collected were different to what she may have collected if she had established rapport. This does not mean that the data were any less valid, but it does mean that they were different.

Third, a researcher's own emotional response to a respondent's experiences can be used to interpret data and may indeed be a necessary part of the reflexive process. Researchers need to reflect on the interview encounter and ask themselves questions such as, why is what the respondent saying making me angry? Why is the respondent not upset about their current situation? What does this tell me about how the respondent makes sense of his or her life? For example, one of the authors has described feeling angry whilst consecutively interviewing a wife and husband on the division of domestic labour. She became fascinated by the discrepancy, not between the two different accounts of their marital life, but by the differing emotions which their very similar accounts evoked in her. This emotional response alerted her to the considerable complexity of the relationship between men and women and their expectations concerning one another's domestic roles. Her own emotion during the interview

prompted her to probe more deeply and to more effect about their domestic relationship than she might have done had she not felt this conflict herself.

Fourth, the author who was exploring women's experiences of combining paid work and parenting shows how emotional experiences in fieldwork can impact on a researcher's professional and personal identity. She was listening to a respondent talk about her marital breakdown. In this particular interview the researcher was doing emotional labour on several levels as she was not only trying to manage respondent emotions, and feeling guilty that she had brought these to the fore, but she was also struggling with her own emotional responses. Furthermore, she was grappling with an important dilemma regularly experienced in qualitative interviewing which is whether or not a respondent digression is actually further illuminating the research question or whether this is potentially unusable data. In this example there was no doubt that issues of marital breakdown were dominating the respondent's parenting experiences and had affected, very positively, her views of her current work situation. In this respect respondent emotions were appropriately highlighting key research issues. However, in this instance, any gains in empathy or emotionally—sensed knowledge on the part of the researcher were outweighed by her feeling that she performed badly both as an interviewer and as a confidant and was left feeling professionally dissatisfied and personally distressed.

Thus, we have shown, through our own experience, that a range of distressing emotions may be felt by researchers, as well as the satisfying ones of a well managed social encounter. We have also made some personal reflections on the ways in which emotion impacts on data, data collection and the sense of self. However, we consider that there is a range of much wider implications for research teams who wish to acknowledge and 'manage' emotion throughout the research process and utilize 'emotionally-sensed knowledge'.

Discussion and implications

A significant development in how researchers carry out their research activities has been acknowledgement of the emotional risks for respondents and following clear ethical guidelines. Whilst we do not wish to deny the importance of recognising that respondents are often placed in vulnerable situations when they take part in our investigations, we also wish to draw attention to the emotional aspects of being involved in research from the researcher's point of view. Through our own personal examples and a review of the literature, we have shown how the research process is not an emotion-free experience. Fieldwork can lead to a sense of euphoria where we feel jubilant and satisfied but it can also evoke feelings of guilt and anger, leaving us upset and miserable. Whilst the role of emotion in research is increasingly acknowledged, there is little guidance for how researchers can 'manage emotions' at the same time as making emotion integral to our understandings of the social world. In this final section, we explore some of the issues raised by this paper for the whole research

process and suggest how emotions can be established as a crucial and inevitable part of the research experience.

The acknowledgement and management of researcher emotions can take place at every stage in the development of the research and in a variety of different contexts such as in the research team, amongst colleagues working on other projects, and within the wider research community.

First, it is important that the grantholders/project managers address the potential impact on all members of the research team at every stage of the project. At the planning stage of a piece of research it is important to be aware of the potential impact on the researcher's own emotions. This is not just a matter of giving consideration to issues about the potential sensitivity of a topic for both researchers and research participants. Decisions about project design itself, taken at the point of the research grant application, can also affect the future challenges for the researcher in the field. For instance, the mode of working in qualitative research is increasingly that of a 'team', but this does not necessarily entail grantholders carrying out any fieldwork or having the same level of in-depth involvement with the data as that characterizing the work of the research fellow to the project. Such possible detachment from the day-to-day realities of conducting fieldwork means that, from the outset, those writing research grants are more distanced from the personal emotional engagements involved in carrying out the fieldwork. We suggest that, throughout the entire research process, all those involved should routinely reflect: 'would I like to do this interviewing?', 'have I faced anything like these fieldwork challenges before?', 'would I be able to cope with this fieldwork?' And these are just some of the challenges that can be anticipated.

Such reflection would set the tone and the groundwork for a team ethos of acknowledging and owning the burdens of fieldwork, whether these be exhaustion, distress, or design plans such as recruitment that prove problematic in the real world. In this way, the emotions involved in doing research would be a shared responsibility of the team and the research fellow would be less likely to see these as simply a matter of personal responsibility or inadequacy. For example, it is often the researcher who is carrying out the fieldwork who bears the main, if not sole, emotional engagement with the respondents. This is usually because it is she or he who actually meets the respondents whereas the rest of the research team is more detached. However, the way in which research teams are organized and responsibilities delegated, means it is often the least experienced researcher who carries out the fieldwork. Grantholders at the inception of the research project need to think about how the research team as a whole can support the fieldworker who is involved in face-to-face encounters with the respondents. That is, research teams need to take collective responsibility for managing emotional risk. Just as grantholders incorporate strategies to protect respondents in the design stage of the research, so they also need to think about strategies for supporting the researcher conducting fieldwork.

Alongside explicitly recognizing emotional issues involved in carrying out fieldwork at the research proposal's inception, research teams also need to be responsive to the emotions that researchers experience throughout the

duration of the project. For instance, it is important to appreciate that, given the open-ended aspect of qualitative research, emotionally challenging fieldwork experiences may sometimes occur unpredictably and be unrelated to the actual topic of inquiry. The researcher should feel able to share such experiences with the team, rather than perhaps feeling in any way responsible for having provoked such interactions with a respondent. These experiences are as much a product of the research as are other data. If it is important for the research project to encourage respondents to 'open up' about sensitive issues, then researchers need to find strategies to manage emotion. Research teams need to encourage techniques such as pacing the interviews, note writing and de-briefing sessions which establish a place for the validation of the emotional work in research. The purpose of this emotion management is not to learn how to avoid emotional experiences but to learn how to acknowledge and utilize them effectively throughout the duration of the project. One result of sharing experiences of emotion throughout the research process may be to facilitate a collaborative learning culture whereby researchers learn from each other how to manage emotional risk in specific contexts and this may make a significant contribution to professional development. But this involves the development of trust and willingness to accept emotion as a valuable and inevitable part of the research experience.

These issues also have a structural dimension concerning the negotiation and management of 'emotion work' and 'feeling rules' within the context of our working environments. From this perspective, emotions are not some individual, unique phenomenon but are shared, created and managed through interactions with others, not only within the interview setting but also within the research team. Furthermore, the context for this 'emotion work' in research teams is within power relationships including those of gender, hierarchy and even personality. Unless grantholders establish a responsive and supportive culture, which acknowledges up-front that researchers may experience emotions during and after fieldwork, a research fellow may feel that it is inappropriate to share problems or admit distress for fear of losing face, or a good reference for the next post. The analytical and writing up stages of research are also unlikely to be free of emotion. Again, without the development of trusting relationships, we may also lose an opportunity for creating insights into our investigations. For example, conflict, tension and challenge within a research team involve emotion which may at times be quite uncomfortable but may also be a way of moving research ideas forward.

Secondly, it is important that researchers feel that they do not have to manage the emotional impact of their work on their own but can rely on the support and advice of colleagues in the wider work environment. In this respect the wider research community, alongside the research team, is also an important arena of support. In the first instance, informal peer and colleague support is also important for researchers, particularly if emotional labour is undervalued by members of their own research team. Chatting in corridors or whilst standing at the coffee machine may be arenas where much discussion about how researchers 'feel' takes place. For instance, this paper was born out of one such encounter, when one of the authors was

discussing with another the considerable distress she had felt during fieldwork, and began to reveal how profound the experience had been for her both in relation to the research findings and personally. However, we do not wish to imply that discussion about emotion is mandatory. Rather, we are suggesting that researchers are given the opportunity to talk about emotional labour in a receptive and supportive environment, which acknowledges that these are shared concerns and are relevant to the research project.

More formal mechanisms may also be developed. The more that the emotional impacts of doing research are seen as valid by the wider research community, the greater is the likelihood that research teams will take the issue seriously. Formal support may involve more literature being published about the subject of emotion, and the production of ethical guidelines to support researchers as well as respondents in these respects. It may also include researchers being offered professional counselling and/or having the issue of emotional labour being an integral part of team meeting agendas. Finally, there should be formally approved mechanisms for assessing the extent to which research managers have been sensitive to the needs and emotional labour of their staff and how this might be improved.

Finally, perhaps the greatest challenge facing researchers is not about developing research teams where emotional labour can be successfully managed, but about recognizing that emotions have epistemological significance. Being emotional is a way of knowing about, and acting in, the social world and is just as significant for how we make sense of our respondents' experiences as our cognitive skills. By acknowledging the role of emotionally-sensed knowledge in our research teams we may be able to further our understandings of the social world. For example, using the emotions of respondents and researchers as interpretative data has implications for analysis beyond the interview setting. Research teams who wish to take emotion into consideration when they are interpreting the data, need to be made aware of these emotions, otherwise this data is lost. That is, the fieldworker needs to be able to convey the emotion expressed in the interview setting to members of his or her research team. This means that researchers need to become more practised in recognising and interpreting emotion, just as they become more practised in making sense of respondents' words and actions. The challenge therefore is how we can construct meaning and develop understanding and knowledge in an academic environment that, on the whole, trains researchers to be objective and 'extract out' emotion. How can we explore and use emotions that appear and are felt so personally, within an academic discipline that requires us to structure our communication in such a way that others can make sense of it? How do we develop emotionally-sensed knowledge as a way of being and knowing, rather than turning it into just another abstract concept? We need to share more practical experiences of research teams who are attempting to be emotional as well as exploring respondents' emotions as a way of understanding the research experience and the social world.

It is intended that this paper will contribute to the process of validating working with emotion in research and of highlighting the importance of the

appropriate management of researcher's emotions as well as those of respondents. These issues are often discussed informally between researchers, but through our work and that of others (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000) we hope that their implications for qualitative research, researchers and the research process will be given the serious attention which we feel they merit.

Disclaimer

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