

Experiencing longitudinal research: ethics, intimacy and distance in research relationships

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This presentation

- Bangladesh Reality Checks: A longitudinal study 2007-2011
- Building rapport, creating intimacy, becoming friends
- Using intimacy as a tool: the 'commodification' of intimacy
- Intimacy and ethics as they develop over time
- Intimacy and distance: a mixed method?

Bangladesh Reality Check

Initiated and funded by Swedish Sida. A means to listen to and document the voices, opinions and experiences of people who are living in poverty in relation to the policies and interventions that are carried out in their name.

Qualitative, longitudinal, staying over night with families.

The Reality Check Approach

- Living with rather than visiting
- Conversations rather than interviews
- Learning rather than finding out
- Inclusive

A note on the concept of 'intimacy'

Duncombe and Jessop: 'Doing rapport' and the ethics of 'faking friendship', in Mauthner et al (2008) *'Ethics in Qualitative Research'*

The emotional and ethical dilemmas of coping with intimacy/social distance, and the professionalisation of building rapport.



Building rapport and gaining intimacy in RC:

- Ethical motivations: the right thing to do
- Instrumental motivations: it would generate the right kind of information

Achieving intimacy in principle...

- Stripping off: manage our appearance and self-presentation
- Applying social skills to build relationships
- Resigning from powerful positions
- ... and hoping our host families would do so too.

The assumption was that this would help us create the **right environment**, the right kind of **relationships** that would support a long term engagement, make us all feel **comfortable**, and generate useful **information**.

... and in practice, over time...

Coping with discomfort: intimacy as ethically based driving force, and using intimacy for instrumental reasons.

...and...

- Handling competing dimensions:
research/friendship/community norms

A matter of personal dilemmas that should be resolved by a professional researcher, or is there something more to it?

Resolving some dilemmas

Introducing 'distance':

- Posing questions
- Sitting down for an interview
- Pen and paper
- Interactive research tools

To conclude...