Chapter 4

Doing Arts-based Decolonising Research (Prof Divine Charura and Prof Rachel Wicaksono, York St John University)

> *As 'ontological colonizers', we must learn to let go of our profound desires to control, if not the course of History itself, the metaphysical meanings we attribute to the experience of historical temporality'* (Malette, 2012: 381)

This chapter outlines some conceptual issues in doing arts-based decolonised research. In the chapter, we take a broad view of 'art', one that includes the 'art of' (decolonising) research, and we highlight examples from our own research that show (1) how we have used objects ('arti-facts'?) to create data and, (2) linking to psychotherapy and research, how the 'art of communication' (the delicate mechanisms of interaction and the way that, as researchers, we choose to report them), has created our data.

We approached this chapter using a duoethnographic research approach, in which we consider the meanings of our individual narratives and our conceptualizations of the different perspectives we were exploring (Norris & Sawyer, 2004; Breault, 2016). We began with two key questions: 'what 'is' arts-based research?' and 'what does decolonizing research 'mean'?'. In the chapter, we highlight the importance of seeing research as a relational and deeply reflexive process; we pay attention to the themes which we conceptualized as part of our analysis of the duoethnographic process. These themes are: 'beginnings', active engagement with the research dynamics that unfold thereafter (which we have called the 'real inner drama'), and, finally, 'endings'. Through each of these themes, we explore the possibility of a decolonised approach which demonstrates a deep respect, and valuing, of participation/participants. This respect can be primarily demonstrated by engagement with reflexivity and evidence of how we, as researchers and co-authors of this chapter, have tried to manage 'power-with' rather than 'power-over'. We show how the latter, being synonymous with colonising dynamics, plays out in practices in which, for example, researchers focus on

having their research questions answered, rather than on engaging with the diversity of world views/experiences that participants bring to the research process. In ending research interviews/encounters, leaving space for reflection and debriefing is important. Where artifacts, or other creative methodologies, are employed, respecting the participant and their objects/creations, involves a discussion of what happens to them next, or how the participant would like to end their participation. Furthermore, dialogue about returning to the transcript to check with the participant about the representation of their narrative, as well as discussions about how they will be represented, or not, in the dissemination, is all part of the ending process. To demonstrate these themes we, offer examples from our own arts-based decolonising research.

Central to our chapter are the following questions:

- What are objects, things, art, and how do they shift power?
- How are these issues relevant to counselling and psychotherapy research and practice?
- What are some of the dilemmas we have faced in doing arts-based decolonising research?

To end the chapter, we reflect on silence as a useful part of the research interaction; for example, in the provision of a space for material to emerge, or to be held, in reflection. We recommend increased awareness of our own and our research participants' multiple and changing understandings of 'things', both material and conceptual; whilst at the same time remaining committed to the process of searching for our own truths, and to the maintenance of ethical research and professional practice.

2. Origins of our duoethnographical, decolonised approach and writing process

Given that we are from different fields and professions, with one of the authors (DC) being a practitioner psychologist, and Director of the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at York St John University, and one (RW) being an applied linguist, we agreed that in writing this chapter we would engage in duoethnographic dialogue. This process began with discussion about our lived experiences: as people with some similar pedagogical interests; as researchers, academics; and by exploring our individual/personal experiences of being in the world (our epistemologies and ontologies). In addition, we focused on our understandings of what doing arts-based decolonising research meant to us and what our experiences of engaging in decolonised research were. This approach was important to us as we were also interested in engaging in a decolonised approach to collaboration in the writing of this chapter. Such an approach enabled our multiple diversities and lived experiences (autoethnographies, autobiographies, life histories, and more) to become equal knowledge-generating partners in dialogue. It also meant that psychological theory/research perspectives did not have pre-eminence over applied linguistic research, or vice versa. And furthermore, it allowed us to attempt to illuminate our process for the readers of this chapter, thereby offering an example of an approach for future researchers to consider in creating their own collaborative encounters/research.

Our duoethnographic approach as an evolving form of inquiry draws on the work of Norris and Sawyer (2012, p. 12), who suggested that duoethnographies can be thought of as a kind of 'collaborative field testing' (Norris & Sawyer, 2012; Breault, 2016). The material for this chapter thus arose over a period, of about a year, which began with a workshop on *'Ontologies' in the context of doing research* with trainees on the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology programme, facilitated by one of the authors (RW). In this workshop, the trainees were invited to explore their perspectives on 'what different things are'. The facilitator invited the trainees to respond to different photographs of objects/things or people. After a few moments of silent reflection, the trainees were then invited to think about and share with other group members, 'what they thought, perceived or felt about what they had seen'. These reflections led to a class discussion about ontology as a questioning of 'the nature of reality' and one's own experience of 'being in the world' (Pring, 2004; Wicaksono & Hall, 2020; Charura & Lago, 2021); and epistemology as a questioning of how theories/bodies of knowledge, and the research methods that underpin them, inform our understanding of social

reality, including our fundamental assumptions about human beings/research participants (Grix, 2001; Charura & Lago, 2021). Following this workshop, we were both moved by the trainees' diversity of perspectives on, and changes in their, understanding of why it is so important for researchers in counselling, psychotherapy, and psychology to engage critically with their own ontological and epistemological positions. Some quotes from our post-workshop dialogue include DC's initial response to RW:

> *As we all engaged in the process, Rachel, I was surprised and excited at the shifts in understanding, in myself as well as the trainees. It was particularly interesting when you showed the picture of hair in a sink and the responses of some participants in the workshop were "oh that is disgusting". Then when you asked about why it becomes "disgusting" in the sink and not when on one's head, the reflections about the importance of considering a diversity of personal/cultural perspectives on hair, and other things, demonstrated a shift in openness to the worldviews of others. This openness to continually develop a reflexive awareness of one's assumptions when engaging in research highlighted for me how the researchers' ontological and epistemological positions of 'what things are' can easily result in colonizing dynamics when faced with a different world-or-knowledge view.*

In response to this RW responded,

> *Thank you Divine… this is important in designing our own research. What are the possible definitions, understandings, categorizations, experiences of a thing? When comparing findings between studies. What was the researchers' conceptualization of the thing? …. I am trying to understand the work of the quantum physicist Karen Barad (2007) who asks us to think about how what we 'know' about things makes them into what they 'are'; and how these objects of knowledge are also agents in the production of knowledge.*

We continued in dialogue in person and, at times, online, each month, and emailed thoughts and responses to each other in relation to doing arts-based decolonising research. Halfway through the writing process, one of the authors (DC) was hospitalised with critical Covid-19 complications for about a month, thus there was a break and pause in our process. We explored what this break meant for us as collaborating authors; including, how what we 'know' about things/people/states of health makes them into what they 'are', and how changing viewpoints about, for example what it means to be a 'person', or a 'healthy person' determine those people's pasts and futures, and the entangled relationships between ontologies (being), epistemologies (knowing) and ethics (doing/in this case, writing).

Upon return to work, we continued to analyse our experiences, further inter-weaving our co-constructed narratives into key themes, which then cumulated in the co-authoring of this paper. As noted by Norris and Sawyer, we juxtaposed our personal voices with the voice of another, so that, through co-reflections, neither position could 'claim dominance or universal truth' (2012, p. 15). We also tried to notice how our naming of things (including, for example: 'real', 'research', 'co-author', 'health') interacts with those things, and, more broadly, how material objects, classes (including of people), ideas/concepts, institutions, practices, and ourselves, come into being and, perhaps, fade away. We offer this aspect of our process, an unforeseen break and then a return to work, as possible example of the potential challenges/unforeseen circumstances that can emerge in any research process; what we refer to, later in the chapter, as 'the real inner drama'.

3. What are some conceptual issues in doing arts-based decolonising research that we address here?

3.1 Arts-based research

In our chapter, we have taken a view of 'art' that includes the 'art of' (decolonising) any kind of research. Our own examples in this chapter show how we have used (1) objects and (2) the 'art of communication' (the delicate mechanisms of interaction and the way that, as researchers, we choose to report them) to create our data. Our view of art is a version of a

definition of 'art therapy', which, according to the (American Art Therapy Association, 2018), is a process that takes place in the presence of a/n (disciplinary-sanctioned) certified/qualified art therapist (Regev & Cohen-Yatziv, 2018). Our 'arts-based' research is described as such in the context of our creation of common ground between our two disciplines. In creating this common ground, we named our examples, presented later in this chapter, as 'arts-based' for the purposes of exploring the art of decolonising (our) research. Our joint agreement to name/describe our process brought our territory into being into a way that avoided the dominance of one discipline over the other. For the, possibly temporary, purposes of this chapter, we are doing arts-based research, a definition which makes the chapter possible, in the context of this book.

3.2 Decolonising research

> *'Making explicit our metaphysical assumptions in order to negotiate their formulations and implications openly with holders of different worldviews who may not share these assumptions could be a good first step to move beyond the grip of a colonial ontology. By doing so, we could minimize the risk of epistemic violence and subtle modes of domination working through our understanding of reality at a fundamental level'* (Malette, 2012: 381).

We started this chapter with a quote from Sebastien Malette, and here we return to his work with another quote. These quotes for us embody the perspectives we raise in this chapter, in relation to an invitation to the reader/researcher to carefully examine and critique worldviews, and the meanings we attribute to things, knowledge and research. In line with Malette's (2012) call to move beyond colonial ontologies, and in order to shift towards a postcolonial ethos, we highlight the importance of challenging the power one holds as a researcher in the fields of counselling, psychotherapy, and psychology. Malette (2012, p. 369) advocates disrupting modes of domination by freeing '*ourselves from ourselves'* and shifts us to openness to that *'which has not always been, that it could be otherwise'.* As researchers, we have tried to learn to let go of our individual, profound desires to control the course of (this duo-ethnographic) research. We have used our different disciplinary perspectives to challenge our ontological and epistemological assumptions, and to co-create our new common ground. And we have tried to reflect on how what we have learned in participating in this duoethnographic process relates to

the way we have related to our research participants in the past, and how we might name and categorize our research 'participants' of the future in ways which evidence a process of 'power-with' participants rather than 'power-over' them.

Researcher refection point 1

1. What could be the connections between these types of questions/concerns and the issue of how you decolonise your own research?
2. Could you begin/continue to decolonise your research by asking these types of questions about what both material and conceptual things 'are'?

With specific reference to decolonising research, we suggest that researchers might need to:

- Endeavour to avoid assuming what freedom (and de/colonisation) is.
- Explore the various ways in which decolonising research can be achieved, with what consequences, for whom.
- Keep open to the possible meanings of things, concepts, participants' responses or worldviews.
- Be reflexive about the ways in which they keep their practices open.

4. Doing arts-based decolonising research: Themes emerging from our duoethnography process and research examples.

While we claim the importance of seeing research as a relational and deeply reflexive process, we also note the, 'risk of personal/autobiographical accounts becoming self-absorbed, and self-indulgent [….] without offering fresh insight into the phenomenon of concern' (Finlay, 2020 p. 335). In the hope of being able to provide some fresh insight into decolonising research, we will provide some examples from our research in the sections of this chapter that follow. In doing this, rather than showing, 'straightforward, unreflective absorption in the objects of experience', as cautioned against by Finlay (2020 p. 335), we attempt to go 'beyond the personal' perspectives and experiences of our research (Toombs, 1993 p. xii; Finlay 2020). Our approach is in line with the view that duoethnography uncovers different subjectivities, generates new meanings, and creates 'hybrid identities'

(Asher, 2007 p. 68) instead of 'binary opposites' (p. 3). Here, a 'hybrid identity' is formulated through our combining of applied linguistics and psychotherapy research, in order to create fresh insights into the objects of experience and in the hope of going beyond our individual experiences of research.

In direct reference to decolonial practice, and in an effort to 'unpack' the cultural underpinnings of their thinking about teaching for equity and diversity, Sawyer and Liggett (2012) use a duoethnography process to explore their own history and the curriculum of colonialism (as schoolteachers in the U.S.). They use personal photographs of themselves as children, a school report, and lesson plans they designed, to compare their lives, their educational histories, and some critical educational incidents; reflecting on issues of representation, self-reflexivity and trustworthiness.

In response to engaging with our reading and dialogue about it, RW stated:

> *After reading their [Sawyer and Liggett's] account of their process and reflecting on their learning, I was left wanting to try and spend more of my time talking/writing about what I see/hear/sense around myself, and less time saying what I think it 'means'. More time on what exploring perspectives on what people think 'it' 'is'. To stay longer with 'things' and spend less time with reasons, more description and less analysis (including more acknowledgement that description = analysis).*
> *This is something that I have also thought about as a transcriber of spoken interaction for research that explored the construction of 'stories' elicited as part of a community project. As part of our data analysis, we tried to pay careful attention to how we translated our audio recordings into written documents, mindful that transcription constructs what the data 'is'.*

The importance of lingering over description, and the equal importance of recognising that description is also analysis, resonated with both of us. In thinking about decolonised counselling and psychotherapy research, DC responded:

> *Doing arts-based decolonising research values the different uses of 'things', of objects/art-i-facts or research encounters, to express the lived experience. That which we may term arts-based research differs in each research*

> *encounter, but perhaps the central/common themes are the researcher's approach to power, knowledge, and curiosity. That, for example, the researcher uses questions, or an approach, which offer(s) opportunities for the participant to employ any form of art/way of being to illuminate the phenomena in question. This could be responses to questions such as: Who are you? What is your lived experience or worldview? What happened to/in you? (rather than: What is wrong with you?). Having an openness to different participant worldviews may take the research interview/encounter in a direction that was not preconceived….and indeed it may require time to stay longer with 'things', the research design/process or the analysis.*

In engaging with the question of what doing arts-based decolonising research is, from our different perspectives, we observed the following three themes:

1. Beginnings - welcoming the participant and their narrative/experience.
2. Active engagement with the research dynamics that unfold thereafter (which we have called 'the real inner drama').
3. Endings - reflecting on what feelings and sense researchers may experience in letting go of power and how they can search their own truth whilst maintaining an ethical stance throughout the process.
4. In addition, we focused on the importance of paying attention to the use of language and use of silence when engaging in research encounter/dialogue. Towards the end of this chapter, we also consider some of the consequences of cleaning and interpreting things, including research data.

To illuminate these themes, we offer examples from our practice and research.

4.1 Beginnings

The research, and the writing, process has to start somewhere. The following are examples of questions which helped us to begin the duoethnographic research we describe here:

- How do we want to approach this research?

- What are the questions we want to ask?
- How do we want to present our experience in a way that is useful to us, and which allows us to explore how our conceptualization of our research experience is brought into being through dialogue.

We then discussed the importance of welcome in the research process, and here we ask you to reflect on and respond to the following questions:

Researcher reflection point 2

1. How do you welcome participants in your arts-based research?
2. How do you begin entering dialogue about the phenomena being researched?
3. How does your welcome communicate how you will use your power and how you will respect the participant's worldviews that may emerge?

In one example of our research on trauma, loss, grief and growth in asylum seekers and refugees (Taylor, Charura, Williams, et al., 2020), participants were invited to bring an artifact that they felt represented their lived experience, in order to begin a dialogue in a way that was the participant's choice. Examples included: a patchwork quilt, shoes, inspirational songs, poems, photographs, a dress, a Bible (that the participant had carried from her home country), a bag, and an African percussion instrument (Mbira). The researchers acknowledged that some participants might not bring a physical object, given that many of their narratives included having lost all things as a result of forced migration. In our own process, following a break in our work due to one of the authors being (DC) having been on sick leave, we attempted to re-begin our duoethnographic process, and RW said:

> *I had been thinking of you…. I did not want to carry on with the project without you. I wanted to respect your thinking, and your life as it was happening, your illness and trauma at the time, in a situation in which you were trying to recover, it made me want to be careful and not rush... our project is interdisciplinary and that also made me want to be careful, and not to assume that we would agree with each other… also,*

> *I had very much enjoyed the process of working together and don't want it to end. I have learnt so much our dialogue….*

In psychotherapy/counselling research, and in psychotherapy encounters, the beginnings of the process set the tone of how, and whether, one can begin to share a narrative/experience. An experience of autonomy in the beginning creates facilitative and conducive conditions for a successful and rich encounter. In re-beginning our duoethnography, we tried to keep the process open by, firstly, not assuming that it had (re-)begun, and then by allowing the other to introduce resources of their choice: an academic discipline, a story about trauma, an opportunity to learn/teach, or nothing. This account of (our) beginnings is an example of our next theme, the importance of showing 'the real inner drama' of research.

4.2 The 'real inner drama'

> *In an attempt to assert objectivity and rationality, scientists often report their work through a simplified pattern of (1) problem, (2) literature review, (3) methodology, and so on. This pattern suggests that their ideas developed solely along such a linear time-line and involved an exclusively logical progression of events. Through such highly standardized reporting practices, scientists inadvertently hide from view the real inner drama of their work, with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives.* (Bargar and Duncan, 1982 p. 2)

In our acknowledgement of the disruptions and uncertainties in our research, we aim to avoid presenting a linear pattern that hides how our thinking and writing was brought into being, and that runs the risk of one of us over-powering/colonising the process of the other.

As part of our duoethnography dialogue in relation to power, one of us (DC) stated:

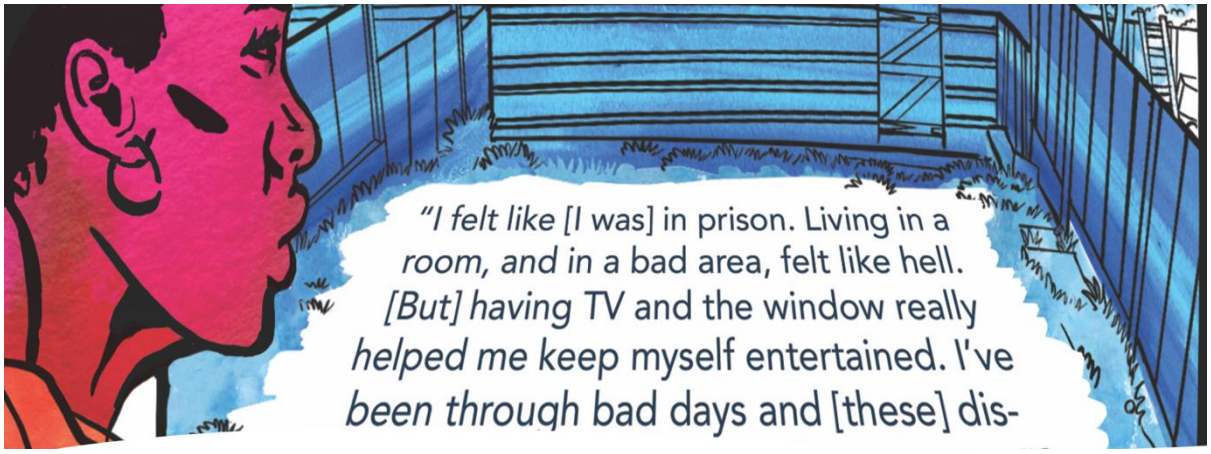
> *Rachel, I like what you said about how power and responsibility can become placed in the frame of reference of the participant. One participant I interviewed brought a pair of shoes. It felt clear to me that, although he had been extremely disempowered*

by the asylum-seeking process, at least in this interview, he was feeling he had the resources and power to share whatever he wanted about his experience, journey and trauma. He also shared how psychotherapy had made a positive impact on his trauma symptoms.

Fig. 1 Picture of shoes brought as an artefact by the participant (Charura, and Allan 2017; Taylor et al 2020).

In another study of asylum seekers, Jaworski, Mountain, Coan and Charura (2020) aim to highlight the housing experiences of young people who have migrated to the UK.

Figure 2: comic depiction of lived experience of living conditions (Jaworski et al., 2020)



In these examples of the research in which participants brought artifacts/objects or relayed their experience through a comic illustration there are several common themes. These include:

1. Participants commented on how they appreciated the opportunity to use creative methodologies such as art, photo elicitation, and objects, and to choose what resources they would bring (including none).
2. Arts-based decolonising research that acknowledged the disruptions and uncertainties that are part of the research process enabled 'power with' the participants, by giving them to be in control about how and how much they share about their experiences.

An excerpt from our dialogue reflects the dynamics of re-constructing the lived experiences of participants, in the 'inner drama' of the process. RW stated:

> *I was struck with the idea that the stories, which were created in dialogue with the objects and their owners, are a re-counted, a re-constructed, past – the only past we have.*

DC responded:

> *Rachel what you said in relation to the use of artifacts and objects, responds beautifully to the Bargar and Duncan quote which we used earlier to highlight how researchers can 'inadvertently hide from view the <u>real inner drama</u> of their work'. In engaging with dialogue, arts, objects and artifacts, I could not hide behind the mask of being a researcher. I was faced with narratives of trauma, loss, death, and difference that refugees and asylum seekers face. I had to quietly reflect on my privilege and power as a person and as a researcher. I was fully present and was being so careful not to 'colonise' the process/participant through conveying a desire to get my research questions answered or to bring my own worldview/interpretation of what the object/artifact represented. Through dialogue with each participant and open questions such as what you would like to share with me about this object/photograph?..... their use or introduction of each object, photograph, or artifact led to an open sharing of their presenting past… in the here and now of our research interview. This way of being resulted in interviews that interweaved narratives of trauma, and loss, but also hope, meaning and post traumatic growth.*

In the next stage of our dialogue we continued to talk about how, when researchers need answers to questions they may be particularly likely assert 'objectivity' and 'rationality', and to lose sight of 'the real inner drama' of how answers are achieved through interaction between the researcher and the research participants. To illustrate some of the ways in which this happens, we discussed data from a recent study conducted by Wicaksono and Zhurauskaya, (2020) that explored the telling of migration stories. The study reported the experience of working with a community group based in York, a small city of approximately 220,000 residents in which, according to the 2011 government census, 90.2 per cent identify as 'White British'. The community group created a project together with fifteen participants who had been born outside of the UK and, at some point, had moved to York. The community group leaders worked with the project participants on a number of awareness-raising activities, and also interviewed each of the participants about their migration experiences. It was these fifteen one-hour long, audio-recorded, interviews which provided the data for our study.

Here we present one extract from the transcripts of these fifteen audio recordings. The extract is followed by a brief description of what the researchers observed in the interaction between the interviewer (IR), one of the project leaders, and the interviewee (IE), one of the project participants. The transcript presented here is a way of making the audio recorded interviews accessible in written form, and a key to the symbols used is available at the end of this chapter. Transcribers decide which aspects of the data to try and represent in writing and which to ignore; these are analytical choices that effect the responses of subsequent readers of the research, as well as any next steps that the researcher may take and are similar to a 'data cleaning' process. What the researcher decides is unnecessary or unimportant in the data is 'cleaned' away and is no longer visible to the readers of the transcript. The extract we present here is the result of this process of selection, and we know that we are implicated in these choices about what to preserve and what to ignore/hide/clean away, and that our choices are invisible to our readers.

In the extract, that follows below, the interviewer is asking the interviewee questions about their 'values' and 'treasures', before moving on to a new topic. The extract begins with the interviewer summarising what they have already heard the interviewee say, before asking a question in line 6.

Figure 3 – transcription example (formatting needs careful checking before going to print)

IR: Interviewer
IE: Interviewee

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01 IR:    so you (.) er (.) when you describe [country] then
02        (.) obviously(1.0) the thing tha:t (.) you treasure
03        most is >obviously< your dad that you left behind
04        [the:re]
05 IE:        [yeah]
06 IR:    when you think of thi:s country then (2.0) am
07        I getting an
08    inkling that you treasure the opportunities
09 IE: yeah
10    (1.0)
11 IR: I mean is there anything else that you treasure
       about
12       the UK then
13       (.)
14 IE:( lip-smack).hh Erm (2.0) (lip-smack) what do I
       treasure about
15     the UK?=
16 IR: =or even York perhaps (.) is there something
about
17       living in York=
18 IE: =Yes (.) I actually (.) really love (.) living in
       York now
19     (.) again when I first came to York I thou:ght it
       was one
20     of the most bo:ring cities
21     ((laughter))
22 IE: a:nd=
23 IR: =so what age where you when you came to York then
24 IE: I wa:s (.) round about (.) thirteen fourteen
25 IR: ok
26 IE: (.) yes a:nd (.) one of the first things that you
       notice of
27     somebody of colour erm (.) is (.) of course=
28 IR: =a rarity
29 IE: yeah (.) [and]
30 IR:              [yeah]
31 IE: here wasn't much hehe
32 IR: okay
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33 IE: e:m (.) so: it was another (.) moment of (1.0)
34   ((sigh)) hh just  (.) being kind of (.) on your own
       again
35      (.) you know (.) e:rm  (.) a::nd (.) >it was a
       struggle< but
36     ((lip-smack)) I think  those experiences sort of
       made me
37    (1.0) e:rm (1.0) what's the  word (1.0) stronger in
       a lot of
38    ways
39     IR: so, they give you character
40 IE: erm (0.5) it did
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After a two small pauses (.) and a hesitation sound ‘er’, the interviewer begins to summarise the interviewee’s previous answers; in lines 1-3 (you treasure your dad, who you left behind) and 5-6 (you treasure the opportunities available in the UK). After each of these summaries, the interviewee says ‘yeah’ (in lines 4 and 7). A pause follows, in line 8, providing a moment in which either speaker could self-select to talk. It is the interviewer who speaks, again, in lines 9-10, offering a further question 'I mean is there anything else that you treasure about the UK then?'.

Several different types of interviewer contributions can be observed in the extract. One example is in lines 9-10, when the interviewer has a second attempt at asking about ‘treasures’ in the UK, having received only a minimal, ambiguous, response to the suggestions that ‘opportunities’ are to be treasured. Another example is in lines 14-15, after the second attempt at ‘treasures’ is unsuccessful, when the interviewer rephrases the question by narrowing its scope, asking about York instead of the UK, and changing ‘something’ (line 9) to ‘anything’ (line 14). A further example can be seen in line 26, where what might be an attempt to help the interviewee to find the right word, actually constrains their subsequent answer and helps to project the kind of information the interviewer wants to hear more about.

If we assume that, in research interviews, answers follow questions, the only possible answer to the question of what this interviewee treasures in the UK, is the interaction in lines 5-6, where they say ‘yeah’, in response to the interviewer’s assumption that *opportunities* are what they treasure. Conceptualising the interviewing process as an art and as a way of thinking about the ‘real’ experiences of a research participant relies on an idea of meaning as held by individuals, rather than in interaction with each other (the interviewer contributes,

even, controls, given their ‘right’ to ask questions, to the answers) or in interaction with the research methods (answers follow questions).

This extract show some of the ways in which a research project which uses interviews, or focus groups or questionnaires, to ‘discover’ what residents of York who were born outside of the UK treasure about the UK, and what they miss about the country of their birth, are, amongst other things, the opportunities that the UK provides to migrants and the music of the country in which they were born. A close look at the interaction, however, shows how the research method, and the researcher, are as much a part of the findings as the research participants and cannot be separated from them. We noted that, in the transcript, what seemed like a rather ‘leading’ set of interview questions helped us to see how answers are always a result of questions, and how ‘thematic’ analysis of these answers risks tidying up the data to such an extent that it can no longer claim to be 'objective’.

Offering a decolonising approach requires an awareness of how of the act of interviewing is underpinned a complex relationship between: interviewer and interviewee; the researcher/researched and the research methods; and the researcher/researched/research methods and the material/social context in which the research takes place. Charura and Lago, (2021) in their writing on decolonising psychotherapy and counselling research, note the importance of researchers’ reflections on their power, as well as how they can actively challenge unequal power relations with disadvantaged, marginalised groups and communities. They further note the importance of acknowledging multiple realities and knowledge bases of participants. Figure 3 shows how the ‘findings’ of research are inextricably linked to the research method, most obviously when there is ‘power over’ rather than ‘power with’ the participants. Where the ‘real inner drama’ of the research is cleaned away, and the opportunities provided by halting time-lines and silence are not recognised, findings become the projections of the powerful researcher, and not acknowledged result of collaboration and interaction between all parties, the methods and the context.

In our duoethnographic dialogues, we went on to discuss the typology of silence, the place of silence in research, and the importance of the researcher seeing silence as part of the interaction. We noted the illocutionary force of silence and the question we ask the reader when faced with silence in an interaction with a participant is: what kind of silence is

presenting? How does the researcher engage with the silence? Given our argument here that silence is functioning, do you, as the researcher, need to use silence more?

Researcher refection point 3

1. How do you respond to the material your participants share in interviews?
2. How do you begin the transcription and analysis process?
4. How do you use silence and ensure you are not rushing to 'suggest themes'?
5. How do you engage with reflexivity and use your developing insights to address power and ensure a decolonised approach to your research?

In responding to these questions, we now invite you to consider endings in research. How can we avoid trying to hide ourselves and our thinking (because doing so presents us, the researcher, as 'objective' and our research participants as 'subjective'/subjects)? How can we describe our process in a way that avoids 'cleaning it all up'? How can we stay with the process as researchers, without rushing to findings and in a way that enables the research encounters to be opportunities to hear the voice of those with lived experience whilst at the same time furthering the stimulus of our thinking?

Endings can mean a number of things, including ending the interview, debriefing, ending the analysis, ending a research project, and dissemination of findings. In the section that follows we discuss our final theme of 'endings'.

4.3 Endings

> *The past in its historical actuality, is gone: the reconstructed, that is, recounted past, the interpreted past, is all we have [….] That is, out of ongoing growth and integration of life experiences, individuals progressively create the found world […] We create the world we live in by the lived interpretation we make about ourselves and about others (Gargiulo, 2016 p. 14).*

We start this section on 'endings' with a quote from Gargiulo's work on quantum psychoanalysis. His reminder that the reconstructed, recounted, interpreted past is all we have encouraged us to renew our commitment to the value of relational, decolonised research. If we believe that, in counselling and psychotherapy practice and in research, the participants

are equal knowledge generating partners, and that their conceptualizations of what things are matter, then our approach/research design should show (not hide) this.

In relation to endings, our dialogue focused on the importance of letting go, searching for our own truths, and continually being ethical in our research practice. DC stated:

> *From our discussions last time we met, I drew the conclusion that if we insist on what we think things/or objects are, or if we rush to conclude or interpret what we think the meaning of the participant's lived experience is, we risk unethical practice and colonizing the other! That is because we will miss their experience or cultural perspective. I am also reminded of our contemporary understanding of quantum models that see the micro world as a 'mist of infinite possibilities', and 'a jittery foam of probabilities' (Wheeler 1973; Gargiulo 2016). This could be synonymous with the idea that we have repeatedly ended up with; that the things/artefacts or narratives and the experiences of participants we engage with, have multiple possibilities of meaning.*

In the same discussion on the importance of letting go, searching for our own truths, and continually being ethical in our research practice. RW, responded, stating:

> *We risk misunderstanding the other and devaluing their perspectives if we take the view that 'I know what it is!'. Stories are also things! We should try to be open to different uses of things. As we have agreed, we can perhaps begin to approach knowing what things are for others through curiosity and listening, and through giving space for others to name things from their frame of reference. In terms of endings, perhaps all we have is that 'mist of infinite possibilities'!*

We noted the importance of referring back to the ethical guidelines of our professional body/institution. In relation to endings, the British Psychological Society, [BPS] (2021) Code of Human Research Ethics states that when the research data is completed, 'It is important to provide an appropriate debriefing for participants' (p.26). The Code acknowledges that some participants may choose not to take up the offer of debriefing, but states that it should be offered when appropriate. We agree that giving research participants the space to have the

last word is one way to increase the possibilities of the research, to open up the closing down stages of a project, and to keep the inner drama out in the open.

Researcher refection point 4

1. As a researcher committed to decolonised ethical research, how will you now approach your arts-based research, design and analysis?
2. How will you respond to the material/objects (internal/physical artifacts) that participants share through the research process?

We conclude this chapter with some points of reflection on objects/subjects and how the creation of these can be related to a colonising process of fixing meaning as a way of getting power over things (objects, people, data etc.). We aim to show our learning from our duoethnographic process, and the insights that have transformed us and our practice as decolonising researchers. We re-iterate the benefits of remaining curious, of not assuming knowledge of things, of engaging in dialogue, and the importance of watchful waiting/not rushing the encounter/participant in order to chase themes. We assert as researchers that it is important to:

1. Reflect on the work of beginnings, the real inner drama, and endings, in arts-based, decolonising research.
2. Reflect on the perspective that research participants are not *only* 'themselves', and don't *only* exist in relation to each other and with the researcher, but that they also 'intra-act' with material things that they may bring to the research context, as well as with the tools/methods of the research, including inorganic objects (such as a recording device) and technologies (such as a transcription code).
3. Pay attention to the potential relationships between research and the process of othering/division in the selection and description/categorisation of 'participants'. We can get power over participants when we position them as 'our participants', even when we are engaged in work that aims to re-dress this balance of power in their favour.
4. Take account not only of our relationships with participants, but also of the political, social, economic context of the research in which these colonizing dynamics of power take place.

5. Avoid claiming knowledge about what others 'are' and avoid using naming practices that are not relevant or welcomed by the participants.
6. Consider cultural factors/humility when designing research, in the selection/translation of instruments/toolkits/resources or artifacts, as well as in data analysis and interpretation of data.
7. Engage with literature that uses theory and reports research which demonstrate a decolonised, culturally sensitive/ informed approach. Critique literature or practice that does not.
8. Notice when your question or reflection, in response to what your participant is saying, has narrowed the flow of the dialogue, or shifted the power dynamic negatively. Consider following up with a more general question such as 'I noticed you seem to have paused/ held back, is there something else you want to say?' or 'Do you have some more comments in response to what I have asked/reflected?'.
9. If the participant does not respond within a few seconds of a question, it is worth letting the silence be. Silences have different meanings for people and respecting pauses can allow time for the participant and researcher to reflect or to think of more detailed answers.
10. Question and reflect on your power as a researcher. This can be in relation to critiquing the dominance of Eurocentric perspectives that exclude the multiple realities and knowledge bases of your participants. It can also be in relation to challenging unequal power relations with disadvantaged, marginalised groups and communities.
11. Research is a site of creative struggle, of innovation and destruction, and a mist of infinite possibilities. We can demonstrate the delicate mechanisms through which this struggle takes place by paying attention to the effects of repetition, silence, overlap and so on.
12. In designing research, we need to pay attention to, and include in our analysis: pre- and post-data collection talk with participants; moments of sampling, recruitment and consent; the preparation of, and adjustments to, data collection instruments 'in the moment' of their use.

We concur with Marshall and Rossman (1999) who argue that researchers should try to be sensitive to the need for change and flexibility as it emerges in their research encounters.

Although we had to finish the construction of this chapter in order to meet our deadline, we tried not to rush to the closing down of the process. And we expect to continue to develop, craft and further refine what has yet to emerge in our writing.

Summary

We have found it useful to think about what things 'are' in de-colonising research; partly because this ontological thinking emphasises that the beginning of our research journey, the drama we experienced and the decisions we made along the way, and our reasons for finishing, are all part of a mist of infinite possibilities. Our research (methods) was/were not inevitable, but emerged in dialogue, and in a range of changing contexts. We have tried to show how the incorporation, through detailed exploration, of obstacles has been part of our own research experience. And we have tried to remain open to the multiple meanings of our dialogue, ourselves and of each other. We are aware that there is much more work to do.

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