
QUESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE CULTURALLY COMPETENT RESEARCH*Ryan Alaniz*, California Polytechnic State University*Irena Papadopoulou*, Middlesex University

With the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme events, there is a greater demand for researchers to travel to field sites to rapidly and systematically collect perishable data. Researchers therefore often find themselves in locations where they are lacking community-based cultural knowledge. The following questions are intended to serve as a guide for individual reflection on the motivations, outcomes, goals, and consequences of one's work.

Considering the Cultural Context of My Research

- Why am I conducting research in this specific community?
- What are my assumptions about the people, places, and culture(s) that I will encounter in this community?
- What does the world look like through the eyes of the local community members?
- How much do I know about the community I want to or am planning to research? Do I understand, for example, their customs and traditions regarding death, major loss, and trauma? Do I know about the variety of religions, family structures, gender appropriate behaviors, beliefs about community, and their expressions of physical, emotional and spiritual pain?
- Do I understand how social, political, and economic power are distributed within the community?

Planning to Engage in Cross-Cultural Research

- Have I made an effort to contact the community I want to or I am planning to research? Do I have trusted connections there?
- Have I explored all of the culturally appropriate ways of involving members of the community in my research?
- How do I plan to deal with potential language barriers? Do I have adequate resources to employ local people as advisors, interpreters and assistant researchers?
- How can I best prepare to train the local people who will be involved in my research?

Understanding My Role and Positionality as Researcher

- What can I personally learn from this experience in a new culture?
- What privileges as a researcher and as an individual do I take for granted?
- How do I prepare myself for the challenges of this research and how do I care for myself during the fieldwork?

Recognizing the Implications and Impacts of My Research

- Does my research address the specific needs and challenges of the local community members?
- What are the potential unintended consequences of my work for the local community members?
- What are the long-term effects of my project on the community and myself?
- How can I utilize my findings from this research to positively impact the local community I studied?
- What are the next steps I will take after my study is completed?

The above questions are not exhaustive. However, by critically reflecting on these issues before entering the field, researchers can conduct more culturally competent research in disaster-affected settings. For those interested in learning more about this topic, please visit the [CONVERGE Cultural Competence in Hazards and Disaster Research Training Module](#).

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