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[Review of: P. Liamputtong (2008) Doing cross-cultural research: ethical and methodological perspectives]

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Publication date

2008

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Medische Antropologie

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Gerrits, T. (2008). [Review of: P. Liamputtong (2008) Doing cross-cultural research: ethical and methodological perspectives]. *Medische Antropologie*, 22(1), 178-181.

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Pranee Liamputtong (ed.), *Doing cross-cultural research. Ethical and methodological perspectives*. Social indicators research series 34. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008. xxxi+310 pp. \$ 199.00 (hard cover). ISBN 978-1-4020-8566-6.

This edited volume about ethical and methodological aspects of cross-cultural research is wide-ranging in various ways. It contains eighteen contributions from qualitative researchers, pertaining to diverse academic and professional disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, public health, psychology, educational sciences, nursing, midwifery, and occupational therapy. The contributions also cover a wide geographical area, stretching from Australia, New Zealand, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe to North America. Thematically, the book is diverse as well, including chapters on men in prison, traumatized refugees, social capital among farmers, survivors of breast cancer, suicide and HIV/AIDS. Finally, the volume addresses a variety of – innovative – methodological approaches, such as the ‘decolonizing’ collaborative life history interview, the use of art research and participatory photography, a photo-voice project, and the use of vignettes in focus group discussions.

The compilation is intended and may indeed be useful for researchers who (plan to) conduct their studies among and with indigenous populations, minority and ethnic communities. The book raises and let readers think about a number of pertinent questions, such as: Who am I working with? What ethical and moral considerations do I need to observe? How should I conduct the research in such a way that it is culturally

appropriate to the needs of people I am researching? How do I deal with language issues? How will I negotiate access? And what research methods should I apply to ensure a successful research process?

The book is divided in three parts: the first part provides a conceptual framework; the second part is on ethical and methodological perspectives and the third part is on methodological considerations. Yet, in fact most of the chapters address conceptual, ethical and methodological issues at the same time.

Many of the contributions in this information dense compilation are worthwhile reading. The diversity of the themes, issues, regions and methodologies makes the book an attractive collection. Yet, at the same time this diversity also made me feel a bit dazzled. I certainly would not recommend anybody to read all chapters in one go. Rather, I find it a book to consult or to refer students to in order to get insight into a particular conceptual, methodological, ethical or thematic aspect of cross-cultural research. That is also the way I have started to use the book myself in recent classes. In the below I restrict to reporting briefly on a number of selected chapters to give the reader a feel of what the book may have to offer.

The introductory chapter contains Liamputtong's reflections – based on extensive reading – on a number of issues addressed in the chapters that follow, such as cultural sensitivity, issues on language, interpreters and bi-cultural researchers, gaining access to study participants and moral and ethical issues in research. In addition, she provides an interesting review on the meaning and implications of the notion of informed consent in cross cultural research and the use of signed consent *forms* in particular. This latter section, including its many literature references, may serve as a valuable starting point for researchers pondering on the meaning and practical implications of informed consent in their research area.

In the second part of the book the authors critically reflect on ethical and methodological questions and dilemmas when doing cross-cultural research. One of them is Labby Ramathan, who reflects on work he and his students have undertaken in the field of HIV/AIDS in South-Africa. He elaborates on the 'situational ethics' in a study in which they intended to explore – by means of a case study – the personal and school life of a HIV positive secondary school student. Finding a candidate for inclusion in the study showed to be extremely difficult, because "participants revealed an unnatural terror at being HIV positive and feared for the safety of their lives" (p. 113-114) if others should come to know their HIV positive status. Therefore, once having found a HIV positive girl who was willing to be involved in the study the research approach had to be adapted in such a way that the girl would not be harmed. This implied for example not drawing attention to the girl within the school environment, so doing rather superficial observation instead of direct and detailed observation. Secondly, given the personal and emotional nature of the interview the informant did not want her story to be recorded, but only notes could be taken. Finally, all interviews were conducted in presence of the girl's peer counselor and the interview with the girl's mother was actually done by this peer counselor (instead of by the researcher herself), as both the girl and her mother had put their trust in this peer counselor. Using this study as an example Ramathan reflects on questions such as

how the conditions under which data are collected – while being ethically sensitive – may affect the type and quality of the data and the analysis that can be derived from it.

In the third section on methodological considerations a number of original case studies are presented. Some of them give detailed insight in how methodological techniques are actually used in the field and adapted to a specific cultural setting. One example of this is Bailey's contribution *Let's tell you a story: Use of vignettes in focus group discussions on HIV/AIDS among migrant and mobile men in Goa, India*. The author and his fellow researchers realized that it would be difficult to talk about sexuality in focus groups discussions with these 'mobile and migrant men', including fisher men and truckers. Therefore, he and his study team used vignettes – defined as pieces of texts, images or other forms of stimuli to which researchers are asked to respond – as a projective technique. In his current contribution Bailey mainly describes the process by which these vignettes were actually constructed and locally grounded, an aspect that is rarely addressed in publications reflecting on the use of vignettes. Insights from previous held in-depth interviews were used to actually formulate vignettes, for example about the perceived social consequences of HIV/AIDS or to understand whom the men actually referred to when they spoke about their 'lovers'. Identifying information was taken out of the original stories and, in order to 'locally ground' the vignettes, local fictional names and places were used. Focus group participants were requested to react to the vignettes. Bailey concludes that the vignettes made the men more comfortable to discuss sensitive issues as they did not have to personalize the information they shared in the group.

In another chapter Gotschi and colleagues address 'participatory photography' as a method in cross-cultural research. Their chapter starts with an informative review of recent studies using photography, addressing questions such as: who takes the pictures, with what purpose, who does the analysis and what are the implications of all this? The authors observe that the main difference in the methodologies used in these studies lies in who is responsible, or empowered, to take decisions on each aspect of the research. Subsequently, the authors report and reflect on their own study, dealing with the development of social capital, group formation processes and power distribution among small farmer groups in Mozambique. As they had previously experienced that it was difficult to get insight in the farmers' perspective on the rather abstract concepts they intended to study by means of conventional research methods (surveys, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews) they started to employ 'participatory camera'. Each group was given two disposable cameras and the farmers had to decide who would look after the cameras, when and what to take pictures on. The photos were later used to stimulate group discussions. While the group discussions about the pictures proved to be informative, the authors also emphasized the importance of the insights they gained from the analysis of the group processes. The way the farmers were sharing cameras and pictures, the way the groups differed in using the cameras and the topics they choose to make pictures of deepened their insight into the farmers' perspectives. For example, it became apparent that some of the farmers considered their group not as a framework of working together but rather as something to draw resources from. Thus they had not taken pictures of group activities but rather of

people working in their private fields. Gender differences and dynamics also became articulated: in some groups, for example, female farmers were not allowed to take care of the cameras; and some activities and positions in the group were visibly gendered, as was illustrated on the pictures, while farmers previously were inclined to deny these gender differences. The authors conclude that the “photos make voices heard that otherwise remain silent” (p.229) and involve the group members much more in various stages of the research than would have been possible by applying more conventional research methods.

Overall, this compilation provides ample food for thought and concrete examples of interesting research projects for researchers who want to be reflexive on methodological, ethical and conceptual aspects of cross-cultural research and who want to be inspired to develop innovative research approaches. In addition, many of the chapters contain good literature reviews which form good starting points for further reading into these topics.

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