Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education

The politics of ethics in diverse cultural settings: colonising the centre stage

Adrian Holliday[a]

[a] Department of English and Language Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The politics of ethics in diverse cultural settings: colonising the centre stage

Adrian Holliday*

Department of English and Language Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury, UK

This paper interrogates the proposition that Western ethical practices in qualitative social research are incompatible with cultures outside the West. It is argued that incompatibility is less to do with national cultural differences than with paradigm differences in (1) perceptions of 'culture' and (2) qualitative research methodology. In both areas, there is a dominant positivist or postpositivist paradigm that encourages a false and polarised picture of cultural difference. To counter this polarised picture, critical cosmopolitanism recognises the contribution of hitherto marginalised non-Western cultural realities. This opening up of possibilities is also supported by a parallel postmodern paradigm of qualitative research, which seeks a more authentic engagement with the complexities of diverse cultural locations. The outcome is a decentred attitude to research ethics that, rather than rejecting them, can colonise and educate Western practices.

Keywords: ethics; research; the West; culture

Introduction

In this paper I argue that apparent cultural conflict in research ethics can be overcome by the adoption of a decentred postmodern paradigm that accommodates cultural diversity. This conclusion is arrived at through an interrogation of the stated relationships between the West, culture and research ethics as it is applied to qualitative research in the social sciences. Following critical writers, some of whom are cited in this chapter, I use 'the West' as a political concept that only partially relates to a geographical location and that is associated with the 'Centre' of influence and power that seeks to define the world, failing to recognise the realities of the non-West or 'Periphery' (Hall 1996; Hannerz 1991). I also treat 'culture' as a contested term that is ideological in its construction (Holliday 2011).

A perhaps useful place to begin is with my own experience of how at least some British universities deal with ethics, qualitative research and

*Email: adrian.holliday@canterbury.ac.uk

cultural difference, making the point that there may be more accommodation of non-Western practices than might be imagined.

Risk and accommodation

Ensuring appropriate ethical behaviour in research has gained considerable attention in recent years. As a member of my university's ethics committee, as the head of my university's centralised Graduate School and as a supervisor of doctoral students carrying out culturally sensitive qualitative research in diverse national locations, I have seen this development at first hand. Two concerns continue to attract discussion.

The first is how to ensure ethically appropriate practice in qualitative studies in which the precise type and content of research methods is expected to emerge in response to the research setting as it unfolds. It is indeed considered classical methodology to decide what is important to look at and how to look at it *after* entering the research setting (e.g. Spradley 1980, 32). This extract from the Northumbria University ethics handbook section on ethnography indicates a preparedness to adjust to this principle:

> The process of informed consent may … be continuous, verbal, and incremental throughout the life of the research. Consequently, gaining written informed consent for ethnographic research on individuals, communities, groups, and organisations, is often problematic. Although informed consent is preferred, under some circumstances it is either difficult to gain written consent and/or is not conducive to the efficacy of the research. For instance, informed consent might not be possible if: (1) Gaining informed consent would change the behaviour of those being studied and would therefore distort the data; (2) Access to the groups or communities might be prevented if the researcher's aims and methods were known; (3) Large populations might make it difficult to gain written consent (whole villages, for example); (4) Language/literacy difficulties might make written consent impossible.
>
> Ethnographers recognise that there are alternative forms of consent, and these must always be sought where possible. For example, gatekeepers and translators can be used and verbal consent can be captured on video/audio tape. Also, *post hoc* consent might be possible if the research was opportunistic in nature. (Northumbria 2012, 2)

There is, nevertheless, a problem with unpredictability. An example of this was a doctoral research student who had gained ethics approval on the basis of an agreed protocol in which she would interview named types of participants in specified locations. Some time later, she came upon rich and highly relevant data all around her in a semi-public social event and she could not wait to make a renewed ethics application for fear of missing the opportunity. The issue here was not just the privacy of participants who had not given permission within a particularly sensitive research topic. It was also the personal safety of the researcher in the event of an aggressive response

from them. The privacy issue might have been solved in the writing of the thesis through anonymisation or by fictionalising the data and using it only as secondary support. This solution in the writing of the thesis would not, however, have prevented the subjects from thinking their privacy was invaded. Getting ethical approval to do a piece of research is therefore by no means the end of ethical issues, which will continue to occur throughout the extent of the research.

The second concern is how to ensure that appropriate ethical practice is being met by university staff or students who carry out research in other countries that have different research ethics policies, where, for example, it may be possible to interview and even photograph young children in schools with only the consent of the school principal. My university is prepared to accept the rules of other countries if the researcher can show evidence that their ethical practices are being met.

Both this preparedness to accommodate international variations in research ethics and the approach to ethnography expressed in the Northumbria University document represent a creative openness in qualitative research that I would associate with a postmodern paradigm. While postmodernism may be far from the minds of the researchers and ethics administrators so far mentioned, I feel I can impose the term to cover a wide range of critical and constructivist approaches that acknowledge the normality of subjectivity and the inevitability of creative researcher intervention in dialogue with the exigencies of local settings (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 20; Guba and Lincoln 2005, 191; Holliday 2007, 15).

The degree of accommodation for creative research approaches described so far may well not be shared across the British university sector. I do not, however, intend to present a consolidated British approach. Quite the opposite, the point I wish to make is that there is not so much a consolidated British *cultural* approach to research but, rather, a possibly quite varied approach depending on the prevailing research paradigm.

Perceptions of cultural incompatibility

The paradigm argument is important because it contrasts quite sharply with the cultural incompatibility argument expressed by some international sources. They argue that there is a powerful Western, Centre research ethics establishment that does not acknowledge, and, indeed, alienates, the realities of research carried out in non-Western locations (e.g. Asante 2008; Ghahremani Ghajar and Mirhosseini 2010; Miike 2008). These writers report a huge amount of diversity of research practice in the various locations in Asia and Africa that they represent. Qureshi (2010) speaks specifically about research ethics in this regard. With regard to Pakistan, she takes the view that the 'codes of ethics' developed in the West disregard 'what is distinct' about the local 'ethical environments' of non-Western con-

texts (78). She refers to such features as permission, access and disclosure of research aims in communities that are very different to those imagined by the Western ethics establishment because of the nature of the communities involved.

To return to the paradigm argument, I maintain that what these writers describe is, in fact, an experience not so much with Western universities *per se*, but with Western universities, journals or supervisors who subscribe to a particular research paradigm. In contrast to the more open postmodern paradigm described above, they have encountered a positivist paradigm that is less able to accommodate the diversity they describe. It may also be possible that these writers are themselves influenced by a positivist paradigm of 'culture' that encourages notions of cultural incompatibility.

In the rest of this paper, I will argue that both of these reasons derive from a sustained dominance of a positivist view both of qualitative research and of culture and that this dominance is not so much to do with a conflict between the West and the non-West but with a conflict that is also taking place within the West.

Positivism in perceptions of culture

The positivist view of culture has been linked to the structural-functional approach in sociology that encourages an image of societies as unified organisms that are essentially different to each other, with nations or national cultures as the main unit of analysis (e.g. Durkheim 1964). This conceptualisation of social systems has influenced the building of profiles for individual national cultures or for the cultures of larger entities (e.g. 'East Asian', 'Arab', 'Western', 'Muslim' or 'Hindu'). Famously, through the work of Hofstede (2003), such profiles are used to predict and explain not only behaviour traits of these so-called 'cultures', but also the issues that arise when they interact or communicate with each other.

This positivist view of culture has been much criticised for being top-down and theory-led. While it claims objectivity, its critics argue that it represents a flawed methodological nationalism that is ideologically influenced by nineteenth-century European nationalist notions of one nation, one language, one culture (Beck and Sznaider 2006, 2; Bhabha 1994; Crane 1994; Delanty 2006; Grande 2006; Rajagopalan 1999; Schudson 1994; Tomlinson 1991). Nevertheless, it has a sustained dominance because its apparent scientific explanation is borne out by a substantial body of empirical work in which interview participants are seduced by the ready-made national cultural profiles that they find it easy to identify with.

The positivist view of culture has undoubtedly supported an essentialist Othering of the non-West (Said 1978). However, at the same time, non-Western writers have also used this positivist image of separate, different 'cultures' to differentiate themselves in resistance to Western norms. They

can, for example, claim that whereas the West is characterised by a culture of individualism, they are collectivist. In so doing, other non-Western writers argued that this strategy only results in self-Othering, which hides the richness and complexity of non-Western identities (Kim 2012; Kumaravadivelu 2006, 22). Indeed, it is also argued that the individualism-collectivism differentiation is itself an invention of the West, where individualism is considered always positive, marked by self-determination and the ability to plan and organise, and collectivism is always negative, marked by the groupism and cultural deficiencies of the non-West (Kim 2005, 108; Kumaravadivelu 2007, 15; Moon 2008, 16).

Something of this positivism can be seen in the argument that there are collectivities in non-Western cultures to which Western ethics do not apply. Hence, Qureshi (2010) says that the researcher in Pakistan is bound by the ethics of the community being researched:

> In a developing country context like Pakistan, where the cultural codes governing human interactions are relational, the ethical environment standards bind researchers in many ways. For instance, the range of choices and degrees of freedom available … are determined by how s/he is introduced to community members and what relational category/categories are assigned to him/her. (90)

I do not wish, in any way to accuse Qureshi of exaggerated self-Othering. On the contrary, she describes eloquently how things really are. However, her description is also strikingly resonant with how things are in Britain and perhaps, indeed, everywhere in the West, where there are also collectivities. It is not, therefore, a matter of Western cultures of individualism that cannot tolerate non-Western collectivities. It is, instead, the positivism that Qureshi has encountered that cannot tolerate cultural complexities wherever they are. The problem is not with the West, but with positivism.

Research writing and easy answers

The following example indicates how easy it is for all of us to fall into this positivist trap. Some years ago, I supervised an East Asian masters student who was doing a qualitative study of East Asian student attitudes within a British university setting. (I have changed or suppressed key details of this case to protect the person involved.) The dissertation he eventually wrote was, in my view, excellent and, indeed, ground-breaking. However, several months after submission, and after he had left the institution, I met several British teachers who were working in the institution in which he collected his data and they said that he had been a nuisance – rude and inconsiderate. He had apparently entered classrooms abruptly and interrupted teaching.

Although I *had* been very careful, as his supervisor, to gain access for him and also to instruct him regarding fieldwork procedures, researcher

relations, how to enter and position himself in the setting and so on, my first response was that I had not prepared him sufficiently for the complex social relationships he might encounter in fieldwork. Furthermore, I felt that when assessing our students' work, both at masters and doctoral level, we take very much at face value that the data has been collected with the right degree of rigour. We tend to evaluate the work on the basis of the quality of the data in its collected form and on the quality of the analysis. We rely very much on the students' own descriptions of what actually happened and the degree to which they adequately justify their choices within these descriptions. We do require them to write in the methodology sections of their dissertations and theses how they acquired permissions, how they presented themselves to their participants, how they chose suitable sites for interviews and how they went about asking their questions – but what they write is only part of the story.

It also occurred to me that there are particular complexities in critical qualitative studies that apply a more postmodern approach. Such studies aim to get beneath the surface, in search of hidden cultural realities and discourses. They engage head-on with the subjectivity implicit in the role of the researcher that has been recognised in qualitative research and ethnography, which I shall come back to below. They require researchers to position themselves carefully and creatively in both their data collection and their writing (Holliday 2004). This demands considerable writing as well as social skills.

This is where I fell into the positivist trap. I felt myself asking if these requirements might be too demanding for a student whose first language is not English or who comes from a very different cultural background to the people she or he needs to interact with in their research.

These questions do not spring from nowhere. They come from two established traditions, which are, I believe, prejudices: (1) that academic writing is inherently difficult for second language writers, especially when (2) their first languages carry with them very different cultural perspectives to that of academic writing in English.

With such questions in mind, we can fall deeper into the trap when speaking to students from diverse cultural backgrounds about their experiences with academic writing in English. We believe too easily how they trace whatever difficulties they have back to their national cultures being different to the dominant British or American national culture that is thought to create these dominant writing styles. They are also falling into the positivist trap. We, as listeners, and they, as recounters, will find the evidence within our experience of these different cultures to support our assumptions. This is how a positivist view of culture operates. There will always be sufficient going on in any social setting to find examples to suit a particular profile. This is the structure of positivism: profile or theory

validated by examples. Always being able to find examples of the profile also makes the profile very hard to shake. It gets stronger and stronger until people get tired of it, or until another way of looking at things, or paradigm, comes along (Kuhn 1970).

Hence, a recent conference paper about the experiences of doctoral students from diverse national backgrounds studying in British universities reveals wide-ranging anxiety about what is perceived to be cultural incompatibility (Lewis, Rajwade, and Wang 2012). In the discussion after the conference paper, several people attributed particular writing protocols (e.g. the use of footnotes and the structure of the thesis) to particular national cultures. It was also reported that British supervisors did not allow students to cite research from other languages than English.

The deeply sustained influence of the positivist view of culture and its accompanying methodological nationalism was addressed in another conference presentation, this time by Rajagopalan (2012). The body language of the audience, when he challenged them to admit to themselves that they still adhered to the 'one language, one nation, one culture' paradigm, indicated that almost everyone did, against their better judgement, and that, in their heads, any cases they knew of that went against the paradigm were really only 'exceptions to the rule'.

Escaping from the positivist trap

However, in defence of the paradigm rather than the positivist culture argument, my own experience, having worked over a number of years with British research students and supervisors across a large number of disciplines, provides a different sort of evidence. From this experience, I can attribute all the variations in academic practice, from the structure of theses to whether or not foreign language citations are allowed, reported by Lewis, Rajwade, and Wang (2012), to different disciplines, paradigms within disciplines and supervisory styles and preferences across one single British university. It is certainly my experience that British students display all the problems with register, style and degree of formality and struggle with the nature of evidence over opinion as do students from other national and linguistic backgrounds. This is especially the case where British students are already highly articulate in a non-academic genre and either resist or find it difficult to cross over to another genre. This observation, of course, depends on all the students, British or otherwise, being of sufficient ability to do the programme.

To further support the paradigm argument, the degree of discomfort and uncertainty described by the nationally diverse students in Lewis, Rajwade, and Wang (2012) is not hugely dissimilar to that experienced by Miller, Nelson, and Moore (1998) in their study of paradigm conflict, *within* qualitative research in a single US university department. They describe

how researchers wishing to follow a postmodern paradigm are constrained in the way in which they are allowed to write by research committees and supervisors who insist on a more traditional postpositivist paradigm – in which qualitative research clings to the positivist principles of a detached manipulation of objective variables in the same manner as the physical sciences. The postmodern researchers are alienated by the postpositivist establishment in exactly the same way as in Qureshi's (2010) account of how researchers from 'developing countries' are 'alienated' by global Western norms and, 'penalised for being too parochial and not following the internationally agreed principles of ethical research practices' (90).

If I can escape from the positivist culture trap, I can then reassess what happened between my East Asian student and the British teachers who felt that he was behaving unethically. The conflict may well have had nothing to do with him being East Asian. At the same time, unlike some of my British students, he seemed particularly at ease with the academic genre of critical qualitative research. It would have required an ethnographic study of its own to shadow his actions and to interview him, the people he came into contact with and the people who spoke to the people he came into contact with – to construct a thick description of what was really going on. However, a particular alternative explanation does spring to mind.

During the course of his research he was discovering that the teachers were not as 'student-centred' as they claimed and that there were intimidating power structures in their classrooms. It is just possible that the teachers might have sensed that he was not 'on their side' and have begun to read antagonism into his behaviour. The British classroom is, after all, just as much a 'relational' community as those described by Qureshi (2010) in Pakistan, in which the researcher may inadvertently upset hidden protocols. While the researcher's East Asian identity may have had nothing at all to do with his ability to carry out the research, it may have contributed to the British teachers' prejudice against him. Also falling into the positivist culture trap, they would too easily buy into the common view that paints East Asians as lacking in the autonomy necessary to plan or think independently (Holliday 2005; Kubota 2002; Kumaravadivelu 2003; Montgomery 2010), or to have the creative social skills necessary for qualitative research relations.

Paradigm change and learning from the margins

The critique of the positivist view of culture and research is part of a wider shift to a postmodern paradigm that engages with emergent complexity and diversity in culture and research methodology (e.g. Kumaravadivelu 2012).

Social action versus global politics

Part of this shift is present in a Weberian social action approach to sociology (e.g. Weber 1964, 115–117), which opposes the positivist notion of cultures that confine the individual. While Weber did much to describe the social structures of Protestantism and Confucianism, it was made very clear that the social action of individuals could be expressed in dialogue with them (Bendix 1966, 261; Dobbin 1994, 118). This social action approach has influenced my own model, or 'grammar' of culture, in which national structures and the actions of the individual are in loose dialogue, and sometimes in conflict (Holliday 2013). Central to this arrangement are underlying universal cultural processes that are shared by all people, regardless of cultural background. They constitute the basis for how we are all able to read, negotiate and create culture wherever we go. This immediately suggests that researchers are not confined by either foreign or their own national structures and have at least the potential to innovate across cultural boundaries. Particular cultural environments also have the potential to expand to take in new cultural practices. Any restriction on this innovation is therefore political rather than due to the nature of the cultures themselves. There is therefore no support here for a permanent incompatibility between cultures.

However, there *is* a powerful global politics that constructs discourses of incompatibility. A number of critical sociologists propose a top-down globalisation in which Western markets dominate the world and alienate non-Western cultural norms (Bhabha 1994, xiv; Canagarajah 1999, 207–209; Fairclough 2006, 40; Hall 1991, 20). This Western hegemony also attempts to define the non-West by both imposing and taking meaning (Hannerz 1991). An aspect of this Western definition of the world is its belief that everything good that happens is due to its own intervention. There is an implicit ethos of a deeply patronising 'helping' of the non-Western Other (Delanty, Wodak, and Jones 2008, 9) which can be connected with a modernistic desire to tie down identities and to hide aggression beneath education, progress and civilisation (Latour 2006). Hence, there is no possibility within the Western imagination that there can be anything of value coming from non-Western cultural realities with regard to research ethics. This makes it all the more difficult for non-Western students and researchers to answer back in the face of established positivist Western practices and protocols.

While this view supports the notion expressed by non-Western writers who claim cultural incompatibility with the West, it does not support their positivist response of combatting one simplistic cultural profile with another.

Claiming centre stage from the margins

I say 'answer back' because there is, nevertheless, another side, which is based on the fact that the cultural inequality that results from this politics *is*

imagined. I personally feel that shared underlying universal cultural processes represent reality and have to be allowed voice. Various theorists are relatively optimistic about a revolutionary reclaiming of cultural space from the margins – a globalisation from below (Fairclough 2006, 121). This perspective comes from the view that there are complex, rich and dynamic cultural realities in non-Western locations, which are unrecognised. Stuart Hall (1991) argues that 'the most profound cultural revolution has come about as a consequence of the margins coming into representation', that 'marginality has become a powerful space', that 'the discourses of the dominant régimes … have been certainly threatened by the de-centred cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local' (34) and that people outside the West are in the process of 'recovering their own hidden mysteries' and that 'they have to try to retell the story from the bottom up, instead of from the top down' (35).

The account of Pakistani cultural complexity in Qureshi (2010) may well be seen as such a retelling and recovering of hidden mysteries. Instead of a complaint about lack of recognition by a West that is essentially different, there must be a sustained struggle to throw off the stereotypes imposed by a Western order and to cross cultural lines with realities that should be recognised everywhere. Implicit in this struggle is the liberating of key concepts of cultural proficiency, such as modernity and self-determination, from the monopoly of the West. An interesting text on this subject is Honarbin-Holliday's (2009) ethnography of Iranian women claiming the modern world as their own cultural heritage and tracing it back to the deep indigenous modernity implicit in the generation of their grandmothers. The non-Western cultural realities that appear indigestible by Western ethical norms must therefore not put up with being sidelined, and take centre stage. Western ethical norms will then have to expand to recognise them.

Support for postmodern paradigm change

This notion of bottom-up globalisation and learning from the margins is also an important basis for developing a methodology within qualitative research and ethnography which is truly rooted in the realities of individual people and their communities.

The concern that qualitative social science has not succeeded in engaging in this manner is often traced back to the publication of the seminal *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The dominant postpositivist version of qualitative research has thus not allowed recognition of the presence and impact of the researcher on the setting or community that is being studied, or the mediation of ideological, social and political forces, resulting in an artificially objective image with a worrying lack of researcher reflexivity (Blackman 2007; Clifford 1986, 2; Faubion 2001; Gubrium and Holstein 1997, 19–33; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 1; Holliday 2007, 16;

MacDonald 2001; Miller, Nelson, and Moore 1998; Spencer 2001). The link between this critical, postmodern turn and the social action picture of culture and Weber's sociology described above is made by Rabinow (1986, 256–258).

Leaving behind a postpositivist certainty in objective sampling and quantification requires that validity and rigour need to be established through the reflexivity and tightness of strategy in engaging with the research setting or community in an appropriate way, and in taking the necessary steps to collect the data necessary to address the aims of the research. This implies that the scope for what can be done is wide open, and this may indeed be the case as long as the workings of the research strategy are *revealed* to be sufficiently justifiable and rigorous (Holliday 2007). Janesick (2000) describes well, through an analogy with choreography, the mixing of creativity and discipline. The major point is that it is in the writing of the research that sense is made of how the research is crafted to suit the question and the setting, and how the rigour of the process is then made clear and accountable.

Appropriate ethical standards and practices must be part of this accountability. Miller, Nelson, and Moore (1998, 412) explain that, 'standards of rigour and ethics should be merged to emphasise connections between researchers and those they research' (412). Therefore, in my close discussion of how appropriate strategies have to be worked out (Holliday 2007, 151) I suggest that the ethics of a particular research project needs to be discovered as part of the developing understanding of the culture being researched. Finding out how to collect data, how to be ethical and how the researcher should behave are part of the same process. The research process *reveals* what is ethical at the same time as it reveals whatever else is deemed the findings. Like Qureshi (2010), I note cases where the default 'textbook' ethical behaviour (coming clean with the research aims, explaining to the participants how they will benefit from them, relying on formal permission, thinking that people will be *interested* in giving permission, being unobtrusive) not only does not work in specific settings, but is distinctly naïve.

Thus, Shamim (1993, 96) only gets access to Pakistani school classrooms on the basis of being considered 'a friend of a friend' whom the teachers can help get good grades in her doctorate (Holliday 2007, 154–155; Qureshi 2010, 86, 91), and the American Linda Herrera (1992, 14–15) only gets similar access in a girls' school in Egypt when she is known to be married with a daughter, the wife of a Muslim and of Arab ancestry (Holliday 2007, 153–154). Delikurt (2006, 161–162) has to use her position as senior ministry official to be able to interview politicians in Northern Cyprus, and the interviews have to take place on her balcony with the radio on loud so that they are not overheard (Holliday 2007, 158–159). When researching university classes in Egypt, I was not allowed to sit inconspicu-

ously at the back but, instead, asked by the lecturer to sit next to her at the front as a guest. Later, my presence caused the privacy of the classroom to be invaded when the head of department used my presence to go into the class with me to see the foreign lecturer teaching. On another occasion, two Egyptian co-observers used the opportunity to have an argument with the foreign lecturer being observed, about how he treated an Egyptian technician (Holliday 2007, 160–162). The Iranian art student participants in Honarbin-Holliday (2005) ask to be identified to the world because they wish their views to be heard, many agree to be photographed and one of them allows herself to be photographed holding one of her paintings (Holliday 2007, 111–112).

In all of these cases, unexpected interactions with people in the research setting reveal to the researchers key features of the small cultures they are researching. This is a long way from the postpositivist notion that the researcher is standing back and examining a virgin culture as it would be if the researcher was not there. Instead, these small cultures are living, breathing, changing entities, which interact with complex forces around them. The researchers' own presences are just one of the things these cultures have to deal with, and the cultures' interactions with researchers reveal something of how these complexities operate. Hence, Herrera (1992) and Shamim (1993) learn much about the internal politics of what is important to teachers. In my interaction with Egyptian university classrooms, part of the often troublesome politics of their relationship with the wider power struggles of the institution and with foreign invasion is laid bare.

It is not, however, just non-Western locations that require this type of variation from the default expectation. Anderson (2003) has to apply a creative ethics policy to deal with the fact that he is researching colleagues in a British English language institute, especially because, rather like my East Asian student cited above, he is looking at how they are not as 'learner-centred' as they claim. He explains that:

> There was, however, one area that I still find ethically ambivalent and troubling. I avoided any form of respondent validation in the teacher and group interviews … because I was concerned that my findings would have been interpreted as criticisms of their practices, and ultimately their professionalism, even if my critique was aimed at the mainstream discourse of the profession and not at them personally. In fact, I considered them to be highly-competent teachers who did their jobs with complete integrity. … Whilst I made it clear at the beginning of each piece of fieldwork what my general aims were, as the focus shifted I did not specify that it was emerging into a critique of the professional discourse. … Behaving honestly in the field is a supportable aim, but in practice the context makes for ambiguity and difficulty … I therefore chose not to reveal the emergent focus of my research. … When confronted, I evaded the issue. (149–150)

In support of this, he cites Punch (1994), who says that 'some deception, passive or active, enables you to get at data not obtainable by other means' (91).

Ovenden (2003), in her study of young British children visiting a museum, feels distanced from her primary data source because she is not able to interview the children directly because of ethical issues and has to rely on their teachers carrying out the interviews on her behalf. In order to gain a closer understanding of the children and their lived experiences, she therefore constructs a rich fictional account of taking four children to the museum (168). This is based on reconstructions from the interviews, her observation of the children in the museum from a distance, her own prior experience as a primary school teacher (207), the experience of childhood discovery in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (165–166) and her reconstructed recollection of unpacking and touching an ancient Egyptian statue for the first time (42–43). (See also Holliday 2007, 63, 109–110).

Colonising standards and bottom-up universals

In conclusion, the major point to be made in this paper is that, once the positivist strictures of perceptions of culture and research methodology have been thrown off, it is the duty of ethical practices to find ways of adapting to diverse and emergent research and cultural practices. I therefore wish to argue that it is not the case that the West has one way of doing things, which does not apply to non-Western cultures. Instead, there is a process of paradigm change taking place, which means that Western ethical practices and standards are in the process of adapting to more creative research approaches both within the West and everywhere else. Just as Qureshi (2010) argues that there is need to find 'ways of striking a balance' (93) between ethical codes for international and local contexts in Pakistan, there is also a need for this in the West. The experience from non-Western locations and, indeed, from any location in which research takes on a particular creativity to engage with the issues at hand, will help serve to inform this (Robinson-Pant 2009).

The critical cosmopolitan solution of 'learning from the margins', of course, becomes a normal concept within postmodern paradigms of cultural difference and qualitative social research. Within a *positivist* picture of the world, 'the margins' are the troublesome complexities that cannot be explained by established theory – which is what, I believe, Qureshi (2010) describes as the research realities of the non-West not fitting established Western ethics protocols. Within this positivist picture, there is a top-down universal model which is imposed in a problematic manner – the result of Western-led globalisation. However, within the *postmodern* picture, the margins claim a new, alternative, central position.

The implication here is that there *can* be viable universal principles – bottom-up principles that engage with cultural complexity and diversity wherever it is found and learn how to accommodate with a broader, more reflexive set of rules. There need to be sound, but *decentred* principles. They might be something like Punch's (1994, 91) response to the issue of deception:

> One need not always be brutally honest, direct, and explicit about one's research purpose, but one should not normally engage in disguise. One should not steal documents. One should not directly lie to people. And, although one might disguise identity to a certain extent, one should not break promises made to people.

In my university, further investigation of a research proposal is required if, 'the study induce[s] psychological stress or anxiety or cause[s] harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life' (CCCU 2012). Of course, all of these things will be interpretable within the diversity of different cultural settings. This is *not* cultural relativism, which I have critiqued briefly above, because it does not mean that 'anything goes'.

The critical cosmopolitan view is helpful in this respect because it argues that cultural practices should be open to contestation, which is a condition for being part of the world in a bottom-up process of recognition (Delanty 2008, 93). On one side, the research project itself can be considered a cultural practice that is clearly open to contestation through the normal process of peer review and assessment of validity. With regard to the people, communities or institutions being researched, this is clearly a delicate matter, but it would certainly imply that the claims made by participants should not always be taken at face value. In the case of Anderson (2003), and of my East Asian student referred to above, if they had stopped at surface statements from teachers they would not have uncovered deeper contradictions in their respective professional cultures.

The final and very important player that falls under the remit of contestation is the methodological authority for how things should be done. This is embodied by the practices and protocols for research ethics. Within the postmodern paradigm, this establishment is, after all, also 'a culture', with its ideologies and politics (though this would be denied within the postpositivist paradigm). Like all other cultures, it moves and re-shapes itself in dialogue with its members. While to students and novice researchers it may seem that these establishments are unshakable, in effect they are fluid and waiting to be written into by newcomers. If they are Western, they are waiting to be colonised by the non-West. There are serious global inequalities as academics from many non-Western countries have difficulties publishing in international journals. However, within a postmodern qualitative research

paradigm, this is a matter of resources and prejudice rather than a matter of cultural incompatibility.

References

Anderson, C. 2003. "The Dominant Discourse in British EFL: The Methodological Contradictions of a Professional Culture." Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of English & Language Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury.

Asante, M. K. 2008. "The Ideological Significance of Afrocentricity in Intercultural Communication." In *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, edited by M. K. Asante, Y. Miike, and J. Yin, 47–55. New York: Routledge.

Beck, U., and N. Sznaider. 2006. "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 1–23. doi:10.1111/bjos.2006.57.issue-1.

Bendix, R. 1966. *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*. London: Methuen.

Bhabha, H. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Blackman, S. J. 2007. "'Hidden Ethnography': Crossing Emotional Borders in Qualitative Accounts of Young People's Lives." *Sociology* 41 (4): 699–716. doi:10.1177/0038038507078925.

Canagarajah, A. S. 1999. "On EFL Teachers, Awareness and Agency." *ELT Journal* 53 (3): 207–214. doi:10.1093/elt/53.3.207.

CCCU. 2012. *Ethics Review Checklist*. Canterbury: Canterbury Christ Church University.

Clifford, J. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus, 1–26. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clifford, J., and G. E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crane, D. 1994. "Introduction: The Challenge of the Sociology of Culture to Sociology as Discipline." In *The Sociology of Culture*, edited by D. Crane, 1–19. Oxford: Blackwell.

Delanty, G. 2006. "The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 25–47. doi:10.1111/bjos.2006.57.issue-1.

Delanty, G. 2008. "Dilemmas of Secularism: Europe, Religion and the Problem of Pluralism." In *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, edited by G. Delanty, R. Wodak, and P. Jones, 78–97. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Delanty, G., R. Wodak, and P. Jones. 2008. "Introduction: Migration, Discrimination and Belonging in Europe." In *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, edited by G. Delanty, R. Wodak, and P. Jones, 1–20. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Delikurt, P. 2006. "Revolution or Evolution in Educational Change: The Intended Policy – Actual Policy – Policy in Use Continuum Revisited. A Case Study in the English Language Teaching and Learning Context of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus." Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of English & Language Studies, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury.

Denzin, N. K., and Y. S. Lincoln. 2005. "The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 1–30. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dobbin, F. R. 1994. "Cultural Models of Organization: The Social Construction of Rational Organizing Principles." In *The Sociology of Culture*, edited by D. Crane, 117–141. Oxford: Blackwell.

Durkheim, E. 1964. *The Division of Labour in Society*. Translated by G. Simpson. New York: Free Press.

Fairclough, N. 2006. *Language and Globalization*. London: Routledge.

Faubion, J. D. 2001. "Currents of Cultural Fieldwork." In *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland, 39–49. London: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781848608337.

Ghahremani Ghajar, S., and S.-A. Mirhosseini, eds. 2010. *Confronting Academic Knowledge*. Tehran: Center for International Scientific Studies and Collaboration.

Grande, E. 2006. "Cosmopolitan Political Science." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 87–111. doi:10.1111/bjos.2006.57.issue-1.

Guba, E. G., and Y. S. Lincoln. 2005. "Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 191–215. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gubrium, J. F., and J. A. Holstein. 1997. *The New Language of Qualitative Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hall, S. 1991. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity." In *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, edited by A. D. King, 19–39. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hall, S. 1996. "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power." In *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, edited by S. Hall and D. Held, 184–228. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hammersley, M., and P. Atkinson. 1995. *Ethnography, Principles and Practice*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Hannerz, U. 1991. "Scenarios of Peripheral Cultures." In *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, edited by A. D. King, 107–128. New York: Palgrave.

Herrera, L. 1992. *Scenes of Schooling: Inside a Girls' School in Cairo*. Cairo: American University of Cairo Press.

Hofstede, G. 2003. *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions and Organizations across Cultures*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Holliday, A. R. 2004. "The Value of Reconstruction in Revealing Hidden or Counter Cultures." *Journal of Applied Linguistics* 1 (3): 275–294. doi:10.1558/japl.2004.1.issue-3.

Holliday, A. R. 2005. *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holliday, A. R. 2007. *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Holliday, A. R. 2011. *Intercultural Communication & Ideology*. London: Sage.

Holliday, A. R. 2013. *Understanding Intercultural Communication: Negotiating a Grammar of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Honarbin-Holliday, M. 2005. "Art Education, Identity and Gender at Tehran and Al Zahra Universities." Unpublished PhD Thesis, Department of Art & Design, Canterbury Christ Church University, Canterbury.

Honarbin-Holliday, M. 2009. *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian Society*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Janesick, V. J. 2000. "The Choreography of Qualitative Research Design: Minuets, Improvisations, and Crystallization." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 379–400. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kim, M.-S. 2005. "Culture-Based Conversational Constraints Theory." In *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication*. edited by W. B. Gudykunst, 93–117. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kim, M.-S. 2012. "Trends in Intercultural Communication Research – from a Research Culture of War to a Research Culture of Peace." Paper presented at the BAAL Special Interest Group in Intercultural Communication: Intercultural Communication in International Contexts – Training and Development, Practice and Research, Open University, Milton Keynes, May.

Kubota, R. 2002. "The Author Responds: (Un)Raveling Racism in a Nice Field like TESOL." *TESOL Quarterly* 36 (1): 84–92. doi:10.2307/3588363.

Kuhn, T. 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2003. "Problematizing Cultural Stereotypes in TESOL." *TESOL Quarterly* 37 (4): 709–719.10.2307/3588219 doi:10.2307/3588219.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2006. "Dangerous Liaison: Globalization, Empire and TESOL." In *(Re)Locating TESOL in an Age of Empire: Language and Globalization*, edited by J. Edge, 1–26. London: Palgrave.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2007. *Cultural Globalization and Language Education*. Yale, CT: Yale University Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2012. "Individual Identity, Cultural Globalization, and Teaching English as an International Language: The Case for an Epistemic Break." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language*, edited by L. Alsagoff, W. Renandya, G. Hu, and S. McKay, 9–27. New York: Routledge.

Latour, B. 2006. War of the Worlds – What about Peace? *Matrix, Bridge the Gap*. Accessed August 19, 2006. http://www.btgjapan.org/catalysts/bruno.html

Lewis, T., K. Rajwade, and L. Wang. 2012. "Research and Supervision across Languages and Cultures." Paper presented at the AHRC Researching Multilingually Seminar, School of Education, The University of Manchester, May.

MacDonald, S. 2001. "British Social Anthropology." In *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland, 60–79. London: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781848608337.

Miike, Y. 2008. "Toward an Alternative Metatheory of Human Communication: An Asiatic Vision." In *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, edited by M. K. Asante, Y. Miike, and J. Yin, 57–72. New York: Routledge.

Miller, S. M., M. W. Nelson, and M. T. Moore. 1998. "Caught in the Paradigm Gap: Qualitative Researchers' Lived Experience and the Politics of Epistemology." *American Educational Research Journal* 35 (3): 377–416. doi:10.3102/00028312035003377.

Montgomery, C. 2010. *Understanding the International Student*. Abingdon: Palgrave Macmillan.

Moon, D. G. 2008. "Concepts of 'Culture': Implications for Intercultural Communication Research." In *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, edited by M. K. Asante, Y. Miike, and J. Yin, 11–26. New York: Routledge.

Northumbria. 2012. *Research Ethics & Governance Handbook*. 5th ed. Newcastle: Northumbria University.

Ovenden, C. A. 2003. "Towards Understanding the Experiential Meanings of Primary School Children's Encounters with Ancient Egyptian Objects." Unpublished PhD Thesis, Institute of Education, University of London, London.

Punch, M. 1994. "Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research." In *A Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 83–97. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Qureshi, R. 2010. "Ethical Standards and Ethical Environment: Tension and a Way Forward." In *Perils, Pitfalls and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research in Education*, edited by F. Shamim and R. Qureshi, 78–100. Karachi: Oxford University Press Pakistan.

Rabinow, P. 1986. "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Postmodernity in Anthropology." In *Writing Culture*, edited by J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus, 234–261. London: University of California Press.

Rajagopalan, K. 1999. "Of EFL Teachers, Conscience and Cowardice." *ELT Journal* 53 (3): 200–206. doi:10.1093/elt/53.3.200.

Rajagopalan, K. 2012. "Hybridity as the Hallmark of Transcultural Interaction: Implications for Language Policy." Paper presented at the CALPIU 2nd International Conference, Higher Education across Borders: Transcultural Interaction and Linguistic Diversity, Roskilde University, Denmark, April.

Robinson-Pant, A. 2009. "Changing Academies: Exploring International PhD Students' Perspectives on 'Host' and 'Home' Universities." *Higher Education Research & Development* 28 (4): 417–429.

Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Schudson, M. 1994. "Culture and the Integration of National Societies." In *The Sociology of Culture*, edited by D. Crane, 21–43. Oxford: Blackwell.

Shamim, F. 1993. "Teacher-Learner Behaviour and Classroom Processes in Large ESL Classes in Pakistan." Unpublished PhD Thesis, International Education, University of Leeds, Leeds.

Spencer, J. 2001. "Ethnography after Postmodernism." In *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland, and L. Lofland, 443–452. London: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781848608337.

Spradley, J. P. 1980. *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Tomlinson, J. 1991. *Cultural Imperialism*. London: Pinter Publications.

Weber, M. 1964. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: The Free Press. Originally published as *Wirtschaft und gesellschaft* (1922).