

Community Research Mythology

Barbara Waldern

Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

*This article is dedicated to an in-depth discussion of the theme “community” and the implications the multiple meanings of community hold for the field of qualitative research. This theme surfaced from Waldern’s 2003 study entitled *Resistance to Research in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside*, which dealt with participant resistance to joining research efforts, and deserves the attention of all social researchers. In this article, the politics of the research process are discussed to evaluate and suggest improvements for reflexive methods of inquiry. Determining that the idea of “community research” is a myth, this work is concerned about making qualitative methods more sensitive to social inequality without compromising their rigour. Key Words: Community Research, Resistance, Reflexive Methods, Methodology, Urbanology, Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and University Relations*

To me, “community” and “community research” are troublesome words. Though widely spoken, the term “community” lacks a common definition. The word “community” is extremely complex because it is linked to class tensions that are intimately related to struggles over claims to space and social identities: It is therefore politically potent. Reflecting popular values regarding democracy and inclusion, it is a popular word. It is perhaps a word frequently employed by researchers who cherish such values. However, its meaning is quite vague and its use inconsistent.

If researchers have not decided on a common definition of “community research” and use the term “community” vaguely, then the question surfaces as to why they refer to “community research.” My paper addresses how “community research” reflects a liberal democratic ideology, espoused by the researchers who refer to this mysterious term. I believe that “community research” is a mythology. That is, the term expresses an aspiration rather than actual practice; the hope of facilitating the equalization of social relations and creating improvements to social conditions through social research. I want to talk about the disjuncture between what appear to be “community research” ideals and research practice in this paper. The term “reflexive methods” seems to be the most appropriate for research methods aimed at social action through increased participant-researcher collaboration. Looking at the limits of new or modified methods, I consider that many researchers have idealized and romanticized their work to alter research practices by applying the misnomer “community research.” I think that they have done so out of an assumption that the participants have necessarily benefited by virtue of the researchers’ intervention. Their assumption is based on a hope rather than a detailed assessment of the methods and outcomes of their work.

The key to understanding this fallacy and substantiating my position is investigation into the politics of research and the power relations in research processes and institutions. I draw from my Master's of Arts research project (Waldern, 2003) called *Resistance to Research in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside* (DTES) in order to study "community research" as a problematic term. My project analyzed selected quotations from interviews that drew out these themes, exploitation of research participants by university-based researchers; ethical considerations of research among poor or otherwise marginalized research participants; and the complications of the term "community." Highlighting the third theme, this article presents the ideas of community, resulting from my interviews with varied DTES research parties. It explains the complexity and inconsistencies of the use of this term by examining the political context of urban expansion, policy shifts, and institutional changes. Using this information, I now propose that community research is a myth. This myth, if perpetuated, is likely to lead to further disappointments and tensions in qualitative research. If replaced with a more accurate understanding of reflexivity, however, more cooperation and more successful results can be achieved.

Summary of Resistance to Research in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside

My purpose behind my 2003 study was to understand the significance of refusal or reluctance to participate in academic qualitative research, in the particular site of the downtown, eastside of the city of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. Some incidents of resistance to research in Vancouver appeared on the public record. To explore this problem further, I held 12 interviews with university administrators, graduate students, downtown eastside residents, and agency personnel (see Appendix A). I asked these people for examples and characterizations of such resistance, their explanations for it, and their recommendations for improved research practices. My participants felt that, in actual practice, university research was mostly irrelevant and oppressive, even downright exploitive at times.

I determined that there was resistance to research in the DTES because of class antagonisms, especially the conflict over the gentrifying development of the DTES. I studied the power and the meanings of the term "community" in the context of contemporary urban and institutional changes in which the DTES was imbedded. Examining the interactions and attitudes of researchers and actual or potential research participants in this urban area, the politics of community and the class dynamics of the research process in this location emerged. The barriers of social difference between researchers and participants became clearer, thereby exposing the weakness of so called "community research."

Replete with politically engaged social service agencies and populated by a high concentration of welfare recipients, DTES is a working class area with a long history of political struggles between rich and poor. These struggles have often surged over urban development, especially with respect to housing. For example, the contest over the renovations to the old Woodward's department store between poor residents and their advocates who desired subsidized housing for low income people, and the city and the corporate suitors who made private housing for new middle class dwellers a priority, climaxed in 2001. I linked this particular political environment to participants' attitudes

towards university based researchers. Here the claim to “community,” even those made by some researchers, was a powerful ideological reference that varied according to a speaker’s social position.

The politics of the DTES explain, in part, the phenomenon of resistance to research. Why else might people approached by researchers be reluctant to cooperate in the DTES, especially if (1) the people approached were people in great need and (2) the university-based researchers had the best intentions and were endeavouring to employ the best methods? The fact that resistance to research was occurring despite the great advances in reflexive methods meant that not all the problems of cooperation and participation in research had so far been addressed and that, therefore, there was much room for more improvement to methods.

I see the topic of resistance to research as urgent and highly important, yet very few researchers have taken it up. Ortner (1995) defines resistance to research as reluctance to cooperate in the research process. She states that both cooperation and resistance on the part of subjects and researchers are inherent to the research process. Manderson, Kelaher, Williams, and Shannon (1998) note that indigenous subjects complain about how academics arrive demanding cooperation only to disappear shortly without giving back much in return. In this paper, I show that it is important for researchers wishing to improve reflexive methods, to be aware of the research politics that influence how social groups are structurally formed by local and global contexts as well as how groups identify themselves and how others imagine groups. I wish to contribute to the efforts to draw together a comprehensive and coherent body of qualitative methods literature. I invite faculty and students to read this article so that they may think twice about embarking upon what they may call “community research.” If they intend to refer to a specific branch of qualitative studies, then more work to identify and forge the methods and literature included in this category should be done.

I organized this paper as follows. I cite literature that discusses the intentions and shortcomings of some existing reflexive practices. The literature review is divided into three parts: descriptions of some qualitative methods, some theories influencing them, and ethnography. I situate experiences of research frustrations in the context of broad economic and political changes to the city, university, and non-profit agency affecting the research process. I then analyze the data I collected on the theme of community from my Master’s thesis, and therefore present a few quotes from my interviews to support my analysis. Finally, I offer some reflections.

Author Context

My interest, data, and proposed ideas come from my experiences both as an academic researcher and as a volunteer researcher in the DTES. I arrived at the topic of resistance to research through my own experience, with resistance as a student at Simon Fraser University (SFU), my discussions with other students involved in social research in the DTES, and my work as a volunteer researcher for a non-profit agency active in the DTES (see Appendix A). In coming up with a Master’s research project, I discarded any idea of addressing a “burning issue” such as drug use and chose to explore resistance to research instead. I hoped that I could carry some voices of concern regarding this topic coming from my participants into the academy through this work. I wanted to contribute

to better research by drawing more attention to this problem not purely as a matter of methods, but as an important social issue as well.

I have had various jobs in the DTES, but have never lived there. My socio-economic class position has fluctuated from a working poor, affluent worker to a borderline professional employee over the years. I approached agencies in the DTES when I found myself unemployed and on social assistance for a few months in 1997. Thus, I was neither an “insider” nor an “outsider,” strictly speaking. The study was done from 1999 to 2001, and SFU awarded me a Master’s degree in anthropology in 2003.

Discussion of the Literature

In order to better understand the context of resistance to research, I take the political economy approach of Roseberry (1989), informed by Bourdieu’s (1984) notions of cultural capital and transformation of social space, and Philo and Kearns’ (1993) critical historical geographic analysis of the post-industrial city and the selling of places. Roseberry conceives of culture as an historical and material social process integral to the political economy. I link the phenomenon of resistance to research to the conflict over gentrification in the DTES. I interpret the various meanings of “community” that surfaced from my study within the context of the birth of the contemporary city and university. With industrial capitalist society experiencing economic restructuring and the corresponding policy shift of global capital (i.e., from welfare capitalism to neo-liberalism), cities and universities are making certain adjustments. The tensions brought about by these changes affect local issues and struggles. For example, through the reconstruction and the remarketing of the DTES, SFU and the University of British Columbia (UBC) produce altered discourses that all employ the term “community” differently.

I read a range of current research practices and took note of how they are described and justified. I enumerate them in the next few paragraphs. I found that research aimed at empowering research participants goes by various labels: collaborative, action, participatory, emancipatory, community, community-based, and so on. After my dead-end search for a literature on “community research” and my encounters with the numerous uses of the term “community,” I came to believe that the existence of a discernable body of “community research” is a myth. One could anthologize tales of “community research” or construct a compendium of all reflexive methods and methodologies (i.e., self-conscious, for social action). Leaving those tasks for another day, I list here some reflexive techniques of qualitative research mentioned in academic literature that might get tagged “community research” in this first section. In the second section, I talk about the different approaches influencing and justifying reflexive methods and how they signal resistance within the academy. Thirdly, I discuss ethnography.

Some Reflexive Qualitative Methods

Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy (1993, p. 177) conceive of Participatory Action Research (PAR) with the following emancipatory aims:

1. solve social problems
2. be viewed as a learning process that brings about change through continual management
3. encourage integrative and interdisciplinary social science based on both local knowledge and social science expertise
4. be participatory (i.e., democratic) in order to improve the quality of the research
5. be self-managed in a participatory way.

Chrisman, Strickland, and Powell (1999) describe a model they call “locality development” in which “researchers and community members work together with shared power” (p. 136). What is more, they say that “investigators are leaders, consultants, and partners, in support of the goals of the community, while utilizing community energy to accomplish research and program development” (p. 136).

Economic restructuring has inspired ideas about community research in tandem with ideas about community development as industrial economic decline and structural changes transpired. Community (economic) development resurged as industrial downsizing and relocation occurred in the 1980s (Shragge, 1994). During the 1980s, research with a view to economic revitalization expanded in line with community development models. With the social process of privatization and reduced state funding and programs, though, community development has come to happen more often by and for larger business interests tied to macroeconomic processes and interests, though there may often be welcome spin-offs in the form of jobs, services and housing for local people.

“Open dialogue” (Lemkau, Ahmed, & Cauley, 2000, p. 1216) is a process intended to permit more participation of community members. Orchestrated between an academic institution and community members, participation usually involves formal meetings in structures and terms familiar to the university.

Though difficult, collaboration between the researcher and social service organization is necessary if the researcher wishes to help alleviate poverty, especially among poor women, say Reid and Vianna (2001). Successful partnering with such agencies requires the (academic) researcher to be respectful and patient, and offer services with the aim of developing a system of mutual support. This is a process that takes time. The more researchers get involved, the more they see themselves as playing a role in the social location they study, and the more they wish to form partnerships and help agencies in order to assist people in need. One must be aware of the differing goals and priorities of academics and agencies; calm and patient negotiation is necessary.

In Canada, some graduate students and faculty have tried to develop independent, local community research organizations to review and approve projects within their geographical and/or population mandate as a mechanism for assuring collaboration, relevancy, inclusion, and social action. However, funding such organizations is difficult.

Cottrell (2001) writes about her experience with independent Advisory Committees in Nova Scotia. They were established to include “many voices” of local people in the decision-making and monitor “what researchers give to and take from communities” (p. 22). One Advisory Committee with whom Cottrell worked with began roundtable discussions about four projects for abused women and youths. The roundtable identified problems of university ethics review processes and the idea of building a separate informal process emerged. A shortage of time, funding, and other resources posed problems.

Tuhuwai Smith (2000) recommends indigenous methods for the study of indigenous communities. These methods are intended to alter the power relations in anthropological research, a field that grew out of the process of colonization, by building in indigenous approaches and collective practices of problem solving. The core group of the research collective that Tuhuwai Smith recommends includes indigenous researchers.

Above, I have listed and described a few reflexive methods. They each aim at altering research relations so as to arrive at more equitable relations and derive more accurate analyses. The reflexive methods all thus take part in a political project, but take various approaches to research that arise out of differing conceptual ideologies. Each framework has its own logic for its own particular practices. However, I do not always see direct links between particular theories and particular methods. All the same, I believe that all new approaches challenge the status quo today in response to anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist resistance, on the part of the oppressed and marginalized populations who usually attract academic curiosity. I see resistance to research as stemming from resistance to colonial and imperialist domination. Resistance takes many forms.

Approaches Influencing Reflexive Methods

All the social actors involved in the research process have particular political biases that express various historical and changing class stances and relations. Their arguments and choice of theory and praxis expose ideo-political debates within and without the academy. The research process is thus wrought with tensions that reflect the struggles of the larger society and their manifestations locally; within the academy, within the administration and among academics, and in the site of fieldwork. Furthermore, I understand resistance to research from a local perspective as a cultural form of struggle because it challenges assumptions about participants’ identities and their social relations as well as academic education and research. At the same time resistance in the research process is economic struggle because it reflects class struggle in general and the particular circumstance of employment and access to special funding produces contradictions in why and how academics do research and how all involved might benefit.

All the methods cited above demonstrate advances in reflexive qualitative methods. I stated that reflexive methods have political bias and are forms of political action. How far, though, do they succeed in equalizing the researcher-participant relationship and making research more participatory and meaningful for participants? Not enough, considering current debates within the academy and the feedback, such as that contained in this article, from research participants.

Agar (1997) pointed out that explorations in reflexivity have made social researchers conscious that research relations are intersubjective, rather than objective or subjective, and culture constructed. This means that power relations in the research process, along with context and meaning, must be understood. Agar further writes that traditional ethnography, for example, erroneously conceived of social groups as isolated. It is wrong to think of the research system as closed. Contrary to the inductive-deductive dichotomy, Agar offers the term “abductive” in an argument favouring grounded theory. With that approach, he posits, research relations can be conceived as frames of intersubjectivity within larger frames. However strong his pitch for grounded theory, I concur with Agar’s points about intersubjectivity and the importance of considering power relations.

Postmodernist thought has greatly contributed to the development of reflexive methods. To take an oft used definition, reflexive practices are based on the understanding that practical accounts and theory are socially constitutive of the situations to which they refer (Jary & Jary, 1991). Practical accounts and theory have the capacity to reproduce or transform the social situations to which they refer. Part of the task of improving reflexive methods is to control the reproduction or transformation of social situations so that they are socially beneficial, particularly to the participants.

Though he is a poststructuralist, Marcus (1998) sees postmodernism as relevant because it broke with conventional concepts and practices, such as the distant scholar stepping out from the formal institution to investigate the everyday life world “collapsing...the earlier distinction between system and life world” (p.14), and the idea of traditional places and “others” of study. To Marcus, postmodernism has shaken up rational cognition, insisted on openness, and introduced reflexivity. However, this “reconfigur[ation] of the space of both fieldwork and the resulting ethnography” (p. 14) caused a crisis of representation.

Salzman (2002) criticizes postmodernist approaches. In rejecting objectivity and “reality,” he cites Trilling (1980) in proposing that postmodernists rely on the romantic virtue of sincerity, striving to avoid falseness through being true to one’s own self. The problem, then, is how to retain a certain degree of rigour in social inquiries and determine the required degree. To reject anthropology as fiction, for instance, would be unacceptable. Salzman declares that anthropology is made, not made up. Postmodernist critiques too readily reject anthropological research because of political and moral investments researchers may make, Salzman complains. The point, Salzman asserts, and I agree, is to understand how one has made anthropology, while valuing its contribution to knowledge. That is to be alert to false objectivity without rejecting the notion of objectivity altogether. In other words, researchers need not, nor should not, reject science. Research can be validated through testing, retesting and dialogue.

In anthropology, too, the succession of new understandings and frames commonly results from new researchers taking a different view, rather than from a change of heart by the original theorists or researchers. This can be seen in the history of cultural anthropology in the replacement of evolutionism and diffusionism by functionalism; the replacement of functionalism by structuralism, processualism, and Marxism; and the challenge to these by interpretationalism and postmodernism. (Salzman, 2002, p. 811)

Perhaps a more significant problem is the lack of standard criteria, norms, and guidelines. Ethnographic practice in particular, complains Stewart (1998), has not been

highly standardized. Standardization can bring about a consistent and precise terminology, a reliably classified body of literature as well as sharpened rigour. Researchers can agree that reality can be represented in multiple ways: Clear accounts of how knowledge was obtained can permit the evaluation of representations.

Ethnography

With its preoccupation with the details of everyday life and its capacity to let the more vulnerable people speak, ethnography is a method well suited for effecting change and countering hegemonic politics, ideology, and culture (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). To offer a deep explanation, Stewart (1998) underscores characteristics of ethnography that, I suggest, make it operate in this way. For one thing ethnography is holistic, that is it understands individual behaviour in the context of the whole. Also, ethnography lends sociocultural description in revealing previously unseen patterns of relations and practice, and previously unacknowledged world views, representations, and meanings. Indeed, ethnography has revealed much about colonial domination and cultural diversity. This role of ethnography in challenging the status quo may explain its popularity and the emergence of other self-conscious or reflexive methods today. When employed outside anthropology however, “ethnography” may be used interchangeably with “qualitative research.” Ethnography is necessarily a very intrusive method, requiring a high degree of cooperation. “Moreover, rare is the group or the actor prepared to be an open book for easy inspection,” writes Stewart (1998, p. 19). Obtaining consent and cooperation from prospective participants for invasive methods can therefore be a delicate and intricate matter. Though ethnography can be exploitive or controlling, it has some capacity to decolonize the subject by virtue of its form alone, (i.e., making culture visible, exposing ideology and hegemony, and building new understanding through a revelation of everyday thought and practice). Liberation in some sense and to some degree has always been an objective of many anthropologists. Participants, however, sometimes say ethnography has been paternal and imposed on them.

Stull and Schensul (1987) excel at urban ethnographic research. They explain how action research grew out of “the work of Sol Tax and his students with the Fox Project in the 1940s and 1950s” (p. 7). Though marginally successful, claim Stull and Schensul, this work served to establish principles of collaborative research. These principles continue to be based on: (1) “developing and testing theory on an ongoing basis in interaction with interventions or action,” (i.e., learning and helping); (2) “ensuring consistency between project means and desired ends; and (3) “basing ends and means on guidelines established by the host community” (p. 7). Such efforts produced “action” or “advocacy” anthropologists who “applied research to community development in ethnic minority communities in the United States” (p.7). The practice of including “community actors” in research projects surfaced by the 1970s.

Schensul, Denelli-Hess, Borrero, and Bhavati, (1987) define collaborative action research today as a process wherein university-trained researchers apply their skills to a community or institutional problem, although the problem may not be identified as such by members of the community or institution in question. This problem is then negotiated and translated “into researchable terms.” All parties work on creating and executing the

project, and on organizing and analyzing the data. A collaborative action research process can be integrated into intervention or ongoing social change programs, and serve to encourage members of an existing social change network to make use of the research.

Feminist methodologies reflect the women's movement quest for liberation from patriarchy as it manifests itself in institutions, discourse, the body, and social relations. Feminist approaches have supported and promoted the improvement and application of qualitative methods, stressing the importance of the female researcher and participant, and research in the apparently mundane, insisting on the study of women's everyday conditions by means of methods that evade institutional domination. An example of a Marxist feminism, D. E. Smith (1990, 1999) developed a method she called institutional ethnography that is meant to expose the power relations and bureaucratic processes of control of institutions. Ristock and Pennell (2000) provide an example of a post-modernist feminist approach with a similar aim. Feminist approaches thus specifically aim to liberate both female researchers and participants, and discover "community" (i.e., non-institutional) perspectives and practices. They thus lend themselves well to the development of reflexivity, addressing the hope and intentions of so called "community research."

I have described briefly some of the many varieties of reflexive qualitative methods and some perspectives that influence them. Their mention reveals multiple interpretations of what some researchers might call "community research," which implies different ontologies, objectives, and experiences in research relations. Thus, they share the political goal of altering the status quo in favour of the poor and marginalized, while they present different political visions. I have discussed the intention and gains of reflexive methods tested to date, and summarized their inadequacies today, without critiquing each method cited. In doing so, I was able to find definitions of the terms "reflexivity," "collaborative," and "action" research. I found that they mostly support the status quo, although they might offer some relief from domination and exploitation through research. However, I said that ethnography inherently has the capacity to challenge the status quo by virtue of its very form.

My research participants complained about university based research and researchers. I cite some quotes to show how they felt research in the DTES has been inadequate, even dominating and exploitive. Community and representation was a theme that emerged from my interviews and secondary data. I searched for the meanings of "community" and saw how its use reflected the particular political context of the research site, and the social positions of the many social actors within the site.

Analysis of Interview Data on the Theme of "Community"

I found several popular and academic meanings of the term "community." Dictionary definitions cover a wide range of the uses of "community": "common interests," "common character," "populations," "common policy," "group of people," "joint ownership or participation," "unified body," "particular area," "various kinds of individuals," or "larger society." The social analyst must determine which definition s/he is to use. The political and ideological environments in which these uses are couched would have to be considered in making such determinations. "Community" is a political hot button.

Jary and Jary (1991) state that popular usages of “community” convey a positive meaning in expressions such as “sense of community” and “community spirit” (p. 66): It is a descriptive, normative, and ideological term. Sociologists often use it to ideologically prescriptive ends, rooted in Tonnies’ dichotomy of “community and association” that pits intimate and durable relations against impersonal, temporary, and contractual relations (Jary & Jary, p. 66). Membership is a criterion of community belonging. All conceptions of community distinguish one community from another by delineated memberships (some being more rigid than others).

For the academic social researcher, “community” comprises the set of social relations of this population, what makes them stand out as a group. In this sense, write Jary and Jary (1991), a researcher may say “community” to signify a specific social group identified in terms of some shared experiences or conditions of proximity such as ethnicity, immigration from the same home country, occupation, geographic location, birth place, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender, and family.

Academic researchers do not often define precisely what they mean by “community.” The research assistant I interviewed (RA-1) said her team had no working definition of “community.” She believed her team thought of its project as community research because it was taking place in the local geographic area where the research participants lived. Moje (1999) compiled an inventory of many literacy, and other kinds of case studies, finding no consistent usage of the term “community,” and few attempts at defining it for the purpose of the studies. Of the cases wherein researchers did define it, researchers most often characterized a “community” as a problem that had to be fixed. Among them, the ethnographies using the term tended to seek to describe and interpret an unknown setting. Others viewed it as a resource to be incorporated into social practice. Also, it was used to reposition alternatives to the institution so as to establish complements to institutional practices.

“Community” is a problematic idea for academia. Individuals may think of themselves in terms of social groupings with whom they share experiences and identify, and to whom they feel they belong. They may imagine an ideal local social arrangement and place that they call “community.” Individuals may use the term “community” in their daily language to refer to the DTES as a place and a social group. For example, one of the individual residents I interviewed, Bruce, referred to “the people in the community” and “community organizations” in the DTES. Of course these groupings and visions overlap and change according to a person’s experience, social milieu, and roles, and so does the use of the term “community.” It is therefore difficult to determine what the researcher intends in terms of place and people. Generally, researchers and participants do not recognize the multiple and conflicting meanings of “community.”

While some of my participants did not comment on definitions or uses of the term “community,” clarity of the term is nevertheless important when one wants to learn more about the interaction and subculture of a certain group or population as distinguished from others. Referring to the DTES as one “community” is a mistake because its population is mixed, and there are sectors that see themselves as separate communities within the DTES, each vying for recognition and space. Common usage varies. Overall, “community” in a popular sense is probably less a specific geographic space or group of people than a feeling of belonging and care.

In the DTES research culture, and perhaps in others, the term “community” tends to get bandied about in a facile manner because it carries political currency, and is intended to show a commitment to authenticity or sincerity, “ordinary people,” and social improvement. It is simultaneously a word in the language of gentrification and one in the language of resistance to gentrification. It can mean many things from “out there in society,” to “neighbourhood,” to “peers,” to “the grassroots” or “majority,” and so on. Researchers need to be more careful about what they mean by “community” when referring to places and populations, and characterizing participants (Moje, 1999). They need to be more aware of their own position in relation to research participants and the entire research environment.

Some Supporting Quotes on the Various Understandings of “Community”

Representation of DTES participants

Actual or would-be research participants in the DTES reacted against the common assumption that everyone in the DTES is very poor, powerless, inadequate and needy, and likely involved in illegal activity. Responding to my query as to how she felt about researchers, Jennifer (an individual resident) had this to say, “I’ve noticed downtown, a lot of people are like—there’s a lot of discrimination, and being judgmental down there. If you could put that aside, maybe it would be a little bit better.”

Agency employees are protective of the people who use their services. As a graduate student, Gordon (PhD student, SFU, and independent researcher) gives this account of his interaction with Len, a service provider of Prostitution Alternative Counselling and Education Society (PACE), who was sharply critical about university researchers. “Len (began) blowing off at me about problems with research. (PACE was) used to people wanting to access “deviant” people. Len thought PACE was considered a ‘stockyard’” (because of the perception that agencies in the DTES are gatekeepers who can deliver a body of participants).

Individual residents are not necessarily as distrustful and admonishing as agency representatives, though they offer insightful criticism and recommend different ways of going about research, as in the case of Bruce, an individual resident.

Most researchers try to have this line between where they’re at and where their participants are at. And that line has been blurred a lot....So you have a bias. If you drop the stereotypes and go gung-ho in trying to self-empower not only yourself but the people you work with, well then we’re moving ahead.

One social service provider (the unnamed participant at PACE) characterized the typical approach of social researchers as colonization, identifying a class-based difference between researchers and participants by referring to academic researchers as descending from their golden towers on a mission of mercy.

[Coming down] off the mountain. You know, there's a wonderful hill over there with the green pastures and a big university with a golf course and all that stuff where people make up language that the general population doesn't understand. And then enters this environment without—it's like missionary work, heh-heh in a way. 'Cause you enter an environment where you're not even sensitive to what your impact will be on that population, like especially if you are seen as a race or a class, where there's power and there's huge—when you want to do research in our population you're talking about people of colour, marginalized, lack of education, literacy issues, health issues, housing issues and you walk in with your nice outfit and your little clipboard, they feel like—you know, they're being violated. But first, what we would think, is just to come to get to know the population, get rid of all those barriers, find out what issues they have with you being there. And then...have a relationship and build the trust...

This statement expresses doubts about the ethics and intentions of researchers. It implies that “community” researchers should hold community ethics and be more connected to the people studied, working with their participants so as to assist them.

Community: Social service organizations' meanings

Social service organizations are very clear about their meaning of community in terms of providing service: It is determined by the specific set of people they are mandated by, state and private funders to assist (i.e., a population distinguished by what they do in life, or where or how they live, such as drug users or sex trade workers or low-income residents of a specific area). For both John Turvey, the Director of the Downtown Eastside Youth Addition Services, and the staff of PACE, defining “community” for the purpose of research is very simple because they understand research as service. For Main & Hastings Community Development Society (MHCDS) belonging in the community hinges on peers accepting that one had lived in the DTES for a lengthy period of time and was poor, or a marginalized individual or an advocate of distinction. What MHCDS wants studied is the population they serve, and they want research to be instrumental, that is, to support the maintenance and creation of services for their clientele. John Turvey saw my questions about community as “esoteric horseshit.” PACE appreciated my questions about community as part of the discussion of how to go about “community based research,” its stated preferred approach. Agencies' use of the term “community” is therefore not free of ideology or politics. In fact, the term comes up in advocacy and social action.

The peer-based model only mitigates the contradiction somewhat. PACE is an example of a peer-based organization, founded about six years ago by a few former sex trade workers and their advocates. Not an invention of government, PACE requires at least one-third of its Board of Directors to be former sex trade workers, and gives preference to actual or former sex trade workers when hiring staff. I interviewed two PACE staff members, Len the temporary Coordinator and a long term counsellor who preferred not to be named in any way. The counsellor made these remarks. “PACE is

peer-based. We're always relevant and accountable to the population we serve. So we must do research. It's a major responsibility. So maybe professionals have a different take on what's prioritized in our work and what's not."

...We're a pretty relevant agency because our population's on the Board. They're inclusive of all, and they've designed the programs we have. But if there's a trend that's being identified through this research and we have the ability to modify some of our programs that would be the total, that's what we would want instead of going somewhere else.

As a result, PACE's budget fluctuates: It relies extensively on project funding from the government. The staff is usually contracted. None of its government money is allocated for research, even though PACE considers research a core activity. However, PACE occasionally receives donations from private sources. The female counsellor from PACE had worked on contracts for other agencies, and her job title had changed several times. Len, the second PACE employee I interviewed, was a semi-professional without a degree and on a short term contract when I interviewed him in 1999. He left after a couple of years due to a shortage of funds. PACE had four research projects on the go in 1999. Even though research does not fit with its government mandate, peer based arrangements require constant study of the conditions of peers. Such a study provides the data required to support a demand for resources to develop specific services. For PACE, research remains a high service priority, but it receives little funding.

Ideally, the research of peer-based organizations would be locally based, reflecting local perspectives of a segment of the people occupying a given social space. It would concern needs and living conditions based on the understandings and desires of these people. If the peers (i.e., service users running the service) lived among the poor and marginalized people of the area, research would proceed with a bias toward the poor and marginalized.

By contrast, a non-peer based social service organization follows a more typical corporate model. Directions come from a Board and are passed on "down" to a middle level administration. Upper or upper middle class figures of distinction, often corporate or professional individuals with clear political and business connections, usually occupy the Boards of non-profit organizations with the largest amount of assets (e.g., arts councils, major charities). The less wealthy and smaller organizations tend to attract middle class professional and business people to their Boards who want to become service leaders (e.g., of Rotary clubs, youth, or training programmes), and enhance their political and business connections. Board members have either made substantial donations or are elected upon through the recommendations of influential people within their social network. They can acquire the position through connections with the government of the day and win support through their capacity to obtain funding. Boards make the financial, programme/service development, and hiring decisions. They promote the organization among their peers and "VIPs," often playing a role at special events, but they leave the daily work to administrative staff members. The staff has a distinct role as management in a well-defined hierarchy. There is thus a great social distance between Boards, administrators, and the service users, with the service users having little power and influence.

Community: Institutional and bureaucratic meanings

SFU city programs at the downtown campus of SFU have a working definition of “community,” said its Director, Judy Oberlander. She simply referred to the community as life outside the institution. When I asked Judy how she imagined “community research,” she said she thought of discussion forums as bringing together many different people to work on shared issues. However, if the participants represented various conflicting interests, can equal participation and voice be achieved? During a televised *People and Policies Town Hall* about “public participation,”¹ both Jill Davidson of the City of Vancouver and Suzanne Richter of the Vancouver-Richmond Health Board remarked that many people, such as the mentally ill and drug dependents, cannot always participate in discussion and decision-making processes.

Institutions (e.g., education, government and health care) use the term “community” in a very broad way. For institutions’ purposes “communities” are groups of people working and living outside the institution, sometimes in specific neighbourhoods or towns². Institutions see their employees as having been raised in a “community” before joining the institution and as going out into the community when they exit the institution’s door. “Working in the community” is therefore assumed to be outside the walls of the institution, and among populations not registered in or employed by the institution. This interpretation of “community” is also called the “field.” Beyond anthropology, this definition is what “community research” may mean in disciplines where field work has not been the norm. Being linked to “the community” can be a useful relationship for the university, and therefore advantageous to the individual academic who can benefit from the university’s interests in such “community” links.

“Community development” can simply mean local economic change as far as the administrations of university and other institutions are concerned. “Community” can also mean small town versus big city. Governments might have this definition, given the geography of governmental jurisdictions. These interpretations reflect problems of understanding community when class is overlooked. They reflect a nebulous vision of “society out there” from the perspective of large class-dominated institutions of capitalism, a perspective that fails to acknowledge the institution as being located within a particular society. Today in neo-liberal discourse, “community” can be seen as including business and government agencies or services located in a certain area, and economic revitalization of that area can be understood as “improving community relations.”

¹ Broadcast on June 7, 2001 by Shaw Cable TV, with Kevin Evans as host. The show featured guest speakers on for issues: health, housing, social development and economic development. Its studio audience included individual DTES residents and representatives of organizations, as well as many delegates from a conference of the International Association on Public Participation held that week in Vancouver.

² For example, SFU calls the new residential area that it is organizing on Burnaby Mountain off the east side of its campus a “community.”

The politics of community

Because of its popularity, the term “community” carries currency in extra-institutional contexts. From my observations of its usage in the DTES, as compared to that of SFU or the government, it is a word sometimes used in various discourses to win over listeners to the authenticity and sincerity of the rhetoric. It is reasonable to say that the general public wants and expects public services or institutions to benefit it. Big businesses (e.g., banks, resource companies), universities, government, and other large-scale complex organizations, such as non-profit societies, want to influence potential clientele, benefactors, and voters, and they have to present their “product” or service as relevant, meaningful, and beneficial to the everyday lives of their clients, benefactors, and voters. “Community” thus becomes part of the required jargon. In short, “community” is ammunition in the competition for spatial identities and control by which it is necessary to secure resources for economic and social improvement. This use of “community” is seen in the creation of the concept of “community economic development,” and the contest over ownership, meaning, and direction of this idea and the projects it nurtures.

I have observed many players engaging in the politics of community in the DTES; non-profit organizations, big businesses, smaller businesses, government, middle class residents, underemployed workers, well paid professional staff, unemployed or disabled residents, poor visitors as well as university and other researchers. Community politics arise as a response to urban development of which research is a facet. Sociology understands such politics as generated by residence in a particular locale. Furthermore, “community politics arise from local concerns with urban spaces as workplaces, residences and living areas, and the politics of urbanization” (Jary & Jary, 1991, pp. 68-69).

Not everyone in the DTES is well disposed to collaborate or consult if they anticipate no direct practical consequences. During the Shaw Cable television broadcast on “public participation” (on June 7, 2001) a DTES resident and SFU geography graduate, Jeff Sommers, conveyed cynicism about “consultations,” declaring that “we’ve been processed to death,” and energy and work “evaporates”³. Both he and Tom Laviolette, of the Carnegie Action Project, stated that many DTES members had given up on forums and turned to activism (i.e., protesting and lobbying) because of the polarization of class and power in Vancouver. They described activism as “being a pain in the butt” because “kicking butt works.” As they are both well-educated individuals, their commentary implies that research should be linked with, and probably subordinated to, social action (i.e., research that brings about direct improvements for the poor and marginalized such as funding or policy). Collaboration and cooperation in this environment cannot be peaceful or even possible at times because of class differentiations.

Movements that counter gentrification struggle for collaboration in and control over development agendas in favour of more equitable social development that benefit the poor or otherwise marginalized populations. Such movements argue for shared public space for the benefit of very disadvantaged people. Achieving equitable development requires engendering sympathy for those who suffer from acute social problems; though

³ (See note 2)

they often get construed as deviance or sickness, they have their basis in capitalist structures. All the participants of my research project desired research with this perspective. They all spoke to economic and political constraints that require long-range economic and political solutions, conditions that demand research in tune with such aims; action research or research aimed at contributing to social change, research that necessarily questions the status quo. They also wanted more and more equitable and meaningful collaboration in research.

Community: The meaning adopted for this study

For my study, I discerned that “community,” as a common term used by impoverished people in the DTES and their advocates and service providers, signifies an ideal of a deeper social connection. It voices a personal acknowledgment that many people in a large-scale, impersonal, and alienating society desire, and try to create in many different ways in their local experience. In the particular context of impoverished DTES inhabitants, their advocates, and service providers, “community” is frequently a statement of class allegiance to workers and the poor, and a commitment to “social justice” for the very disadvantaged in a challenge to the ruling powers and their large-scale formal organizations, from government to big commercial enterprises. Or at least, it reflects a strategy of survival in a deteriorating situation caused by political and economic history, structures, policies, and norms. In this discourse, “large-scale, impersonal and alienating” institutions represent a small sector of powerful upper class people, and not the majority.

Reflections

Political economic analysis connects the tension between all the research actors with class struggle in general, and gentrification in the particular case of the DTES. I see criticisms of research practices and researchers, and the reluctance to cooperate in the research process as evidence of resistance to research. Resistance to research may not usually be an expression of conscious political action, but it does arise out of local and global politics and is connected to class antagonisms. Resistive participants may identify with a named group, real and imagined, and assert their community integrity and rights. Frequently, their behaviors are a response to what they see as the incursions of large institutions, governments, and corporations.

Many researchers based in university settings experiment with alternative methods, frequently employing a discourse of liberation that values community and characterizes research participants’ communities, so as to get cooperation and better assist people in need. They thus recognize social disparity and the role of universities in perpetuating it. As a result, they may aspire to “community research” to relieve their participants of the experience of oppression and help them better themselves. Not only is “community research” a vague term, it is a misnomer. No common definition of this term or any common body of methods literature exists. However, there is a consistent use of the term “reflexive methods” in the literature. As to how successful such methods are in reducing social disparity and relieving the oppression of researchers and research participants, I think that they, by and large, still serve the status quo.

All my interviewees talked about some bad experiences with researchers, and said that the outcomes of (qualitative) research are generally negative in that they do not result in significant social improvements for deprived DTES people. They expressed concerns about the particular style, attitudes, language, perceptions, preferences, and techniques they have observed university-based researchers using. They communicated fears that research can be oppressive, even exploitive, in the experience of research participants. However problematic qualitative methods look, though, the social service providers and academic researchers I interviewed seemed to want qualitative research done (e.g., PACE's interest in life stories). They thus seem to recognize the potential usefulness of qualitative research. All my interviewees stated they preferred collaborative research that empowers participants and offers them material rewards. However, they indicated, without employing specific political language, university-based researchers act out the predominant biases and beliefs of universities woven into an elitist (i.e., class) society. The themes of exploitation, ethics, and representation of community point to the necessity of improving qualitative research methods, and positioning researcher and subject within the political economic conditions of the day and place.

Despite its problems, qualitative research has the capacity to reveal important social phenomena of everyday experience that cannot be observed through quantitative methods. It is conducive to enhancing understanding of what may, at first glance, appear to be unremarkable events and relationships. It is potentially liberating because what becomes known (e.g., effects of deprivation) can point the way toward solutions that would alleviate social suffering and arrive at more equitable and effective social planning. Therefore, it is most worthwhile to improve qualitative methods. The task is to find more effective means of developing cooperation among participants, and making meaningful contributions to participants' lives, while sustaining rigour of inquiry and analysis. Completing that task requires becoming conscious that the research process exists within a polity and marketplace.

I make four broad suggestions to academic qualitative researchers. First, researchers should clearly define "community" and "community research." Second, they need to better appreciate the complexity of the research process. That is, to be conscious of the power relations and conflicts among the actors involved in the research process as well as local and larger structural processes. Third, they must acknowledge power relations and endeavour to relinquish more control when embarking upon collaborations. Fourth, greater awareness of the complexity of "community" and the research process, as well as the politics of community and research, should lead to more sensitivity to stereotypes of poor and marginalized populations. Each of these suggestions will be discussed below.

Defining "Community"

Academic researchers should address the term "community" as being problematic, and question its use within specific contexts. They must be very exacting about the particular group to whom, or place to which, they refer. They must ask who and where they themselves are in relation to a given social setting. I see this as both a practical and ethical imperative, certainly a defining criterion of well designed reflexive research.

“Community” could be used by many to mean something other than large scale commercial development, and other than big cities. As Moje (1999) concludes, “The need to define and complicate community as a construct is important, because communities are becoming more complex, and sometimes less communal, with the diversity and rapid change of new times and fast capitalism” (p. 77). Indeed, Roseberry (1989) defines “community” in political terms having particular formations and meanings in the context of the development of capitalism. He says it is “a political association formed through the processes of political and cultural creation and imagination—the generation of meaning of contexts and unequal power” (p. 14). I agree with Roseberry and add that researchers must still indicate exactly the place or group of people under study, and how they see them as distinguished from others. It is precisely because the term is so politically charged that it means different things to different people.

“Community research” is a misleading term: “Reflexive methods” is more accurate. If researchers employ “community research” they must come to a common understanding of the term and form a consensus on the kinds of methods that constitute it and why. If one intends it to mean driven by participants, or inclusive of participants, then s/he should design a collaborative or participatory method, and describe and name the specific method used. It would be worthwhile to pursue further work in determining, classifying, and critiquing different qualitative research methods to develop meaning, clarity, and consistency of what might be labelled “community-based research.” Research that starts in and is directed by staff of a university is simply not based in the community, even though the collection of data may occur outside a library or institution. Study that examines the articulation of methods and the interaction between method and researcher would serve well. In addition, a discussion of different approaches to ethics with a critical review of research criteria and processes would be pertinent.

The Complexity of the Research Process

Complexity of social relations and social issues make using the term “community” especially problematic today. It is very difficult to act as responsible social investigators with the high standards of an academic discipline in the present-day circumstances of commercialization, extensive change, and migration. It is also very difficult to do this given the intensification and diversity of symbolic representation in increasingly stratified and fractionalized societies.

Money and control are deciding factors with respect to exploitation and domination through research. This is essentially an economic and political problem, and it highlights the politics of academia, research, social service, and community development. In negotiating one thing, something must be traded. However, research takes place in an unequal market. Academic researchers have historically received more than they have given. Participants today often demand material benefits, especially money, in return for or in conjunction with cooperation in a research project. Therefore, another contradiction: in attempting to put a price on research services participants and researchers contribute to the commodification of research. Some consolation can be taken from the fact that no research is pure and without political and economic contexts and ramifications.

Analysts must complicate their research process and experience in considering the political and economic context. They must consider whether to choose a political stand in that process and act as advocates working toward social change. Research is linked to development, regardless of one's choices, as change of some sort motivates research in any case. Research will influence social and economic development, sometimes and to some extent, come what may. In the DTES, research is complicated extensively by the conflict over gentrification and the corresponding politics of community⁴. It is shaped partly by the rules of government funding, the political agendas that dictate budgets and funding allocations, university administration appointments, and the control of university resources by university administrations. Rather than gloss over these elements of context, researchers should study them, spell out their interpretations, and clarify the analysis and implications they see.

Appreciating Power Relations

The contradictions in defining and using the term "community" stem largely from the contest over control and the impetus to exploit or resist exploitation. Research participants tend to be less powerful than universities and researchers, researchers less powerful than institutions, and universities less powerful than governments and global market interests. To assist in community-based endeavours, universities and academic researchers must acknowledge this power imbalance and relinquish control. They must distinguish research based in the academy with research based in a community or outside it. Community-based research may consult academic researchers or refer to their writings and still remain independent of universities. Still, there is no good reason why academic researchers should not head their own projects, asserting their own socially redeeming contributions to thought and practice, and their responsibility to society as whole. All the same, they must give over more power in collaborative partnerships.

Contemporary economic and social development theories and practices stem from long centuries of colonialism and imperialism. Research is a necessary facet of development. I believe that it has largely been conducted by powerful class interests in a position to design and control planning, with the aim of achieving the colonization of space and imposing a dominant ideology and social order. With that ideo-political history in mind, one can anticipate resistance to research as one of many expressions of resistance to domination and exploitation. Research seen and experienced as a means to extend social control and to exploit will continue to be detected and rejected. Action or collaborative researchers must be more aware of the phenomenon of resistance to research and its links to the political and economic conditions, global and local, that affect the field site. If academic researchers and academically educated researchers want to be invited to assist or wish to offer service to organizations, they will have to continue to hone their tools of methods and analysis accordingly. They should consider the politics of the research process. They must be clearer on their position and role, and strive to minimize their part in exploitation and domination as much as possible.

Of course, research alone cannot profoundly alter the structures that are the source of domination and exploitation. However, research employing a political economy

⁴ This was demonstrated by the standoff over the conversion of the old Woodward's department store to housing stock in the fall of 2001.

approach can contribute to a better understanding of the interrelationships, operations, and consequences of macro and micro structures. For example, the political economy approach is instrumental in understanding that the expansion of the “knowledge industry” supported by neo-liberal ideology and policies is bringing about the further commodification of education and research, resulting in the extensive patenting of ideas, the contracting of a broader scope of services, trade in texts and projects, the selling of seats in educational programs and online courses, and the privatization of the university. Change has a profound impact on research values, visions, and practices. It is difficult for researchers to resist this wave of rapid and sweeping change, but since its advance depends, in part, on the cooperation within and without the academy, they can enhance qualitative methods that can address and reframe (i.e., “reconvert”) this hegemony in some places. They can adopt the values and aims consistent with social justice (and the corresponding political commitment) for the benefit of the poorest and most deprived people. Ethnographic methods especially can acknowledge and interpret the actual, informal, local, and personal perspectives and practices of everyday experience of the lower classes, and compare and contrast them with the detachment, reserve, formality, efficiency, and coldness of large institutions.

Central to all my suggestions is the question, “Who is the person I want to research and what is my relationship to that person?” To answer that question, it is vital to determine the interests of both the participants and researchers. That is to try to see why they might want to participate, and why the researcher might want to know them better. One should also situate them in their existing social contexts and determine their social positions, so that the relationships among them stand out clearly. Doing so helps to clarify the economic and power relations in which these social actors are embedded. Understanding more about the economic and power relations will serve to identify forces confining, directing, and swaying them (e.g., government or institutional policy, local and global economies, socioeconomic status, research funding, social service provider’s budgets, and so on and so forth).

Avoiding Stereotypes

Researchers risk “over-determining, essentializing, and romanticizing what it means to engage in community-based (projects),” writes Moje (1999, p.77). It is not only the “community” that may be idealized and stereotyped; it is also the institution on the part of both researchers and participants. Many people guilty of such stereotyping may be academic or government administrators, academic researchers, social service providers, and the poor people themselves. The black and white, “us versus them” mindset develops into a battle of competing discourses for exclusive rights, territory, or privileges.

One factor undermining good reflexive practice is the underrating of the knowledge of participants studied, and the academic researcher’s bias towards academic perspectives and expertise. As do so many others, my project demonstrated the credibility and applicability of interviewees’ special knowledge, and how their knowledge can influence the academy and enhance academic work. I found less resistance and more cooperation to addressing the topic of resistance to research because my DTES participants believed this topic was relevant and they were concerned about the quality of research. Their words validated the concerns expressed by the academic researchers who

participated in this study. I brought all my participants' candid, yet respectful, words to an academic arena with the hope of having at least a little influence over others connected to universities, who might be planning research projects in the DTES and elsewhere. However, the knowledge and language of non-academic participants is not easily transferable. It is usually inconsistent with the academic discourses and changes all the time. Perhaps it can serve to expose academic discourse as discourse. In this way, the language of non-academic participants is resistive. Furthermore, collaborative methods can expose and challenge academic discourse. If resistance to research can transform research practices and challenge assumptions then it is healthy for the development of qualitative methods.

The DTES is a sensational and convenient place to work. However, students and teachers of the social conditions of society surely know that addictions, poverty, trade in sex, disability, displaced aboriginals, underemployment, and such happen in various locations, and therefore could be researched in many different places. There are other circumstances, populations, and issues worth studying. For example, I think that it would be worthwhile to research community ideologies of various groups of people, especially in relation to ideals of "development" and definitions of classes. I think it would be interesting and useful to look into the world view(s) of long term unemployed people in Canada, and contrast those views with working and middle class consciousness. There are important urban issues, of course, such as the growth of poverty as a result of neo-liberal trends. Finding out who the urban poor are and exactly where they are would be worthwhile. Doing so might serve to rupture the stereotypes and fascination with the DTES.

To Ortner (1995), resistance to research is an outcome of social inequality within the research process. It is precisely because research participants are dominated and subjugated by more powerful social forces in the research process that some academic researchers and participants resist research and the institutions that direct and control research: For the same reason they feel ambivalent and their resistance is ambiguous. For all the talk of reflexivity today, however, academics are generally reluctant to admit there is resistance to academic research on the part of the prospective research populations that they encounter. If mentioned at all, resistance tends to be discussed as an encumbrance to be avoided rather than a sign of methodological inadequacy or political and economic structural conditions. I have raised the issue of resistance as a major methodological problem affecting analysis that has been largely suppressed by the forces that appropriate and control research.

Incoherency in the meanings and descriptions of reflexive methods comes out of the uneven and sporadic development of qualitative methods and reflexivity in different branches and schools of social sciences. This incoherency shows that particular attention to resistance to research must be made, especially since the appeal and value of qualitative research, particularly ethnographic methods, is increasing. Although reflexivity generates major debates within the social sciences, reflexive methods remain on the fringes of academic research. This is mainly because of the politics of research and a class-based conservatism with regards to alternative views and practices. Researchers who desire improvements that liberate disadvantaged populations must strive to bring reflexive methods into the center of study. Building a coherent literature of qualitative methods will contribute greatly to realizing that objective.

The love-hate relationships between researchers and participants, and researchers and participants between universities, still continue as do their motives to exploit each other. The least powerful, that is researchers in relationships with the university and research participants in relationships with researchers and universities, will continue to lament the exploitation and domination. They will continue to debate what is important and relevant, question the understandings of social benefits and the intentions and products of research, and resent the imbalance and unfairness of the distribution of the rewards. However, this is healthy grief since it comes from an organic dynamic of the research process that produces change in response to social movement. Together university-based researchers and their participants can alleviate the exploitation and domination, deepen their understanding, and work towards alternative social orders.

References

- Agar, H. A. (1997). Ethnography: An overview. *Substance Abuse and Misuse*, 32, 1155-1173.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste* (R. Nice, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chrisman, N. J., Strickland, C. J., & Powell, K. (1999). Community partnership research with the Yakama Indian nation. *Human Organization*, 58, 134-141.
- Cottrell, B. (2001). Working with research ethics: The role of advisory committees in community-based research. *Atlantis*, 25(2), 22-30.
- Greenwood, D. J., Whyte, W. F., & Harkavy, I. (1993). Participatory action research as a process and as a goal. *Human Relations*, 46, 175-192.
- Jary, D., & Jary, J. (1991). *Harper-Collins dictionary of sociology*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Lemkau, J. P., Ahmed, S., & Cauley, K. (2000). The history of health in Dayton: A community-academic partnership. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90, 1216-1217.
- Manderson, L., Kelaher, M., Williams, G., & Shannon, C. (1998). The politics of community: Negotiation and consultation in research on women's health. *Human Organization*, 57, 222-229.
- Marcus, G. (1998). *Ethnography through thick and thin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Marcus, G., & Fischer, M. J. (1986). *Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Moje, E. B. (1999). Critical issues: Circles of kinship, friendship, position, and power: Examining the community in community-based literacy research. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 32, 77-112.
- Ortner, S. (1995). Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal. *Comparative Studies in Sociology and History*, 37, 173-193.
- Philo, C., & Kearns, G. (1993). *Selling places: The city as cultural capital, past and present*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Pergamon Press.
- Reid, P. T., & Vianna, E. (2001). Negotiating partnerships in research on poverty with community-based agencies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 337-354.

- Ristock, J., & Pennell, J. (2000). *Community research as empowerment: Feminist links, postmodern interruptions*. Toronto, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Roseberry, W. (1989). *Anthropologies and histories: Essays in culture, history, and political economy*. London: Rutgers University Press.
- Salzman, P. C. (2002). On reflexivity. *American Anthropologist*, 104, 805-813.
- Schensul, J. J., Denelli-Hess, D., Borrero, M. G., & Bhavati, M. P. (1987). Urban comadronas: Maternal and child health research and policy formulation in a Puerto Rican community. In J. J. Schensul & D. D. Stull (Eds.), *Collaborative research and social change* (pp. 7-31). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Shrage, E. (1994). Preface, CED: Conflicts and visions. In E. Schrage (Ed.), *CED: In search of empowerment* (pp. viii-18). Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books.
- Smith, D. E. (1990). *Conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, D. E. (1999). *Writing the social: Critiques, theory and investigations*. Toronto, Canada: Toronto University Press.
- Stewart, A. (1998). *The ethnographer's method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stull, D., & Schensul, J. (Eds.). (1987). *Collaborative research and social change: Applied anthropology in action*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2000). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago Press.
- Waldern, B. (2003). *Resistance to research in Vancouver's downtown eastside*. Unpublished master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.

Appendix A

Auto-Ethnographic Materials

Volunteer researcher, MHCDS, July 1997 to May 1998. Employee for MHCDS, community forum on drugs and AIDS, in collaboration with SFU and BCHRF, (includes my own notes and form materials), March to May, 1998. Masters of Arts program application, 1998.

Notes of unregistered student, "Urban Field School," UBC January to April, 1999.

Volunteer researcher, "Community Standards" Questionnaire, PACE, March 1999 to April 2000 Student researcher, SFU MA Anthropology Research Project Program, 2000 to 2003

Field Notes

January 25 to March 31, 1999

June 28, 2000

May 17 to August 16, 2001

Interviews

Administrators

Elliott, Brian, UBC Department of Anthropology and Sociology, June 27 and July 11, 2000.

Judy Oberlander, Director of City Programs, SFU Harbour Center, November 19, 2001

RA-1, SFU, October 23, 2001.

Individual Downtown Eastside Residents

AJ and Roderick, September 17, 2001.

Susan and Jennifer, August 16, 2001.

Bruce, August 14, 2001.

Social Service Agency Personnel

PACE staff member, June 4, 2001.

John Turvey, DEYAS, June 5, 2001.

Len Kler-Cunningham, February 3 and 26, 1999.

Students

Roe, Gordon, SFU PhD student, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, March 1 and 25, 1999.

RA-1, unnamed graduate student employed as a Research Assistant at SFU, Department of Sociology and Anthropology (also a former social service agency employee)

Televised Forums on Shaw Cable

People and Policies Town Hall with host Kevin Evans and a gallery of conference delegates of the "International Association on Public Participation," re-broadcast from May 2001 on June 7, 2001 at 19h00 (my handwritten notes)

ICTV After Hours with Jim Green and Am Johal, broadcast on August 25, 2001 at 22h00 on community development, including university involvements in DTES (my handwritten notes)

Author Note

Born and raised in the Vancouver area of British Columbia, Barbara Waldern holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in French, a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Social Policy

Issues, and a Masters of Arts in Anthropology from Simon Fraser University (SFU). She is currently employed as a professional researcher on the national school personnel study in the Faculty of Education at SFU where she is co-author of a journal article manuscript on Canadian education policy regarding inclusion and diversity.

Waldern presented papers on resistance to research to QUIG (University of Georgia, Education) and the Pacific Sociology Association in 2002. She produced a paper on the public response to heritage tourism for a New York State planning commission as a research intern in 2002. , and her manuscript on urban land claims in Vancouver was accepted by the "City & Society" journal for a special issue on sport and cities in late 2005. Anthropology News of the American Anthropology Association accepted her article on the human rights situation in the Philippines in December 2005.

Send all correspondence concerning this manuscript to Barbara Waldern, #1 – 1305 Jervis Street, Vancouver, BC, V6E 2E4; Telephone: 604-687-6596; Email: barbaraw@sfu.ca

I am grateful to all my participants for their knowledge, comments and assistance. They include Prostitution Counselling Alternative Education Society, the Downtown Eastside Youth Addition Services, Brian Elliott in the Department Anthropology and Sociology at the UBC, Judy Oberlander at Harbour Center City Programs at SFU, two student researchers and five area residents. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Stacy Pigg and Dara Culhane, my supervisors at SFU. I give special thanks to Dara for helping me to sort out the data on “community” and guide my reflections. I appreciate the assistance of the clerical staff and the support and interest of all my colleagues in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at SFU.

Copyright 2006: Barbara Waldern and Nova Southeastern Unviersity

Article Citation

Waldern, B. (2006). Community research mythology. *The Qualitative Report*, 11(1), 55-79. Retrieved [Insert date], from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR11-1/waldern.pdf>
