

**From Horror Story to Manageable Risk:**  
Formulating Safety Strategies for Peace Researchers

By  
Scott D. Meyer

Master Degree Programme in Peace and Conflict Transformation  
2005-2007

Center for Peace Studies  
Faculty of Social Science, University of Tromsø, Norway



## **Abstract**

Research in the social sciences, and specifically peace studies, often utilizes fieldwork as a method to collect data. During this process, researchers are exposed to a variety of safety risks from the ambient fieldwork setting that they are often unprepared to deal with. This thesis argues that researchers and their sending institutions should do a better job of managing risks in the field, specifically by creating decision-making strategies for researchers. These strategies should be informed by both substantive knowledge as well as experiential and emotional knowledge from other researchers who have conducted fieldwork. By highlighting my own research experience, this thesis shows a typical research process and the minimal focus on safety in the field, as well as the possible dangers one could experience in the field. My emotional response to an incident during my fieldwork experience is analyzed using Albert Hirschman's framework of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. This analysis supports the argument that safety and personal experience are essential parts of the research process and the academic findings. My experience is then used to begin developing useful decision-making strategies for researchers and institutions. Ultimately, this thesis aims to give voice to other researchers who have experienced incidents in the field and attempts to open a discussion on the best ways to help researchers manage risks from the ambient fieldwork setting.

**Key words:** *safety, risk, methodology, strategies, fieldwork, exit voice and loyalty, emotions, knowledge, research process, experiential data, ambient fieldwork setting, risk society*

## **Acknowledgements**

*A special thanks to:*

Rotary International,  
for giving me the opportunity to live and study in Tromsø,

Methodologies in Peace Research conference participants,  
for inspiring this work and adding wind to my voice,

Tove I. Dahl,  
for conversations, jobs, food, recommendations, and welcomed counsel,

MPCT classmates,  
for friendship, discussions, revolutions, and other necessary distractions,

Friends at both of my “homes,”  
for continued advice, friendship, and patience when listening to my newest ideas,

Georges Midré,  
for supervision in the midst of an ever-changing thesis,

Diane Lister,  
for supervision and support throughout all stages of my research experience,

My parents and family,  
for supporting me in, following me on, and sometimes saving me from my adventures.

Scott D. Meyer  
May 2007

## Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>I. Introduction</b>	
1. Context of the Research	3
2. Contribution to Peace Studies and the Research Environment	3
3. Terms and Concepts	4
4. Conventional Research versus the Reality of the Field	6
5. Theoretical, Practical, and Ethical Contexts of the Research	9
6. Aims and Objectives	10
7. Scope of the Thesis	11
<b>II. Intellect and Emotion</b>	
1. Introduction	15
2. Obtaining Knowledge: Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies	15
3. Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Methods	16
4. Valid Knowledge in Quantitative and Qualitative Methods	17
5. Emotions as Knowledge	17
6. Current Study of Emotion	18
7. Conclusion	19
<b>III. Risk and Safety</b>	
1. Introduction	23
2. <i>The Risk Society</i>	23
3. Safety Framework	24
4. Conclusion	30
<b>IV. The Conventional Research Process and the Reality of the Field</b>	
1. Introduction	33
2. Conventional Research Process	33
3. Conventional Research Project Case Study	38
4. My Original Research Project	41
5. Second Attempt at Conventional Research	43
6. Conclusion	45
<b>V. Findings</b>	
1. Introduction	49
2. Literature	50
3. Theorizing Emotional Reactions to Incidents in the Field- <i>Exit, Voice, and Loyalty?</i>	51
4. Discussing my Experiences	52
5. Managing Risks with Decision-Making Strategies	59
6. Institutional Strategies	61
7. Strategies for Lone Researchers	65
8. Conclusion	71

<b>VI. Conclusion</b>	
1. Introduction	75
2. Answering the Research Questions	75
3. Theoretical, Practical, and Academic Implications	76
4. Relevance to Peace Studies	77
5. Implications for Future Research	77
6. Conclusion	78
<b>VII. Bibliography</b>	81
<b>VIII. Appendices</b>	89

# 1

Introduction



## **1.1 Context of the Research**

This thesis explores the issue of the personal safety of the lone social science researcher from risks found while living in the field. These are the ambient risks that are present whether or not the researcher is in the actual process of conducting fieldwork. Connected with the issue of safety is the role of emotions in research. This thesis will argue that emotions are an important part of the research experience and safety preparation. Additionally, this paper will attempt to demonstrate that conventional research processes for the most part ignore emotions and pay little to no attention to safety preparation. This thesis thus attempts to begin a discussion on these important issues and will put forth strategies that both lone researchers and institutions can use to improve the safety of the fieldwork experience.

To open up a debate on issues of safety and emotions, this thesis will juxtapose a variety of themes such as: safety and risk, conventional and unconventional research processes, intellect and emotion, and a clean and messy research project. Throughout the paper, a dichotomy will be created between what an ideal research project looks like with what researchers can expect from research and what they should learn before conducting fieldwork. This is a reflection of my own experience attempting to conduct a research project in the field that was forced to change due to safety risks. I was forced to alter my research project numerous times. After discussing my field experience at a conference entitled “Methodologies in Peace Research” on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, I decided that issues of safety and emotions were important topics that deserved more of a focus in the research process. I had conducted extensive research before that conference, but this thesis is based on my work following the conference as seen in Table 1.1. It is an outgrowth of my realization of the importance of safety and is a product of an unconventional methodology. This unconventional process has helped me to open up a discussion on how the research process can be improved to better ensure the safety of the lone social science researcher.

## **1.2 Contribution to Peace Studies and the Research Environment**

The safety of the researcher is obviously important to every researcher and sending institution, but both preparation for fieldwork and academic literature focuses mostly on the safety of

research participants (Nilan, 2002: 371) and not on the health of the researcher (Sampson and Thomas, 2003: 184). The safety of researcher is not “explored, or in many cases even identified in methodological literature” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 1). Part of the problem is what Wilkins (1993: 94) calls the “intellectual cover-up of emotion, intuition, and human relationships in the name of expert or academic knowledge” (quoted in Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126). Emotions are considered to be less scientific and valid than intellectual reasoning with incidents in the field regarded as little more than “tales from the field” (Sampson and Thomas, 2003: 166). This thesis is an important step in filling the void of literature addressing the importance of the safety of the researcher and emotions in the research process. These issues are especially important to consider in the field of peace studies, which is often focused on areas of conflict where the safety of researchers are more often compromised. Additionally, peace studies has as its starting point the normative idea of creating peace (Galtung, 1996: 10). For peace studies to succeed in its goal, it must first assure that it avoids increasing the risk of violence by sending peace researchers unprepared into areas of conflict. As promoters of peace, peace studies institutes should also avoid an overemphasis on data at the expense of the emotional health of the researchers and should provide appropriate support for researchers dealing with any physical, emotional, or psychological harm from research. This thesis thus makes an important contribution to peace studies by attempting to bridge the gap between intellect and emotion with useful strategies to help lone researchers and intuitions manage risks in the fieldwork setting.

### **1.3 Terms and Concepts**

Throughout the thesis I will refer to terms that need to be better defined:

- “*Substantive literature*” for the purpose of this thesis will refer to literature dealing with a specific topic or issue, such as foreign aid, that is used to inform the development of the research question.
- A “*conventional research process*” identifies the steps of research that are taught in methods books for novice researchers (Silverman, 2000). A systematic, step-by-step

procedure characterizes this process, most often with little or no importance place on safety issues. Conventional research processes also stick to traditional sources of knowledge such as substantive literature while ignoring other sources such as emotions.

- An “*unconventional research process*” in this thesis thus means a research process that does not follow a prescribed path and that incorporates different types of knowledge such as emotions and personal experience.

“Safety” and “managing risk” are also terms used throughout the thesis:

- *Safety* means the absence danger, defined as “threats or risk with serious negative consequences for the researcher, participants, or other groups in society” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 1).
- *Managing risk* implies acknowledging that there is always a chance of danger but working to minimize that threat. Thus, safety is the ideal while managing risk is the means to move towards that goal.

I will make reference to “institutions” throughout the thesis:

- *Institutions* are the universities or research centers that send researchers into the field. Institutions in the context of my thesis deal with peace institutes, but as peace institutes are located with the field of social science, the findings and strategies are also applicable to other social science institutions.

Finally, I will refer to the “clean” process of conventional research and the “messy” process of actual fieldwork:

- *Clean* refers to the textbook version of conducting research according to a simple, step-by-step process called the conventional stages of empirical research processes in this thesis (see Table 1.1). It is important to note that conventional research can also be a

messy process, but when I talk about the conventional stages I am referring specifically to the process as outlined by textbooks.

- *Messy* describes the reality of conducting research in the field. This process often strays from the clean recommendations given to researchers and is less straightforward than the clean research process textbooks describe.

Other terms in the thesis will be operationally defined.

#### 1.4 Conventional Research versus the Reality of the Field

In this thesis I will contrast the “clean” textbook version of the conventional stages of empirical research that are often emphasized by research intuitions and that I attempted to follow with the “messy” reality often encountered in the field by researchers such as myself. Table 1.1 illustrates these traditional stages according to David Silverman’s (2000: viii-xi) book *Doing Qualitative Research*. I am aware there are many different ways to outline conventional research processes (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000), but I chose to use Silverman because it was the literature I used prior to entering the field. It also seems to be a fairly standard set of processes for the novice researcher.

**Table 1.1**

Silverman, David (2000: viii-xi). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications: London.

Conventional Stages of Empirical Research Processes
---

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Select a topic</li><li>2. Choose a theoretical base</li><li>3. Choose a methodology</li><li>4. Select a case</li><li>5. Write a research proposal</li><li>6. Collect data</li><li>7. Analyze data</li><li>8. Present data</li></ol> |
|--|

The so-called “reality of the field” is depicted in Tables 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 outline how I attempted to mimic the orderly steps of a conventional research process in spite of

my unpredictable research experience. Table 1.4 demonstrates how I finally abandoned the conventional research in favor of more personal and reflective research process discussing my experience in the field. The numbers in Tables 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 correspond to Silverman's conventional stages of empirical research processes. It can be noted that my first attempt at conventional research was interrupted after stage six, as seen in Table 1.2.1. I then returned to step one and again conducted research from steps one to eight according to Silverman's recipe (Table 1.3). My loyalty to my original topic is shown in the five months I spent working on the topic. However, on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 at a conference entitled "Methodologies in Peace Research," I shared how the conventional research process did not happen in the field. I presented a paper entitled "Safety in the Field: Experience and Recommendation" (Meyer 2007). My voice was activated as I found a forum in which to discuss my experience, and I recognized my personal interest in the issue of safety and the interest other researchers had in the topic of safety. At the conference there was active discussion on the importance of managing risks in the field and it seemed like an important topic that affected nearly everybody. After the conference, I finally made the decision to exit my original research topic and began focusing on the issues of safety and risk management as seen in Table 1.4. My "unconventional" research process can be neatly displayed in Table 1.4 using Silverman's steps, but the process of arriving at this final thesis was much less clean and systematic than Silverman's recipe, as the numerous tables and arrows prove.

**My Research Experience**

**Table 1.2**

My Stages of Conventional Research

1. Chose foreign aid to Nicaragua as topic
2. Identified social exchange theory as a theoretical base
3. Chose fieldwork and qualitative research to answer my research question
4. Selected South Dakota (SD) and its aid program with Nicaragua as my case study
5. Created two part research design interviewing donors in SD and recipients in Nicaragua
  - Formulated research question: “Does aid from the SD Lutheran Church meet the needs of Nicaraguans?”
  - Applied for funding
  - Made contact and gained permission to conduct fieldwork in SD and Nicaragua, no safety preparation
6. Traveled to the United States
  - Interviewed donors in SD before leaving for Nicaragua

**Table 1.2.1**

Violent encounter in Nicaragua after six days

**Table 1.2.2**

Exited the field before steps 7 and 8 (Table 1.1)

**Table 1.2.3**

Returned to step 1 of conventional research, remained loyal to topic

**Table 1.3**

Second Attempt at Conventional Research

1. Felt need to keep topic
2. Kept theoretical base
3. Chose to conduct more fieldwork and qualitative interviews
4. Selected Pine Ridge, SD as the new case study where the church had another aid program
5. Changed research question to: “Why do donors in SD give money to the Lutheran Church’s aid programs?”
  - Modified research design to compare Nicaragua donors with Pine Ridge donors to discover reasons for giving
  - Interviewed donors of the Pine Ridge program
6. Traveled to Pine Ridge for five days
  - Collected data at Pine Ridge
7. Analyzed interviews
8. Began writing process and continued writing for five months

**Table 1.3.1**

March 22, 2006: Presented a paper about my experience entitled “Safety in the Field” at a conference called “Methodologies in Peace Research” at the University of Tromsø. This presentation activated my voice and highlighted my interest on the issue of safety and the importance of discussing it in an academic setting

**Table 1.4**

Final “Unconventional” Research

1. Changed topic to safety in the field
2. Identified Beck’s *Risk Society* and Hirschman’s *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* as theoretical bases
3. Chose personal experience informed by substantive literature to explore the issue of safety
4. Selected personal experience as my case
5. Changed research questions to: “How can researchers best manage risks encountered from the fieldwork setting?” and “What can be learned from these risks?”
6. Read literature and journal entries and reflected on my experience
7. Considered my experience in light of theoretical bases and substantive literature
8. Wrote thesis and developed strategies for institutions and other researchers

## **1.5 Theoretical, Practical, and Ethical Contexts of the Research**

The theoretical context of the thesis will explore knowledge issues in an attempt to determine what can be considered valid and reliable knowledge in the realm of social science and more specifically in peace studies (Brannen, 1992). Within the discussion of knowledge, the topics of emotions and intellect will be explored (Turner and Stets, 2005; Roberts, 2007; Liamputtong, 2007). These arguments will demonstrate that what is taught as valid and reliable knowledge for researchers is different from what could be useful in the fieldwork setting. The nature of risk in the ambient fieldwork setting will be studied (Hardin, 1993; Kenyon and Hawker, 1999; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). The concept of risk will be analyzed focusing on what risk is, what risks researchers face, and how to create strategies to deal with them (Hirschman, 1970; Beck, 1992; Beck, et al. 1994). I will also reflect on my personal research experience in the field. This will highlight how I dealt with risk in my fieldwork and will explore the emotions I felt during the process. I will analyze these emotions by looking at the “loyalty” to the field or the research topic alongside the difficulty of “exiting” a research process and the need to “voice” such an experience (Hirschman, 1970). I will use my experience in combination with substantive literature to examine the emotions that may influence the actions of other researchers in the field.

In addition to the theoretical contexts, it is also important to point out the practical contexts of the research. On a practical level, the goal of the paper is to create useable safety strategies for lone researchers and institutions. It will be important to briefly discuss strategy making as defined by Crow (1989) and clarify what safety is through the writings of Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000) as well as others to know what the strategies are actually trying to achieve. Preparing for risks creates ethical issues that must also be addressed. First, this thesis will argue with support from Sampson and Thomas (2003) and others that current ethics are primarily concerned with the protection of the research subject and not the researchers themselves. Institutions are obligated according to the UK Council of Vice Chancellors and Principles (1995) to adequately prepare and aid their employee, but many fail to take this responsibility seriously. Research should not be seen as a task that can be done flippantly because of the risks to the

researcher. Instead, detailed preparation and strategies should be an ethical consideration for institutions (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999).

Researchers must also think ethically when entering the field and dealing with risks. Risk cannot be entirely eliminated and managing risks also has to be balanced with respect for research participants and the field setting in general (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Thus, developing strategies that are useful but not overly imposing to researchers or research participants is an important consideration. It is also important to admit that these strategies will never be a one-size fits all solution and that there are always risks in the field. Finally, there are important ethical considerations when writing about experiences from the field. Omitting field experiences, especially if they are negative, hinders research by failing to completely explain the true methodology of the research (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn, and Kemmer, 2001). Additionally, if incidents from the field are excluded, other researchers miss an opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and are less prepared for their own fieldwork and the risks they may face.

## **1.6 Aims and Objectives**

Within these contexts, this thesis aims to answer the two following research questions:

1. How can researchers best manage risks encountered from the fieldwork setting?
2. What can be learned from these risks?

These research questions allow further exploration of the importance of safety in research preparation, risk management in the fieldwork environment, and the value of emotions in safety preparation and academic knowledge. It also opens up space to analyze my research experience and utilize this experience to create useful strategies for lone researchers and institutions.

The discussions about the value of emotions in safety and academic knowledge and the importance of safety in research preparation will lay the academic foundation for the thesis. This academic foundation will then be supplemented by my personal experience in conducting a

messy research project. My experience as shown in Tables 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 will help demonstrate the theoretical issues of risk, emotions, loyalty and exit in an actual fieldwork process. The combination of academic insight and personal experience will inform the recommendation of strategies for lone researchers and institutions.

## **1.7 Scope of the thesis**

This thesis is structured around six chapters following an unconventional thematic format. This unconventional format creates space to reflect on my experience academically and allows a comparison between this unconventional format and a conventional research process, which often disregards the academic value of the researcher's emotional experiences. Following this introduction chapter, the second chapter will explore intellectual and emotional knowledge. It will review different methods of knowledge acquisition and argue that emotions should be considered a valid and useful source of knowledge generation. Validating the worth of emotions will allow me to use my own experience as data that aids in the formation of safety strategies. Chapter Three will look at the concepts of safety and risk and review the current body of literature about the subjects. This chapter will point out gaps in the literature and how this thesis aims to contribute to research on the issues of safety and risk. Chapter Four will define a conventional research process and then compare this process with my experience in the field. This comparison will make clear the need for safety and risk management in the research process and the importance of creating decision-making strategies to help achieve improved safety and risk management. Chapter Five will use my personal experience, as described in my field journal, and substantive literature to help create these strategies for both lone researchers and institutions. In addition to creating strategies, this chapter will analyze my emotional experience as a way to demonstrate the emotional process other researchers may also go through. These strategies and emotional analyses will be the findings of my thesis. The paper will conclude in Chapter Six followed by appendixes, which provide an opportunity for me to share my journal entries in their entirety.



## 2 Intellect and Emotion



## **2.1 Introduction**

This thesis will argue that what is often considered valid knowledge in social science research can exclude other useful knowledge sources such as emotions. Therefore, before proceeding with the thesis it is important to first analyze the concept of valid knowledge. It will be necessary to focus on different methods of knowledge acquisition, which are typically divided into quantitative methods and qualitative methods. This chapter will first explore the theoretical bases of both methods and what they mean practically for researchers. It will pay special attention to qualitative research methods, which I used in my research. This chapter will also note the possibility of mixing the two methods (Brannen, 1992). Then it will be demonstrated that sources of knowledge generation, such as the emotions of the researcher, are left out of both of these methods and not typically considered valid knowledge. It will be argued that blending quantitative and qualitative methods has been legitimated and that blending emotions with other knowledge sources should similarly be accepted in academic work.

## **2.2 Obtaining Knowledge: Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies**

There have conventionally been two methods of acquiring knowledge: qualitative and quantitative. The most important difference between the two is the way each method treats data (Brannen, 1992: 4). The quantitative researcher isolates and defines variables and variable categories, which are “linked together to frame hypotheses often before data are collected and then tested upon the data” (Brannen, 1992: 4). Qualitative research on the other hand begins by defining general concepts that, as the research progresses, change their definition. In this method, the variables may “constitute the product of outcome” (Brannen, 1992: 4).

Data collection also separates quantitative and qualitative research. The instrument used in quantitative research is “a pre-determined and finely-tuned technological tool which allows for much less flexibility, imaginative input and reflexivity” (Brannen, 1992: 5). Qualitative researchers use themselves as the research instrument and thus need to consider their own cultural assumptions in addition to the data (Brannen, 1992: 4). The qualitative investigator tries

to achieve “imaginative insights into the respondents’ social worlds” through flexibility and reflexivity while somehow manufacturing distance (McCracken, 1988 quoted in Brannen, 1992: 5).

Finally, quantitative methods have typically been associated with data or “enumerative induction” while qualitative methods typically refer to meaning or “analytic induction” (Brannen, 1992: 6). These methods have different starting points with enumerative induction abstracting by generalizing whereas analytic induction generalizes by abstracting (Brannen, 1992: 7). Analytic induction is often used in ethnographic work in which “a concrete case is inspected and those features which are essential to it are abstracted” (Znaniecki, 1934 and Denzin, 1970 quoted in Brannen, 1992: 6). Enumerative induction is sometimes wrongly associated as the exclusive method of research in the natural sciences while analytic induction as applied in qualitative research is sometimes criticized as being ‘unscientific’ because of its supposed connection with social science research (Brannen, 1992: 6). Within methodology literature, epistemology and methods are also depicted as being intimately inter-related (Brannen, 1992: 15). Positivist epistemology is associated with quantitative methods while qualitative methods are closely associated with an interpretative epistemology (Brannen, 1992: 15).

### **2.3 Mixing Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

The distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods is useful for delineating different styles of research, but it is also limiting because it eliminates the numerous blends of methods that can be used. Hammersley (1992: 39) argues that it also “obscures the breadth of issues and arguments involved in the methodology of social research.” Using a single method limits the research because the researcher is not forced to confront tensions between different theoretical perspectives (Brannen, 1992: 33). There has been an increasing tendency to accept and promote mixing methods, but time constraints, the lack of expertise in both methods, and the tendency to conduct research in the same way as previous researchers has discouraged widespread use of mixed methods (Brannen, 1992). In methodology, the dominant paradigm focuses on a simple contrast between two opposed standpoints, but as Hammersley (1992: 51) notes, there is a range

of positions sometimes located on more than one dimension that could be considered. Choosing a position should depend on the purposes of the research instead of methodological or philosophical commitments imposed by the dominant paradigm (Hammersley, 1992: 51).

## **2.4 Valid Knowledge in Quantitative and Qualitative Methods**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as blends of the methods, circumscribe valid knowledge. Qualitative research creates space for reflexivity, but there has traditionally been an attempt to achieve supposed objectivity in qualitative research. Following the Enlightenment, and even more-so following the writings of Kant, naturalist thinkers considered the practice of the natural sciences as a model for acquiring secure knowledge (Baert, 2005: 131). They suggested that the social sciences should “emulate natural science” and promote value-neutrality in which the values of the researcher “should not interfere with their investigations” (Baert, 2005: 134). Even advocates of qualitative methods, such as early qualitative writers Thomas and Znaniecki, Herbert Blumer, as well as anthropologists Boas, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and modern day writers, have regarded the natural sciences as exemplary (Hammersley, 1992: 46-47). In this framework, researchers emphasize the conceptual and theoretical and avoid emotional vulnerability, thus closing down a way to learn about the social world (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126).

## **2.5 Emotions as Knowledge**

In social science, the emotions of the research participant are considered a part of the data and legitimate knowledge because it offers insight into the perspectives and behaviors of the research participant’s world (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 120; Hammersley, 1992: 45). Recently, feminist methodology has “made the role of researcher’s emotion explicit to the research process” and the field of health has also acknowledged the emotions of the researcher themselves (Mills and Coleman, 1994; Young and Lee, 1996; Kitwood, 1997; Atley and Rodham, 1998; Ellis and Bochner, 1999; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000 all quoted in Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Keemer, 2000: 124). However, the emotions of the researcher have

for the most part have been ignored as a knowledge source in order to preserve the integrity of the data (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 120. As Coffey (1999: 1) notes:

“It has become increasingly fashionable for individual researchers to ‘personalise’ their accounts of fieldwork. But there has been little systematic attempt to reflect upon their experiences and emotions...in any overarching collective or epistemological sense. All too often, research methods texts remain relatively silent on the ways in which fieldwork affects us, and we affect the field” (quoted in Liamputtong, 2007: 93).

The emotions of the researcher should be seen as a useful, “emotionally-sensed knowledge” that is “an indispensable part of the research process” (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 120). As Game (1997) notes, “emotions are the means by which we make sense of, and relate to, our physical, natural and social world. In this sense, emotion has epistemological significance because we can only ‘know’ through our emotions and not simply our cognition or intellect” (quoted in Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126). Instead of contrasting an “emotional way of knowing” with an “objective, scientific approach, it is more appropriate to perceive our emotional and cognitive functioning as inseparable” (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126). Williams (1998: 761) emphasizes the point arguing that human emotion should not be counter-posed with rational thought because “without emotions, social life, including our decision-making capacities and our ability to make informed choices amongst a plurality of options would be impossible” (quoted in Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126). Emotions are thus not only essential as a knowledge source in research, but also valid and imperative in any attempt to create decision-making strategies.

## **2.6 Current Study of Emotion**

The serious study of emotions did not emerge until the 1970’s (Turner and Stets, 2005: 1), but since then a substantial body of research has emerged “documenting the plausibility of the theoretical arguments” of the validity and importance of emotions (Turner and Stets, 2005: 316). The fields of sociology, psychology, and neurobiology in particular have been keenly interested

in emotions (Turner and Stets, 2005: 1-2), but emotions as a source of knowledge has been mostly confined to the micro level (Turner and Stets, 2005: 312). However “emotions are also what tie people to macrostructures,” and the study of larger structures could use emotions as an important point of insight. It would also be useful to study emotions in “a wide variety of research methodologies including historical analysis, observational research, and ethnography” (Turner and Stets, 2005: 313). Rarely are emotions studied in their natural context (Turner and Stets, 2005: 315), so bringing emotions into fieldwork could be an important marriage of research areas. Considering emotions as a part of scientific knowledge is an important consideration that this thesis attempts to highlight.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the major methods of knowledge acquisition, namely quantitative and qualitative methods. While these methods can be delineated by the way they collect and treat data, the two methods can also be merged. Despite their differences, both quantitative and qualitative data are guilty of often ignoring emotions as a valid source of knowledge. Emotions, instead of being disregarded, should be treated as an essential part of the research and a valid source of knowledge. In fact, it is impossible to separate intellectual and emotional knowledge, as the two are inherently intertwined (Williams, 1998: 761 quoted in Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126). Therefore, any discussion of creating decision-making strategies should consider emotions as a valid source of inspiration. Social scientists have recently begun to study emotions on the micro-level, but further research, especially connecting emotions with macrostructures and using emotions to inform other research methods, needs to be undertaken. Having demonstrated the validity of emotion as a source of knowledge, the thesis will use my emotional experience as a way to analyze the research process and create safety strategies for lone researchers and institutions.



# 3

## Risk and Safety



If you don't have your health<sup>1</sup>, you don't have anything.  
-Folk Wisdom

### **3.1 Introduction**

Managing risk and improving the safety of the researcher should be a major concern in developing a research project, as traditional folk wisdom reminds us. Currently however, the literature most often speaks about the bravery of researchers surviving dangerous encounters with informants and the importance of protecting research participants (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). There seems to be a lack of literature addressing other aspects of safety such as the physical risks from the field setting itself, the pressures placed on researchers, the emotion health of the researcher, and the peace of mind of the researcher. This chapter aims to highlight literature currently dealing with risk and safety in order to show how my thesis will help expand the present academic work. It is important first to review the current substantive literature dealing with risk. This chapter will then create a framework for discussing safety that will explain the different categories within this framework. After defining and describing the categories, this chapter will review the current literature dealing with the traditionally overlooked issues of ambient physical safety, pressures, emotional health, and strategies. This analysis will show where the current literature ends and where future research and discussions should begin.

### **3.2 The *Risk Society***

Much of the current discussion about risk in the social sciences centers around Ulrich Beck's (1992) work called the *Risk Society*. According to Beck (1992), "attempting to minimise and measure risk have become defining features of contemporary societies" (also found in Beck, Giddens, and Lash, 1994; quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 9). The information age has improved our abilities to control threats in general society, the workplace and the home. However, "in an unequal society some individuals and social groups have more access to knowledge about risk, and greater agency to limit their exposure to it, than do other groups" (Beck, 1992 quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 9).

---

<sup>1</sup> This thesis argues that health should be thought of as mental, physical, and emotional health.

In relation to research, social scientists often study risks to society and the research participants and/or work in areas of enhanced risk. Thus they are oddly placed within the risk society alongside those without agency to limit their exposure to risk (Beck, 1992 quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 9). This is particularly true for peace researchers, development studies researchers, and other studies that focus on areas of conflict and increased risk. Researchers typically work and study under the guise and protection of a larger institution at home; however, when entering the field, the protection of this institution suddenly disappears. Institutions are often guilty of leaving researchers to their own improvised safety strategies (Kovats-Bernat, 2002: 2; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 1), which Beck (1992) describes as transferring risk from the institution to the individual. Institutions should still have an obligation towards the researcher, but assessing risk becomes more difficult for the institution because it is removed from the field. Individual researchers are thus “expected to make choices about the risks they face” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 10).

Despite the fact that researchers are most often linked to academic institutions, the risks they take “are frequently seen as exclusively their own” and even necessary for academic excellence (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 10). It can thus be argued that most qualitative research is “to some extent potentially dangerous” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 10). This risk is not intrinsically negative as it can lead to important insight in understanding the world of the research participants who face the same or even heightened risk without the protecting of an institution (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 199). This however does not preclude the responsibility of institutions or the importance of preparation for the potential risks one could face in the field (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 10)

### **3.3 Safety Framework**

Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000) propose that safety literature should take into account four categories of risk, or what Lee-Treweek and Linkogle call danger: physical, emotional, ethical, and professional. These risk are admittedly “fluid and often experienced together in a variety of permutations” making it difficult create absolute categories (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000:

203). However, these distinctions can help to focus the discussion of risk management and safety to make it more concrete and fruitful. This framework is displayed below in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**

Safety Considerations:
1. Physical Danger
2. Emotional Danger
3. Ethical Danger
4. Professional Danger

### **3.3.1 Physical Danger**

Physical danger refers to the risk of injury for the researcher both from conducting fieldwork and from the field environment in general. This can include physical violence as extreme as murder (Menchú, 1998), personal risk from mundane tasks like traveling in the field (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000), and general dangers from the environment such as Lankshear's (2000) account of hazardous biological material in the hospital where she was conducting research. Physical danger can be further specified into what Lee (1995) calls ambient and situational risk or what Beck (1992) calls personal and occupational risk. Ambient, or personal, risks are the risks from the research setting in general. These risks can be as varied as sunburn, traffic accidents, disease, robbery or assault that occurs when not specifically conducting interviews or observing. Situational, or occupational, risks are the risks researchers face while conducting interviews, observations, or other aspects of the actual fieldwork. This especially includes harm from the research participants themselves. It is not always easy to know when fieldwork ends, so it is sometimes difficult to separate ambient and situational risks, but the distinction is useful in the discussion about safety. This thesis will focus primarily on the ambient risks of fieldwork, which is what I experienced during my fieldwork.

Physical danger from situational risks has featured prominently in research accounts from early anthropological literature through to the Chicago School and still today in modern urban ethnographies (Fielding, 1981 quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 10). These accounts are often tales of bravery included to "indicate commitment to the pursuit of knowledge" (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 11). A small number of authors have begun to write critically

about these tales of bravery and the negative pressure it can put on researchers. Sampson and Thomas (2003) highlight the pressure exerted on researchers to conduct increasingly exotic fieldwork that often leads to safety oversight. Universities have become more research-oriented, and many researchers are hired on short-term contracts and have a need to get data at all costs to keep their jobs (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Research institutes also are a part of a male-dominated, competitive research culture, which is often reflected in accounts of risk and valor in the field (Patrick, 1973 quoted in Sampson and Thomas, 2003: 185). These researchers aim to be the so-called “Indiana Jones researcher” (Lee 1995 quoted in Nilan, 2002). To “fit in” in this culture and to enjoy academic success, men and women find themselves complicit in compromising their own health and safety (Sampson and Thomas, 2003; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). The pressure to create results also makes many researchers worry more about data than safety (Lareau, 1996; Nilan, 2002; Sampson and Thomas, 2003) and forces many researchers to remain loyal to unsafe or dangerous field work against their better judgment in order to avoid feeling like they have failed (Gurney, 1985; Sluka, 1995; Sampson and Thomas, 2003).

Gender often shapes the dangers present in the field (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Both men and women can experience physical danger, but “gender often shapes the forms such dangers take” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 12). The nature of masculinised settings can pose unique risk for women, while sexual harassment and assault are also physical dangers women face (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 12). For men, ‘maleness’ is not a safeguard (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 324). Men can be pressured to act tough and be able to handle dangerous situations that could ultimately increase their exposure to risks of physical danger (Peterson, 2000).

Ambient risks to the researcher’s physical safety have received notably less literary attention than situational risks (Jones, 1991: 209 quoted in Kenyon and Hawker, 1999; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Accounts are mostly limited to shared anecdotes between researchers that are often left out of the writing process. Recently a few authors have started to bring ambient safety into the world of academia, such as Lee (1995), Nordstrom and Robben (1995), and Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000). These researchers take these so-called ‘tales from the field’ and

try to consider the risks inherent in field situations (Warren, 1988: 33 and Lee 1995: 56 quoted in Kenyon and Hawker, 1999; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). The majority of safety literature focuses on situational risks while literature about ambient risk remains sparse.

### **3.3.2 Emotional Danger**

Emotional danger deals with threats to researchers “due to negative ‘feeling states’ induced by the research process” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 13). These dangers are not uncomfortable feelings and annoyances researchers face in the field, but are “real distress which can spill over into other areas of the researcher’s life, such as their family and personal relationships or connections with colleagues at work” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 13). Emotional danger is a complex issue because different research settings can produce different emotions depending on the individual researcher.

Until recently, emotional danger has been considered outside of the realm of social research and thus ignored in the majority of literature (Lee-Treweek, and Linkogle, 2000; Sampson and Thomas, 2003; see also Chapter Two). This is especially true when it comes to psychological and emotional health and issues of sexual harassment (Sampson and Thomas, 2003). Researchers can face both ambient and situational risks to their emotional and psychological health. Living in the field and being exposed to the ambient stressors of violence, poverty, isolation, loneliness, and other frustrations associated with fieldwork can pose “serious threats to a researcher’s emotional stability and sense of self” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 13). Situational risks could include exposure to threatening situations or traumatic experiences from their research participants that can have a lasting impact on their emotional and mental health. Even if researchers are not directly threatened in the course of their work, hearing traumatic stories of their research participants can deeply affect the mental and emotional state of the researchers (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000). If physical harm occurs, emotional and/or psychological issues could continue to haunt the researcher even after leaving the field. These psychological and emotional feelings do not always receive attention when returning from fieldwork when counseling and debriefing could be helpful (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 135).

These emotional aspects of social life have only recently been included in social research. According to Kleinman and Copp (1993: 23), “traditional research methodologies have generally excluded the emotions of the researcher from the research process” (quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 13). Emotions were considered at odds with the idea that social sciences were akin to the natural sciences. According to this normative model of research, “investigation and discovery were only possible if untainted by feelings states and other intangible aspects of human experience” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 14). Participants are often offered counseling or help dealing with issues of post traumatic stress when retelling about past incidents, but the researchers who hear these stories rarely are offered the same care (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 133).

The writing process leaves little opportunity for the researcher to voice their emotional experiences (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 14). The writing process is supposed to be a clean and academic experience based on facts instead of emotions (see Chapter Two). The psychological and emotional issues are thus designed out of the process, leaving researchers little room to discuss the difficulties in their experience in their writings for fear of “losing face or a good reference for the next post” (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 134). This denies researchers one method of voicing psychological and emotional issues they may have from their research. Ignoring emotions can also influence the research itself. As Hubbard, Backett-Milburn, and Kemmer (2000) note, the emotions of the researcher are likely to influence and inform the understanding of the topic under investigation. Thus, to have an accurate depiction of the data, emotions of the research should be included. Emotions are also essential in decision-making, so incorporating emotions in preparation could help researchers make safer decisions (Kenyon and Hawker 1999; Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000; Liamputtong, 2007: 82; see also Chapter Two).

Recently, discussion and analysis of researchers’ emotions have become more commonplace, often by drawing upon the emerging sub-discipline of the sociology of emotions (Karp and Yoels, 1993; Young and Lee, 1996; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000; Turner and Stets, 2005; see also Chapter Two). As feminist research has demonstrated, “depersonalised research denies the subjective character of social inquiry and ignores the insight that reflexivity, as a

methodological tool, can bring to the research process” (Stanely, 1992 quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). Using personal experience can be useful to research, but it also requires caution because it can be self-destructive (Lankshear 2000; Letherby, 2000). Literature should continue to explore the benefits and challenges in using emotions to shape academic analysis as well as highlight the need to offer support for researchers struggling with psychological and emotional issues.

### **3.3.3 Ethical Danger**

Ethical danger focuses “primarily on the protection and welfare of participants” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 17). Issues of physical and emotional danger to the research participant are thus included in the category of ethical danger (number 3 in Table 3.1) and are delineated from the physical and emotional dangers to the researcher considered in the previous categories (number 1 and 2 in Table 3.1). Ethical dangers have received the most attention with a substantial body of methodological literature considering the issue of research ethics (Bulmer, 1982; Homan, 1991; Lee, 1993). Ethical codes of practice were slower to develop in the social sciences than in the natural sciences, but infamous cases of unethical practices such as Milgram (1963), Humphreys (1970), and Wallis (1976) helped form the boundaries of ethical principles. Literature dealing with ethical dangers often focus on informed consent, deception, privacy, and accuracy in data publication (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 139-140). Literature and ethical guidelines such as the British Sociological Association’s Statement of Ethical Practice (1992: 704) tell researchers to avoid emotional distress to participants and to protect their research participants by maintaining confidentiality (quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 15). Within these models, the participant is given primacy in terms of protection from negative consequences (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 15). This thesis is focused primarily on the safety of the researcher and therefore will not focus on the issues of ethical danger. The plethora of literature dealing with ethical dangers is often included in the methodological stage of the research design (step 3 in Table 1.1 found in Chapter One) demonstrating that the importance of managing ethical dangers has already been recognized.

### **3.3.4 Professional Danger**

Professional danger refers to the risks “associated with the consequences of challenging or deviating from existing occupation dynamics and collegial preoccupations” (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 20). Using different theories or methods may prevent researchers from publishing, gaining academic support and respect from colleagues and institutions, and from obtaining jobs (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). This danger concerns itself much more with the return from the field and the writing process. It is important to acknowledge this danger, which can quell innovation and new developments in social research. This thesis, however, aims to deal with the dangers researchers face in the process of fieldwork and will exclude a discussion on the professional dangers researchers may face.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

When researchers enter the field they often research, work, and live alongside individuals who do not have the knowledge or agency to manage and minimize risk in their society as well as the researcher’s home society. The researcher’s institution is unable to actively help the researcher minimize risk and often researchers are left to navigate the field in a cursory or *ad hoc* fashion (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 1). The risks of the modern society and the heightened risk for social researchers, in particular peace researchers, means that risk management and safety deserves more attention in institutions, research designs, and academic literature. With Lee-Treweek and Linkogle’s framework, this chapter has drawn attention to the fact that current literature focuses primarily on ethical dangers and risks to the research participant. More attention should be given to risks researchers themselves face from ambient physical danger and emotional danger. This thesis attempts to fill these gaps by analyzing a personal experience involving ambient physical danger and emotional danger and developing strategies that can help minimize risk from both dangers. Additionally, this research aims to highlight risk management and safety as a priority for future academic work.

## 4

### The Conventional Research Process and the Reality of the Field



## **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the straightforward research process and highlights the plethora of substantive literature surrounding it. This conventional research process will then be compared with the messy fieldwork I experienced and my subsequent attempts to continue following the conventional process. In textbook terms, conventional research is supposed to follow a logical procedure that focuses mostly on academic issues found in substantive literature. However, the reality of the field is often less logical. This chapter will point to the fact that before leaving for fieldwork, substantive literature is usually emphasized while little attention is paid to potentially useful preparations such as decision-making strategies or reading the small body of safety literature that exists. These issues, which could prove helpful in the messy field, are often considered to be in the realm of common sense that researchers should be able to navigate themselves (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 314). This chapter demonstrates the need for including decision-making strategies and safety preparation in the conventional research process, thereby underscoring the importance of the findings in the next chapter.

To highlight the practical preparation in the conventional research process, I will define each of the steps of a conventional research project and comment after each step on how it prepares or fails to prepare researchers for actual fieldwork. I will then use my original research project to demonstrate these steps in practice. My original research project is an example of a conventional research and shows how substantive literature is often emphasized and how safety is often viewed as a minor detail and not given prime consideration. Discussing my research process will also demonstrate how the ideal, conventional research steps can be completely different than the actual process researchers experience in the typically less predictable field.

## **4.2 Conventional Research Process**

Methods books describe a conventional research project as a straightforward process. The step-by-step procedure includes reading a large amount of substantive literature and building a strong academic base before entering the field. Table 4.1 (also shown as Table 1.1 in Chapter One) shows this conventional process.

**Table 4.1**

Silverman, David (2000: viii-xi). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications: London.

Conventional Stages of Empirical Research Processes
1. Select a topic
2. Choose a theoretical base
3. Choose a methodology
4. Select a case
5. Write a research proposal
6. Collect data
7. Analyze data
8. Present data

Opening any typical social science research book will also show this emphasis on substantive literature and the lack of focus on safety before entering the field. For example, the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) uses 1075 pages to discuss everything from the history of qualitative research to focus groups in feminist research. Safety in the book only deals with the research participants such as the requirement to provide of informed consent, avoid deception, ensure privacy and accuracy in publishing data about a research subject (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 139-140). Similarly, out of the 585 pages in Bryman's (2005) book *Social Research Methods*, only one paragraph is dedicated to safety. This paragraph is typical of material on safety. It is a horror story of one researcher's experience conducting fieldwork. These scare tactics do little to help researchers methodically strive to conduct safe fieldwork. The majority of substantive literature in fact provides few concrete ways to manage dangerous situations leaving many researchers with little to no safety preparation before entering the field. Instead of being an essential part of substantive literature, safety is considered to be common sense and not an academic issue (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 314).

#### **4.2.1 Step One: Select a Topic**

The first step of a typical research project is finding a workable research topic (Silverman, 2000: 90). In locating a topic, it is important to formulate research questions keeping in mind the answerability, interconnectedness, and relevance of the questions (Silverman, 2000: 90). The

researcher should spend time analyzing resources, drawing flow charts, and begin searching for data to ensure that their research topic is as specific and clear as possible (Silverman, 2000: 92). Choosing a research topic is a highly intellectual process. It has practical results of directing the research and deciding where fieldwork may take place. It does not explicitly attempt to prepare researchers for the unpredictable realities of the field although considering the workability of a topic could prevent researchers from entering field setting that may be more difficult to navigate. Deciding on a topic is important and has safety implications, but it is not explicitly involved in preparing researchers for fieldwork.

#### **4.2.2 Step Two: Choose a Theoretical Base**

Theoretical paradigms and perspectives are the second step of a traditional research project (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). They are the “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (Guba, 1990: 17 in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 19) and ultimately “shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 19). There are four major paradigms that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note, including: positivism and post positivism, constructivism-interpretive, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and feminist-post structural. The paradigms all have different ideas on how information should be both obtained and interpreted. These theoretical paradigms and concepts are important in research, but in the messy reality of the field, they have little value. For example, understanding positivism or the social exchange theory has little practical value when a researcher is looking for research participants in Managua, Nicaragua.

#### **4.2.3 Step Three: Choose a Methodology**

The third step of the conventional research process is choosing a methodology defined as “a general approach to studying research topics” (Silverman, 2000: 109). Many data collection methods are available to researchers including interviews, observation, artifacts, documents, records, visual methods, focus groups, and auto ethnography. After obtaining the data, it can be analyzed using data management methods, computer-assisted analysis, textual analysis, conversational analysis and applied ethnography (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Silverman, 2000).

Methodology literature can provide information that is useful in fieldwork. Understanding how to appropriately conduct interviews can help to maintain safety both for and from the research participant. However, methodology literature often fails to provide a broader interpretation of safety or strategies for researchers. As J. Christopher Kovats-Bernats (2002: 3) notes, these methodologies can even be dangerous because they are based on “rigid, positivist frameworks and fixed assumption about the means of acquiring data.” He suggests instead that methodology should not be a rigid or fixed framework, but should be “an elastic, incorporative, integrative, and malleable practice that is informed by shifting social complexities unique to the field site” (Kovats-Bernats: 2002: 3). This means that methodology literature can and should do a better job of incorporating safety as a legitimate consideration before entering fieldwork. Additionally, researchers should tailor their methodology to their individual field situation and the risks they may face there.

#### **4.2.4 Step Four: Select a Case**

Selecting a case<sup>2</sup> is the fourth step of the conventional research process with the idea that one case “will be studied in detail, using whatever methods seem appropriate...to develop as full an understanding of that case as possible” (Punch, 1998: 150 quoted in Silverman, 2000: 126). Most often the goal for qualitative researchers is to use the case to make generalizations about an issue or to revise a previous generalization (Silverman, 2000: 127). Deciding upon a case usually requires extensive reading on the context of the proposed case to decide if it will be suitable to help answer the research topic. This contextual reading can be a valuable safety tool if the case includes fieldwork because knowing the current situation as well as the history of the field can teach the researcher what situations could be dangerous and what other researchers have faced in the same field. While contextual literature is useful, it lacks any strategy tools or systematic analysis of the current safety of the field.

---

<sup>2</sup> Case in this context means a case study although other strategies for obtaining exist such as: ethnographies, phenomenologies, grounded theory, life histories, historical methods, action and applied research, and clinical research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 20). The case study will be focused on in this thesis as it is a common choice for qualitative researchers and was what I attempted to use to answer my original research questions.

#### **4.2.5 Step Five: Writing a Research Proposal**

Writing a research proposal is the fifth step of a conventional research project. It is often seen as a “bureaucratic hurdle” but can be useful in clarifying the direction of the research and summarizing the previous steps of the research process (Silverman, 2000: 139). The proposal will often include: background information on the topic, a focused research question, a literature review, the methods that will be used to collect data, possible ethical issues, how the findings will be communicated and why they are important, and a timetable for the research (Morse, 1994: 228; Kelly, 1998: 115-121; Rudestam and Newton, 1992: 18; all quoted in Silverman, 2000: 140). The process of writing a proposal could illuminate issues of safety that the research may not have previously considered. When considering the ethical issues, managing risk to the research subject and the researcher could be a part of the process. Submitting a research proposal could especially be useful in safety preparation if the institution receiving the proposal has a safety or ethics committee that will review the application. Forcing researchers to consider practical issues of the field before leaving can help manage the risks of the field; unfortunately, the aspect of safety can be easily left out of the research proposal just as it is notably absent from Silverman’s (2000) book.

#### **4.2.6 Steps Six to Eight: Dealing with Data**

The final steps of the research process focus on collecting, interpreting and presenting data. The researcher is most often alone when it is time to collect data according to the methodology they previously selected. The collection methods and the success can vary significantly depending on the context of the field and the goals of the research. After collecting data, the researcher returns to interpret the data they have with the ultimate goal being to present the data. There is “no single interpretive truth,” so the final interpretation and presentation depends on the previous steps taken in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 23). The researcher has freedom of interpretation and presentation, so the final presentation can “assume several forms: confessional, realist, impressionistic, critical, formal, literary, analytic, ground theory, and so on” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 23).

When the researcher is in the field or has completed fieldwork and begins the interpretation and presentation process, it is too late to provide practical preparation strategies. However, the writing process can be an important way for researchers to process and deal with emotions and experiences from their fieldwork experience. Unfortunately, the academic writing process leaves little opportunity for the researcher to discuss their emotional experiences (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 14; see also Chapter Two). This means that researchers return and are often left without a forum to discuss their emotions. Compounding the problem is the fact that psychological and emotional support is not often provided for researchers.

### **4.3 Conventional Research Project Case Study**

Now that the conventional research process has been explained, it can be compared to the reality of the field. The so-called “reality of the field” is of course very subjective with every researcher having a different overall experience. However, it is safe to say that “the practice of research is a messy and untidy business which rarely conforms to the models set down in methodology textbooks” (Brannen, 1992: 3). My research experience will give insight into the untidy business that researchers face, especially in the field. This will be useful in finding the shortcomings of what researchers are currently taught before entering the field and will set the stage to discuss the decision to leave the field in the next chapter.

Before defining the steps of a traditional research project, it is important to give the background of my original research project. It involved studying an aid program between the South Dakota Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in Nicaragua. I originally wanted to identify if the aid met the needs of the recipients and later tried to focus on why donors decide to give to such aid programs. My research experience is shown below in Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 (reproductions of Tables 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4 in Chapter One). The steps of my experience are displayed to match the typical research process outlined in Table 4.1, even though the chronology of events did not always fit the specific order prescribed in a conventional research process. It is also visually evident by the numerous boxes and arrows that my research process was anything but orderly. Although I attempted to stick to the conventional research process, the reality in the field ultimately precluded my efforts to follow the research recipe. This chapter will deal with the

process of trying to fit a research project to the conventional model, thus focusing on Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4. Tables 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, and 4.3.1 will be discussed in the following chapter (reproductions of Tables 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, and 1.3.1 in Chapter One).

**My Research Experience**

**Table 4.2**

**Table 4.3**

**Table 4.4**

**My Stages of Conventional Research**

1. Chose foreign aid to Nicaragua as topic
2. Identified social exchange theory as a theoretical base
3. Chose fieldwork and qualitative research to investigate foreign aid to Nicaragua
4. Selected South Dakota (SD) and its aid program with Nicaragua as my case study
5. Created two part research design interviewing donors in SD and recipients in Nicaragua
  - Formulated research question: “Does aid from the SD Lutheran Church meet the needs of Nicaraguans?”
  - Applied for funding
  - Made contact and gained permission to conduct fieldwork in SD and Nicaragua, no safety preparation
6. Traveled to the United States
  - Interviewed donors in SD before leaving for Nicaragua

**Second Attempt at Conventional Research**

1. Felt need to keep topic
2. Kept theoretical base
3. Chose to conduct more fieldwork and qualitative interviews
4. Selected Pine Ridge, SD as the new case study where the church had another aid program
5. Changed research question to: “Why do donors in SD give money to the Lutheran Church’s aid programs?”
  - Modified research design to compare Nicaragua donors with Pine Ridge donors to discover reasons for giving
  - Interviewed donors of the Pine Ridge program
6. Traveled to Pine Ridge for five days
  - Collected data at Pine Ridge
7. Analyzed interviews
8. Began writing process and continued writing for five months

**Final “Unconventional” Research**

1. Changed topic to safety in the field
2. Identified Beck’s *Risk Society* and Hirschman’s *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* as theoretical bases
3. Chose personal experience informed by substantive literature to explore the issue of safety
4. Selected personal experience as my case
5. Changed research questions to: “How can researchers best manage risks encountered from the fieldwork setting?” and “What can be learned from these risks?”
6. Read literature and journal entries and reflected on my experience
7. Considered my experience in light of theoretical bases and substantive literature
8. Wrote thesis and developed strategies for institutions and other researchers

**Table 4.2.1**

Violent encounter in Nicaragua after six days

**Table 4.2.2**

Exited the field before steps 7 and 8 (Table 4.1)

**Table 4.2.3**

Returned to step 1 of conventional research, remained loyal to topic

**Table 4.3.1**

March 22, 2006: Presented a paper about my experience entitled “Safety in the Field” at a conference called “Methodologies in Peace Research” at the University of Tromsø. This presentation activated my voice and highlighted my interest on the issue of safety and the importance of discussing it in an academic setting

#### 4.4 My Original Research Project (Table 4.2)

The first step of selecting a topic began for me at the end of the 2005. As a master student at the University of Tromsø, I knew that I would be required to write a thesis in my second year of study. I was interested in using fieldwork for a qualitative research project and began to brainstorm on manageable options. I had an interest in foreign aid and its actual impact on recipients. Shortly after selecting my topic I selected my methodology (step three in Table 4.2). I decided that I was interested in qualitative research and wanted to conduct fieldwork, so I started trying to find a concrete example that I could use as a case study for my research. As an active member in the South Dakota Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (SD ELCA), I had contacts that could help and an interest in finding out how the organization that I was involved in worked and what they actually did. I made contact with the ELCA before Christmas in December 2005 and was able to meet with the Assistant to the Bishop of South Dakota while home during the Christmas season. We had a discussion about what the ELCA does, especially in Nicaragua. I told him that I was interested in foreign aid and how, or if, it helps local recipients. He encouraged me to travel to Nicaragua to work with the program and to see for myself how the relationship works. His encouragement helped me finalize my topic as foreign aid focusing on the case study (step four in Table 4.2) of the South Dakota Lutheran Church's aid to Nicaragua.

Choosing a theoretical base (step two in Table 4.2) started at the same time I was trying to find a case study. I started my theoretical work with a thorough reading of David Silverman's (2000) *Doing Qualitative Research*. I learned about the different paradigms and then used the paradigm of positivism to explain how I would interpret the data as factual information. In addition to theoretical paradigms, I was also encouraged to look at theoretical concepts that could give me insights on what to look for in my research and eventually how to interpret my data. I read about the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Molm, 1997; Zafirovski, 2005), the tourist gaze (Urry, 2001), and the hierarchy of emotions (Maslow quoted in Lowry, 1973; Turner and Stets, 2005).

My research design included conducting interviews with donors to the aid program, both on the phone and in person. I combined these interviews with some official documents published by the South Dakota Lutheran Church about their policy aims and objectives. I had planned to also conduct interviews in Nicaragua and observe the aid program in practice but was unable to complete this task because I left the field early.

Discussions with my advisor helped me to begin the creation of my research proposal (step five in Table 4.2). We specified two research questions: “Does foreign aid from the SD ELCA to the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church meet the needs of Nicaraguans and/or South Dakotans? What are the needs of the Nicaraguans and South Dakotans?” These research questions led to a two-part research design. The first part of the research focused on South Dakotans, particularly donors to the program, to understand what, if anything, they received from their participation in the program. In order to conduct the first part of the research design, I contacted the Assistant to the Bishop of South Dakota who provided me with a list of the 31 churches that support the Nicaragua program, of which 17 were ultimately interviewed at the beginning of the summer 2006 (step six in Table 4.2). The second stage of the research design was focused on the Nicaraguans and what their needs were and how, or if, the relationship with the SD ELCA was helping meet those needs. In order to achieve this, I planned to travel to Nicaragua for two and half months (July-September 2006). My first week would be spent meeting the members of the central church in Managua. Then, I would travel to Granada, Nicaragua to study Spanish at a language school for one month. After the language training, I would travel back to Managua and work with the central church and hopefully travel to one of their program areas to see the work the church was doing, and more importantly, spend time with the benefactors of the programs.

In addition to the research question, the proposal also was supplemented with a literature review looking at the current debates about foreign aid (Sogge, 2002; Adelman, 2003; Sachs, 2005; Birdsall, Rodrik, and Subramanian, 2005) as well as information about Christian mission work, ideas of partnership in foreign aid, the Lutheran Church’s presence in Nicaragua, and the history of Nicaragua in general (Bosch, 1994; Yates, 1994; ELCA, 2006). Literature from Robert Yin (1984) helped explain how case studies could be used to generalize findings while publications

from Denzin (1970), Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), and David Silverman (2000) were used in formulating my research question and design.

Before traveling to Nicaragua, I received confirmation that they would be happy to host me. I also made contact with the American working there who would be my contact and guide in Nicaragua. She had been living there one year and lived on the church grounds. I arrived in Managua, Nicaragua on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June and was picked up by members of the ILFE and taken to a small hotel three blocks from the church.

The first week before traveling to Granada was spent meeting people and getting to know the community. I spent most of my days at the church talking to the workers there and participating in a few of the projects they had that week. I went to a youth gathering for Lutheran youth in Managua. There were about 60 kids who spent the afternoon singing, playing games, and eating together. I acted as a counselor, singing along, watching the kids, and organizing the games and transportation.

I also attended the church service on Sunday and met members of the congregation. It was a small, but close-knit and very outspoken congregation active in helping the poor in their community, even though from the United States perspective the church members themselves would probably be considered poor. After the service I enjoyed lunch with my contact person, and we decided to see the historic downtown Managua before I would leave for Granada that evening. This proved to be a bad decision as we were violently mugged at knifepoint in the middle of the afternoon on a small street next to the main thoroughfare (Table 4.2.1; appendix I).

#### **4.5 Second Attempt at Conventional Research (Table 4.3)**

A week after exiting the field, I contacted my supervisor to try to think of ideas on how to proceed (appendix III). One idea was to try replicate my research design by keeping my original topic (step one Table 4.3) and theoretical bases (step two Table 4.3) and just collect more data from a different case study (steps three and four in Table 4.3). I knew that the SD ELCA had a similar program with the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwest South Dakota, so I

contacted the Assistant to the Bishop and told him what happened in Nicaragua and that I hoped to continue my research in another way.

Pine Ridge was an attractive choice at the time because I could use it as the basis of my thesis while still remaining, for the most part, loyal to my original research design. Pine Ridge was also conveniently located in my home state of South Dakota. It thus provided a field experience that was somehow safer and appeared less risky to me. I could easily enter and exit the field, and since the partnership was through the SD ELCA I was able to make contacts quickly to set up the new research design. Additionally, my own curiosity having lived 20 miles from an Indian Reservation and only being on the Reservation one time encouraged me to make the opportunity work.

I slightly altered my research question and design in order to allow a comparison between the data I had already collected on donors to the Nicaragua program (step six Table 4.2) and the new data I was going to collect in Pine Ridge. In this way I attempted to salvage my previous research. My new research question was: Why do donors in SD give money to the Lutheran Church's aid programs? To begin the process, I contacted the SD ELCA and received a list of seven churches that donated to Pine Ridge. I e-mailed the seven churches explaining my research and asking if they would be willing to conduct an interview with me. Four responded to my request, and I called and interviewed those four churches.

Armed with a new research question, new data, and determination to "succeed" in the field, I traveled six hours to Pine Ridge, where I joined a church group from Minnesota that was visiting Pine Ridge for five days (step six in Table 4.3). While in Pine Ridge, I interviewed the people in the church group I was with, people who worked for the program, and locals who benefited from the program and who were critical of the program.

It is interesting to note that again safety was not considered in my research process. I felt very secure at Pine Ridge staying at a church surrounded by nearly 30 other outsiders, but there were a number of ambient risks present at Pine Ridge as well. The night before I had arrived, a local gang vandalized the van of the church group. A few days later while playing with local children

next to the church, a group of five men were stopped by three police cars and questioned right next to where we were staying. The extreme poverty and unemployment on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation made it similar in some ways to Nicaragua. Despite some similarities however, my feeling of safety was completely different at Pine Ridge. I felt calm, protected, and in a way, at home. The context of the fieldwork and the familiarity of food, language, and culture among the group I was living with, for me, played a major role in my feelings of safety. Additionally, knowing that I would be there for only a week made it seem quite easy to endure the fieldwork experience. Although this comforted me, it highlighted the fact that leaving Nicaragua was an easier decision for me because I was not yet loyal to the people or place and because I had a long time to still be there. If I had been in Nicaragua for two months and then had been mugged, it is quite possible that my feelings of loyalty to the people I had met and the research I had done might have kept me there. Also, if I had known that I would soon be leaving the field anyway, I may have had an easier time overcoming my emotional urge to leave the field.

Finally, I returned to Norway with the new data from Pine Ridge and the Pine Ridge donors and the old data from the donors to the Nicaragua program and began to analyze the interviews and began writing up my results (steps seven and eight in Table 4.3). This process continued from September 2007 until March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 when I presented a paper entitled “Safety in Research: Experience and Recommendation” at a conference at the University of Tromsø called “Methodologies in Peace Research” (Meyer 2007). After this presentation (figure 4.3.1), I had my second moment of “enlightenment” and decided to again change my research project, this time to the current unconventional thesis dealing with safety strategies for peace researchers.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Both the conventional research process and the current thesis (Table 4.4) can be adequately depicted using Silverman’s steps of research. These steps are useful in helping researchers plan and undertake research. However, the process of conducting fieldwork does not always fit this straightforward and clean process. In fact, research can go through numerous metamorphoses like my research project, due to the unpredictable and messy nature of fieldwork. The risks inherent in fieldwork make it important to consider issues of safety and decision-making

strategies in addition to the conventional research process. Depicting the research process as a highly variable and unpredictable process could help relieve the potentially dangerous pressure researchers face to be “successful” by following the conventional research process. Researchers may also be safer if they were taught how to handle a variety of the situations they may encounter. It is impossible to predict every scenario researchers will fall upon, but by equipping them with decision-making strategies and practical training they will be better prepared to manage risk while conducting research.

The conventional research process lacks important issues that could be useful in messy research processes, such as the one I faced. This chapter has attempted to highlight these shortcomings by comparing the ideal process with what occurred to me in the field. My research experience is useful in showing the reality of fieldwork and generalizable because as Kenyon and Hawker (1999: 317) found by interviewing 46 social scientists from a variety of Western countries through e-mail social science discussion lists, it is common for researchers to experience serious incidents, feelings of isolation, vulnerability and/or fear, and ‘close shaves.’ The number of people who commented about their own messy research experience at the research conference (Table 4.3.1) also seems to point to incidents during fieldwork as being far from an anomaly. The next chapter will help fill in these current gaps in the conventional research process by preparing researchers for the emotions they could encounter in the field and by beginning a discussion on strategies institutions and individuals could use to best manage risk.

# 5 Findings



The experience of mountain climbers suggests that it is not the physical aspect of mountain climbing that is so dangerous, but more frequently poor mental fitness and lack of decision-making skills that lead to problems.

-Peterson (quoted in Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 187)

## **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins a discussion on formulating useful strategies for institutions and lone researchers. These strategies aim to answer the first research question of how researchers can best manage risks encountered from the fieldwork setting. As the introductory quote notes, it is not necessarily the physical danger that places people at risk, but the lack of preparation to handle those situations. Thus, these strategies are meant to assist institutions in appropriately preparing and supporting researchers entering the field and to help lone researchers enhance their safety by managing risks that may be encountered in the field. The previous chapters have argued that emotions are an important part of valid knowledge, so these strategies are based on a combination of experiential data and substantive literature about safety, risk, strategy making, and decision-making. The experiential data will include journal entries from my fieldwork experience in Nicaragua as well as journal entries from a previous dangerous incident and e-mails I shared with my advisor after exiting the field of Nicaragua (see appendices). Experiential data helps answer the second research question by highlighting what lessons can be learned and what strategies should be created based on risks I have encountered in the field.

It is admittedly difficult to fit personal data into an academic milieu because such processes usually ignore it. Including my experience is important though because it is valuable to strategy formation and because the researcher's emotions can seriously affect their health and decision-making. Including the personal data is also difficult because it forces me to relive issues that I would at times rather keep buried. The process of voicing this experience can help me cope with my emotions, and the value of helping other researchers possibly avoid dangerous experience is worth the discomfort. Finally, even though this data is personal, it is important to include because it can be used to make generalizations. As discussed in Chapter Four, Kenyon and Hawker (1999) found that incidents in the field are not rare occurrences. My experience can be used to illuminate and illustrate the emotional process researchers who have had incidents in the field may go through. By connecting my emotions with insights from Hirschman's (1970)

theoretical framework of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*, data from my experience is “meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test...theory and explanation” (Mason, 1996: 93-94 quoted in Silverman, 2000: 131). I also make use of a journal entry written a year and a half earlier when a similar experience happened in Durban, South Africa while taking a field course on reconciliation in South Africa for one month (appendix II). This experience influenced the way I reacted in Nicaragua and provides a second data source from which to analyze emotions following an incident in the field. This gives me a richer look at my findings, making the generalizations more legitimate (Silverman, 2000: 133).

Ultimately, this chapter argues that danger cannot be planned out of research. Fortunately, the research process can better manage risk if institutions prepare and support researchers and if individuals are equipped with decision-making strategies and are prepared for emotional reactions before entering the field. This chapter attempts to fill the gaps in the current literature and conventional research process highlighted in the previous chapters and attempts to draw focus to important issues that future research should consider. It also aims to open a discussion about the strategies that institutions should provide and that researchers should have before entering the field.

## **5.2 Literature**

As previously stated, the current academic literature seems to lack comprehensive strategies for both institutions and lone researchers (see also Chapter Three). Some authors have started the process of creating strategies that can inform the creation of more comprehensive strategies in the future. Sampson and Thomas (2003) highlight the importance of maintaining good relations with gatekeepers while Nilan (2002) notes the value of local advice and knowledge. Boynton (2002) also contributes by creating safety strategies for research on prostitution in the red light district. Outside of this literature, most suggestions are only brief words of advice. In fact, decision-making strategies have on the whole ignored the social researcher, who is sometimes considered a “pen-pushing middle class” researcher not in significant danger (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 201). Pragmatic and comprehensive strategies for researchers are for the most part currently lacking in literature about safety in the field.

### 5.3 Theorizing Emotional Reactions to Incidents in the Field- *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty?*

My personal experience and the substantive literature highlight a decision-making process that individuals face after experiencing a dangerous event. To begin to analyze this process, I have made use of Hirschman's (1970) book *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, which investigates industrial relations. While these relations may seem different than decision-making in the field, the framework Hirschman develops is useful in enabling me to talk about my experience analytically and legitimizing my emotional experience in an academic forum. Hirschman's framework is also a useful way to look at emotions because it facilitates a systemization of the emotions and an exploration of how these emotions influence decisions during research. In my case it gives me the opportunity to not only talk about my emotions but also to use them to create strategies and prepare other researchers for emotions and decisions they may face in the field. Throughout this chapter, I will thus use Hirschman's framework when discussing my experience.

The first category in Hirschman's framework is "exit," which is making the decision to completely leave the situation one faces. In terms of research, this could include the current situation, the field setting in general, or the topic and research in general. The second choice is "voice," which is "an attempt to change rather than escape from an objectionable state of affairs" (Hirschman, 1970: 31). For researchers this could mean writing about the dangerous experience, complaining to the sending institution about the safety provided or preparation given to the researcher, or telling other people to avoid either the field or research in general. The final factor in decision-making is "loyalty." Loyalty influences both exit and voice because if one is loyal, they are less likely to exit and more likely to use the option of voice (Hirschman, 1970: 77; 97). People remain loyal as long as they can expect a positive return or that "*something* will happen to improve matters" (Hirschman, 1970: 78; emphasis in original text). For a researcher, this could be loyalty to the field or individuals in the field, loyalty to the topic of research, or loyalty to their institution.

## 5.4 Discussing My Experiences

I will make use of my journal entries and e-mails with my advisor to look at my experience and discuss the emotions researchers can feel if an incident occurs. I will also make reference to Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 (shown below), which depict the violent incident I experienced, my exit from the field, my loyalty to my original topic, and the activation of my voice and exit from my topic respectively (reproductions of Table 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, and 4.3.1 in Chapter Four).

### *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in My Research Experience*

**Table 5.1**

Violent encounter in Nicaragua after six days
---

**Table 5.2**

Exited the field before steps 7 and 8 (Table 1.1, Chapter 1)
--

**Table 5.3**

Returned to step 1 of conventional research, remained loyal to topic
--

**Table 5.4**

March 22, 2006: Presented a paper about my experience entitled “Safety in the Field” at a conference called “Methodologies in Peace Research” at the University of Tromsø. This presentation activated my voice and highlighted my interest on the issue of safety and the importance of discussing it in an academic setting
---

### 5.4.1 Immediate Reaction to Violent Incidents in Nicaragua (Table 5.1) and South Africa

First it is important to describe what happened to me in the field and how I reacted physically and emotionally. This can help explain the decisions I made and also encourage others begin to think how they might react in such a situation. It also answers my second research question by identifying what can be learned from risks in the field. Finally, describing my experience also gives me a chance to voice my experience and warn other researchers about the areas where I faced violence. My incidents in the field started in an ironic way. Both in Nicaragua and South Africa I had noble intentions, much like peace researchers entering the field in hopes of finding a way to create peace. In Nicaragua I was walking with my guide to the Park of Peace (appendix I: 2-4) while in South Africa I was studying reconciliation (appendix II: 65-66). Unfortunately, I

found neither peace nor reconciliation. Instead I was violently mugged ironically near the Park of Peace in Nicaragua and while attempting to learn about reconciliation in South Africa.

In Nicaragua two men attacked my guide and me by running at us and waving a large machete in the air (appendix I: 4-6). In South Africa, the experience was more violent with three men surrounding me and holding a knife at my stomach after I tried to escape by elbowing one of the men in the face (appendix II: 13-14, 19). In both cases they took money and possessions and ran away (appendix I: 6-12; appendix II: 14-19). My immediate reaction was different in the two cases. The first time it happened, in South Africa, I stood in shock and “after a moment chased after them across the street without looking and into an alley” to an abandoned house they ran into (appendix II: 20-22). After seeing a number of men at the entrance of the house, I decided not to enter and instead stood frozen in shock: “My hands were shaking, my eyes darting, and I felt my rectum shrink and tighten into oblivion” (appendix II: 24-25). In Nicaragua, the actual experience “just felt normal” (appendix I: 12). “I didn’t feel particularly threatened and knew exactly what to do” (appendix I: 12-13). I had the physical reaction to run away, but instead I stayed there talking my guide through the experience, trying to keep her calm (appendix I: 8-9).

The role of gender is interesting to consider in my immediate reactions in both South Africa and Nicaragua. In South Africa, I was walking with three female classmates and felt the need to walk behind them as a way to watch and protect them (appendix II: 10-11). When someone started to steal the bag of one of the girls, I reacted verbally and physically trying to protect her (appendix II: 13-14). My reaction may not have been the reason I was robbed, but it definitely resulted in the robbery being a violent incident (appendix II: 14). In Nicaragua, I was with a female guide, and before the mugging I looked to her for advice, even asking numerous times if it was safe to walk (appendix I: 4). Since she was the expert, I trusted her judgment. However, when the mugging took place, I suddenly felt like the expert and felt the need to “talk her through it in my mind” instead of fleeing the situation (appendix I: 7-8). As I argued in Chapter Three, gender often shapes the dangers present in the field (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). My experience also shows how gender can shape the reaction to incidents in the field. This can be useful knowledge for anyone entering the field and preparing for risks they may face and reaction they may have.

### **5.4.2 Role Reversal: Becoming the Traumatized Subject**

In the current safety literature, researchers are warned about protecting the research subject and avoiding causing them trauma (see also Chapter Three). In my experience, however, my role was changed from the researcher to the traumatized subject when reporting the incident to the police. In both South Africa and Nicaragua, the police acted as irresponsible researchers in a way, forcing me to relive the incident without regards to my emotions (appendix I: 14-17; appendix II: 29-44). This demonstrated to me the importance of protecting the research subjects, but it also shows how researchers themselves can be put in situations of being a traumatized subject. Thus, safety literature and research preparation should not exclusively focus on the research subject, but instead should also prepare researchers for the emotional trauma they could face in the field.

In South Africa, this trauma was extreme to the point that surviving my time with the police was more traumatic than actually being mugged. I waited outside of the abandoned building where the people who had mugged me ran into. At first, police would not even stop to help me (appendix II: 29), and I was forced to rely on the help of a cab driver and an extremely racist Afrikaner man who made me feel less secure than I already was (appendix II: 26-29). When the police did arrive, they led me into the abandoned building and began a door-to-door search with their guns raised looking “ready to kill” (appendix II: 30-36). They were throwing around the squatters who were living there making it seem probable that the numerous people in the building might attack the police and me, the white boy following them (appendix II: 32-33). They seemed to forget about me, and I felt very unsafe in the dark hallways surrounded by people who were angry at the invasion (appendix II: 31-32). I also was forced to ride around the neighborhood with the police who were cursing about the Nigerians and threatening to “kill them all” (appendix II: 40-41). As the subject to the police, I felt extremely traumatized by my time with them.

In Nicaragua, I was again forced into the role of subject when talking with the police. There was no violent search for the people who mugged us, but the police actually took us back to the exact

spot it happened to have us describe precisely what occurred: “The weird part was they drove us back to where it happened and had us stand where we stood when it happened. They drew a little map, which I think they needed because none of the streets in Managua have names” (appendix I: 14-16). This reenactment did little to comfort me and instead made me feel like a traumatized respondent forced to replay an event I wanted to forget.

### **5.4.3 Exit from the Field (Table 5.2)**

After the incidents passed, I felt an overwhelming urge to exit the field. In South Africa this was not a problem because my course was leaving the same afternoon. I rejoined the group, got on the bus, and was driven away from the site of the incident to a black township about an hour away. It was ironic that these townships, which are supposedly dangerous areas especially for white people, was the place where I first calmed down and felt safe again among people who wanted to comfort me (appendix II: 50-57).

In Nicaragua, I returned to my bed and breakfast after the incident where I wrote my journal entry and expressed a need to leave the field: “Now I don’t know what to do. I don’t want to be here. I don’t feel safe and feel confined to this tiny neighborhood. Plus, I’m feeling very alone” (appendix I: 17-18). Without my safety, I wanted to exit as quickly as possible. I had been isolated to a four-block area around the church (appendix I: 2), but after getting mugged, even walking in this supposedly safe area frightened me. In my journal entry, I seemed to work through the issues in my head worrying first that exiting the field might be a “cop out, the easy decision,” but I justify it to myself arguing that “being safe and with people who care for me seems like what I need, more than proving to myself or others that I can survive here” (appendix I: 21-23). Ultimately I decided in my journal that “I think I’m going to go home” and I waited for my mom to call to tell her to book me airline tickets out of Nicaragua (appendix: 20-21). I felt guilty leaving the field, but since I had only been in Nicaragua for six days, I had little loyalty to the place or the people there. It is quite possible that my loyalty to the field would have been greater had I spent more time in the field before the mugging occurred. Without any overwhelming loyalty to Nicaragua and without a feeling of safety, I decided to leave the field and was home almost 24 hours after the mugging occurred.

#### **5.4.4 Second Conventional Research Attempt- Loyalty to the Original Topic (Table 5.3)**

Although I had little loyalty to Nicaragua, I did feel both internal and external loyal to my research with the apparent hope of the positive return of being acknowledged as a successful researcher. I had spent six months preparing for my work, and I wanted to prove to myself, and to professors and classmates, that I could succeed at social science research. This desire to prove myself even led me to apologize to my advisor for bothering her with the news of the mugging I experienced (appendix III). Internally, I wanted to remain loyal to my original convictions and research project. Externally I wanted to complete my research in accordance with the requirements and expectations of my program and professors. Four days after returning home, I wrote my advisor with new research ideas (appendix III). The first idea was to just focus on the donors of my original research project while the second idea was to use the data I had collected and enlarge it with more data collection at another fieldwork site (appendix III). The third option my advisor suggested was that I could exit my topic and use my experience as a new topic like I am now doing with this thesis, but after a brief exchange of e-mails (appendix III-IV), I decided to attempt to salvage my original topic with more research (Table 5.3).

Choosing to conduct more research may have been an attempt to correct what I felt was a momentary “lapse” in my research capability. Even though I said in my journal that I did not have to prove to anyone that I could survive in the field (appendix I: 21-23), I also was not eager to tell people that I had left. In this way it was similar to my experience in South Africa when I was hesitant to tell people what had happened (appendix II: 45). The fact that another fieldwork option close to home was available coupled with my pride made the decision to collect more data an attractive choice. I collected data for two months in the summer and tried to combine it with my previous data to create a “successful” product from my research.

Hirschman (1970: 78) notes that this loyalty “holds exit at bay and activates voice.” In my case it definitely held exit at bay, but as I returned to my university, I found the option for voice severely limited both internally, from myself, and externally from the research environment. Reasons for the repression of my voice were again my own pride and external pressures to be a

“successful” researcher. It also may have been my own defense mechanism. I may have wanted to forget about the Nicaragua incident, much like how I rarely talk about South Africa. In fact, I read my journal entry from South Africa for the first time when writing this chapter.

The academic environment left little room for me to discuss my experience. No counseling or debriefing was offered and discussion with classmates about the incident was also limited. I could have sought out counseling and debriefing individually, but as Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, and Kemmer (2000: 134) note, without a “responsive and supportive culture, which acknowledges upfront that researchers may experience emotions during and after fieldwork, a research fellow may feel that it is inappropriate to share problems or admit distress for fear of losing face.” Additionally, gender could have played a role in my repression (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 134). As a man, I am supposed to be able to handle dangerous situations and not be affected by my emotions (see also Chapter Three). Talking about my emotions might have seemed to me to be “soft, subjective, irrational, passionate, dangerous, and potentially out of control: in sum, feminine” (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 123). By not talking about the experience I avoided having to risk losing my sense of masculinity. The writing process also left little room for my emotional experience. I was more concerned about data collection, concepts, and theory like a “good” researcher than considering the role of emotions as a source knowledge generation (Hubbard, Backet-Milbrun, Kemmer, 2000: 126; see also Chapter Two).

#### **5.4.5 Activating My Voice (Table 5.4)**

My voice was repressed internally and externally until March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 when I had an opportunity to share my voice at a conference organized by my advisor Diane Lister entitled “Methodologies in Peace Research” at the University of Tromsø. For the conference I prepared a paper entitled “Safety in the Field: Experience and Recommendations” that would give other researchers some basic safety strategies based on my experience in Nicaragua (Meyer, 2007). Preparing the paper was a mechanical process. I wrote a bit about what happened and what other people should do to better ensure their safety.

Actually presenting the paper, however, proved to be a turning point in my research (Table 5.4). When I presented the paper, I did so in a humorous manner, almost acting out the experience instead of simply talking about it. In retrospect I can identify that the humor was an unintentional defense mechanism to help me avoid actually discussing the uncomfortable topic and reliving the memories. The audience seemed to use laughter in the same way, laughing as I acted out the mugging, perhaps to help them avoid dealing with the uncomfortable topic. Despite presenting in an uplifting manner, I felt my heart rate rise and had difficulty making eye contact with people when telling the story. I am not typically one to get nervous in front of a crowd, so it was a new ordeal for me. The question and answer period of the presentation was when I realized that I had been repressing my emotions and voice. People asked about why I presented in a humorous way. I answered rather quickly that maybe it was because of post-traumatic stress, to which a number of people in the audience laughed, perhaps to again cover their discomfort. Another audience member asked if perhaps my humor was a way for me to talk about the experience as a man without losing my feelings of masculinity (see also the discussion in 5.4.4).

These questions disarmed me and the emotions I felt caught me off guard. I did not realize how difficult it was for me to talk about my experience in a serious manner and how big of influence it had on me. The audience members encouraged me to focus my research on my incidents in the field and the emotions I felt because of it. They noted that it seemed like an important event to me and also that it was important to talk about, as a number of them had also had incidents in the field. The conference thus gave me a validation of my experience. I was able to talk about it in an academic way and my emotions were validated as legitimate since others had felt similar emotions after incidents in the field. I spent the Easter holiday reflecting on the conference and trying to decide if I wanted to exit my original topic. After thinking about it for a week, I finally overcame my loyalty to my original research process. Thanks to the validation of my experience and emotions, I decided to exit my original topic and use my voice to draw attention to what I realized were important issues to me, namely safety and managing risk.

## **5.5 Managing Risk with Decision-Making Strategies**

My research experience and subsequent emotions have been explored with the use of Hirschman's (1970) framework. It is now important to use this data to help other researchers manage risk and ideally achieve safety. Risk will never be planned out of research, but using personal experience and substantive literature to develop decision-making strategies for institutions and lone researchers can help better manage risk. These strategies are "a fundamental aspect of social relations" that "imply the presence of conscious and rational decisions involving a long-term perspective" (Crow, 1989: 19). Strategies take into account power dynamics and choices available to actors in a particular setting. As Morgan (1989: 26) explains:

"The term 'strategy'...can be quite explicitly a sociological tool...based upon a careful assessment of outcomes and the resources and constraints available to social actors at any one particular period. Theoretically, its merit lies in the way in which it recognizes the presence of powerful constraints."

Ideally, these strategies will create space for the researcher's voice, legitimize exit for researchers when they feel it is necessary, and avoid unhealthy loyalty to the field, topic or institution. These strategies combined with practical strategies and recommendations from literature and my own experience will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

### **5.5.1 Institutional and Personal Research Constraints**

Strategy making is formulating a decision based on the existing context. However, institutions and lone researchers face very different contextual constraints, which necessitates different types of strategies. Institutes are limited by the fact that they are not in the field with the researcher. They can provide guidelines and advice before the researcher leaves, assistance and contact during fieldwork, and debriefing and support after fieldwork. Ultimately however, the researcher leaves the protection of the institute when they enter the field (Beck, 1992), so the strategies for institutions are minimal during the fieldwork process (see Table 5.5). Researchers are forced to face situations that cannot be predicted and act in the changing context of the field.

The unpredictable nature of fieldwork means that lone researchers need decision-making strategies (see Table 5.6) that are less prescriptive than the strategies that institutions should consider (see Table 5.5). The different constraints for institutions and lone researchers make it worthwhile to separate and develop strategies for the two actors.

### 5.5.2 Talking Points

It is important to remember that there is no checklist or one-size fits all strategy that can protect researchers, but in response to the first research question, thinking through the issues of safety before entering the field will help prepare the researcher to manage the risks they may face. Thus, the strategies and ideas presented below in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 should be seen as talking points that can be modified, expanded, and specialized depending on the context of the institute and researcher. There are undoubtedly other strategies or techniques that could be added to help researchers, but these talking points are a good starting point for any institution or researcher.

**Table 5.5** **Safety Strategies for Institutions**

<b>Before Entering the Field</b>	<b>During Fieldwork</b>	<b>Exiting the Field</b>
- Review board or ethics committee reviews research design	- Offer support and contact for researchers	- Support researcher’s decision
- Code of practice established with attention paid to researcher’s safety		- Provide counseling, debriefing, and support upon return
- Provide financial support for safety items		- Allow space for the researcher’s voice in the writing process
- Offer support and contact for researchers		
- De-emphasize data and “exotic” fieldwork		
- Include safety and risk management in fieldwork preparation		
- Validate emotions as legitimate knowledge		

### Safety Strategies for Lone Researchers

**Table 5.6**

<b>Before Entering the Field</b>	<b>During Fieldwork</b>	<b>Exiting the Field</b>
- Use detailed planning	- Trust your senses	- Weigh risks and acknowledge loyalty before exiting
- Evaluate risks	- Take necessary precautions	- Activate voice
- Plan for the worst	- Realize bad things happen	
	- Be flexible in research	

#### **5.6 Institutional Strategies (Table 5.5)**

The protection of the institute is absent when the researcher leaves for fieldwork, but before they embark on their research, institutions have the ability and responsibility to prepare researchers (CVCP 1995: 1 as quoted in Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 326). Additionally, institutions have the ability to support researchers upon their return from the field. Currently institutions often leave issues of safety to the researcher's own common sense (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 322) or even argue that researchers need to experience "rope burns" to learn the "ropes" of research (Sanders quoted in Lee, 1993: 121). It is absurd, however, to think that researchers should endure painful "memories and regrets" like I experienced for the sake of learning (appendix II: 58-62). Instead, institutions should do all they can to help researchers manage risks in the field. This recommendation comes from my experience on having only one lecture on safety in the field before the fieldwork experience and being left to navigate issues thereafter on my own.

I had very few expectations of what the institution should provide me as a researcher before I entered the field. It is a reasonable expectation, however, for institutes to have internal review boards or ethics committees that help prepare researchers for the field and ensure that research designs adequately manage risks. These bodies should develop codes of practice that give

researchers general guidelines on how to handle a variety of situations (Sieber, 1992 quoted in VanderStaay, 2005). Many codes of practice exist in organizations such as the British Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association, and the American Anthropological Association, but these models were developed from medical and scientific codes and focus primarily on the research participant and not the researcher (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000). In Norway for example, the national guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences completely ignore the safety of the researcher but devote nearly one-fourth of the document to protecting research participants (NESH, 2005). Kenyon and Hawker (1999: 322) discovered a similar phenomenon when interviewing 46 experienced and professional researchers from a wide range of Western countries of which only one had received a safety code of practice. Kovats-Bernat confirms that dangerous fields are customarily approached and engaged through a broad range of improvised strategies leaving researchers to “hash out crucial matters of personal safety after already finding themselves embroiled in crisis” (2002: 2). Research institutions should be no different than scientific institutes that have a set of standardized safety procedures (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999).

A professional code of practice for researchers entering the field would dispel the myth that common sense is enough and would remove the personal burden of developing one’s own strategies (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999). It would also provide an equal level of support and guidance for all researchers and would allow researchers to focus more on their research instead of trying to reinvent a personal safety wheel every time they enter the field (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999). As Fielding (2004: 259) summarizes,

“Working in hostile research environments requires thoughtful planning, anticipating the things that may happen on each fieldwork occasion, interpersonal sensitivity in the field, and flexibility. Above all, it demands awareness that every field decision, including the decisions not to go further must be treated by reference to the *practical* application of ethical *principles*.”

Ideally, institutions should create these principles as a basis for the decision-making strategies of lone researchers. In fact, the UK Council of Vice Chancellors and Principles (CVCP)

recommendations demand that “Universities must exercise a ‘duty of care’ to employees and to those they supervise’- a duty that is ‘recognized in both criminal and civil law’ (CVCP 1995: 1 as quoted in Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 326). This means that safety should not be the responsibility of the researcher or their often-used informal support systems of friends and family (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999). As Punch (1994) summarize: “no one in his or her right mind would support a carefree, amateurship, and unduly naive approach to qualitative research” (quoted in VanderStaay, 2005: 406).

Practically, institutions should also remove any financial issues that may increase risk. Funds for safe transportation, housing, and local liaisons are important for the safety of the researcher. Other safety items such as mobile phones, official stationary, and other practical items should be provided. If institutes are trying to save money, safety items should be the last thing cut from the budget.

Research institutions must also be more supportive of their researches and should take safety seriously in the form of support before, during, and after field activities in the form of communication, debriefing, and counseling (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). Institutes should also be available for contact while the researchers are conducting fieldwork. Regular contact via e-mail or phone can help the researcher feel less alone and can provide emotions and practical support for the researcher such as I received from my advisor following my fieldwork experience (appendix III-IV). The researchers are ultimately alone in the field, but institutions should be accessible when help or advice is needed.

### **5.6.1 Legitimizing Exit, Minimizing Unhealthy Loyalty, Creating Space for Voice**

Institutions can greatly relieve the external and internal pressures researchers face by concentrating on the milieu of the institution. There should be a de-emphasis by institutes on collecting extensive amount of exotic data to be successful because this external pressure can push researchers into dangerous areas against their better judgment. It is valuable to conduct research in areas of risk (Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000: 199), but not appropriate to pressure researchers into these situations against their will. These external pressures can also lead to

internal pressures such as an unhealthy loyalty to the field or subject (Hirschman, 1970; Gurney, 1985; Sluka, 1995; Sampson and Thomas, 2003). Researchers may feel like I did and worry about failing if they take the “easy decision” and exit the field (appendix I: 21). In my experience, my self-imposed pressure to prove myself as a researcher led to an obsession with data collection and loyalty to the original research design. Although my loyalty kept me tied to the topic for a long period of time, it did not prevent my exit from the field. Other researchers, however, may feel either external or internal pressure to remain loyal to field, putting themselves in dangerous situations. Institutions can reduce this pressure and improve the safety of the researchers by de-emphasizing loyalty to data and the field setting and legitimizing exit from the field if the researcher feels the need to exit.

My inability to discuss and process my experience points to a need for institutions to create space for the voice of the researchers. Increasing the importance of safety and risk management in the research process and including discussions on decision-making strategies could create space for the researcher’s voice. It would also prepare researchers for risks they may face and legitimize discussions about safety before and during fieldwork. If safety is seen as common sense that researchers are expected to manage like it was in my experience, they are unlikely to talk about their experience due to the risk of being seen as a failure. Putting safety and risk management on the agenda of research preparation would practically prepare researchers and help to create space for them to voice their difficulties and problems. This voice can help the institutions continue to refine and improve their safety preparation and can help other researchers who may enter a similar field.

Validating emotions as knowledge would also create a forum for the voice of the researcher. Creating space for this voice would make it less likely for researchers to exit a topic because they would find academic forums an adequate mode of dealing with their experiences. Besides deepening researcher (see also Chapter Two), emotions can help researchers make decisions in the field. Often “gut feelings” like the ones I experienced are ignored because they seem illogical (appendix I: 3-4, appendix II: 8-10). However, in my experience these emotions are an important indicator of danger. Helping researchers to validate, recognize, and use this indicator could help them avoid some dangerous situations.

## **5.7 Strategies for Lone Researchers (Table 5.6)**

The lone researcher is the researcher that enters the field without the support or protection of other colleagues. Ideally, traveling with others, working in teams, and informing people where you are going and when you expect to return can greatly enhance the safety of the research setting, but these options are often absent for the lone researcher (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 322-324). Thus, it is important to create practical strategies to help the lone researcher manage risks they may face from the ambient fieldwork setting.

### **5.7.1 Practical Strategies for the Lone Researcher Before Entering the Field**

A research design is the beginning of the research process and should be the first step to ensure safety in the field. The research design should be well researched so the fieldworker knows the situation of their site and potential dangers. It should also incorporate locals as much as possible. Having local guides and informants can help steer the researcher away from dangerous situations that may not be noticed by an outsider. In South Africa, researching the area or traveling with a local would have taught me that I should have avoided the street I was on (appendix II: 5-7). Detailed planning can go a long way in preventing wandering into dangerous situations.

Before entering the field, it is also important to, as realistically as possible, evaluate risks. Almost every type of research will have some degree of risk, and it is important to acknowledge this and ask if it is an acceptable level of danger for the researcher (Sluka, 1995: 282). Making this decision will depend on the researcher and what they are willing to do for their research. In Nicaragua, I made a detailed research design (see also Table 4.2 in Chapter Four) but did not consider the risks ahead of time. Considering the risks of crime in Nicaragua may have helped me to reconsider my fieldwork or to be more cautious upon arrival. Evaluating risks also will help the researcher to be more prepared to make a decision on leaving the field if necessary. Identifying an acceptable level of danger will give the researcher some idea of the threshold of risk. If this threshold were crossed, the fieldworker would know they should consider leaving

the field. This strategy allows the researcher to combine their emotional knowledge in the moment with their intellectual knowledge gathered before fieldwork to make a decision on whether or not to exit the field in the case of an incident. Useful ways to evaluate the risks of the field include talking to people with direct experience in the country and discussing potential dangers with advisers and colleagues. In the best-case scenario, the researcher can take an exploratory visit to the field to see if it feels like it would be a productive and safe project (Sluka, 1995: 282). This is not always possible, but any chance to learn about potential risks will help the researcher make safe decisions on what to research, where to go, and how to conduct the research.

Finally, before entering the field, it is useful to create a plan of exit and a back-up research plan. The plan of exit should ideally be a way to get of dangerous situations by for instance having the number of a taxi driver or someone who can assist the researcher exit. It is also helpful to know how to exit the field completely if necessary by knowing airplane, train, or bus times and routes. In Nicaragua I did not have a plan of exit, so when I felt in danger I was less in control and had to rely on others to help me exit the situation (appendix I: 4). After I was mugged, I had to rely on my family in the United States to do all the planning for me to exit the field (appendix I: 24). They were able to secure a ticket for me on a flight the next day. However, I should have planned ahead and had the number of the airline company as well as the departure times so I would have been able to make arrangements if my parents were not able to help me.

The back-up research plan is useful for academic purposes. When I was debating whether or not to leave the field, the loyalty to my research weighed on my mind (appendix I: 20-23). Although it was not enough of a reason for me to stay, it is very possible that as a researcher gets attached to their work and pressures themselves to succeed, they may become overly loyal and unwilling to exit, even if safety demands that they leave. Thus, researchers should create a back-up research plan looking at ways they could use their preparation and perhaps some of their fieldwork in a different way than originally expected if they decide to exit the field. I did not plan ahead in my case, but I attempted to salvage some of my research after exiting the field (appendix VI). I had already conducted interviews with South Dakotan participants in the Nicaragua program and tried to use these preparatory interviews as the research itself (appendix

III). I also conducted fieldwork at Pine Ridge, SD in order to expand my data and in an attempt to remain loyal to my topic (appendix VI). This experience was personally rewarding, but it was too short and piecemeal to be of value for my research. If I had a backup plan before going to Nicaragua I could have more easily changed my research design.

### **5.7.2 Practical Strategies for the Lone Researcher During Fieldwork**

Although common sense is not enough preparation for fieldwork (Kenyon and Hawker, 1999: 314), it is one of the most important tools a researcher has in the field. It is important to listen to advice from locals, but ultimately researchers are left to defend themselves in the risk society based on their own senses. Both times I have been in unsafe situations I have recognized it (appendix I: 4; appendix II: 8-10). However, it is easy to cast off these premonitions and ignore what your body is telling you, especially when you have been taught to exclusively use your mind (see also Chapter Two). It is when I ignored these feelings that something bad happened. As Sluka (1995: 285) warns in *Fieldwork Under Fire*, “while you are in the field, do not grow complacent about the dangers you face, and do not treat the situation as a game or adventure. Do not ignore potential threats when they arise: they rarely just “go away” if you ignore them.” Ideally, researchers can learn to cope with ambient dangers in the field by “developing a sensitivity to potentially hazardous situations informed by an acquired knowledge and awareness of what constitutes danger in the context of a specific field” (Kovats-Bernat, 2002: 5). Researchers should strive to supplement their intellectual knowledge with their feelings or sensory knowledge, even if it intellectually seems overly precautionary, because it truly is better to be safe than sorry.

Along with trusting one’s senses, researchers need to be willing to take necessary precautions both in situations that feel dangerous and also before entering areas that could plausibly be dangerous. This is difficult at times because researchers in the field often want to be a part of the culture as much as possible. They want to relate to their research subjects and live like them as I tried to do in my research experience. There are times however when the researcher needs to be willing to act as the outsider they actually are. This often takes the form of spending a little bit more money. Before being mugged in both Nicaragua and South Africa, I had considered that I

should take a taxi to exit what I felt was a dangerous situation but ignored the feelings or was talked out of it (appendix I: 4). Taking a taxi instead of walking or accepting the fact that it is necessary to walk with a group of people are concessions that may have to be made for safety's sake. It is important to accept that even though the researcher may want to be a part of the culture, they will most often look and act like a foreigner. It is important to be culturally sensitive, but it is equally important to acknowledge that as a foreigner extra precautions must be taken.

The researcher should also acknowledge that bad things do happen, despite preparations and precautions. In hindsight it is easy to dwell on "all the things I could have done differently," but it is not possible to prevent or plan for every situation (appendix II: 58-62). As Sluka (1995: 289) argues somewhat morbidly, "some dangers may be beyond management. Despite your best efforts at danger management, simple bad luck can sometimes result in the termination of the research or worse yet the termination of the research." Conducting fieldwork in dangerous environments is a combination of both skill and luck. "Good luck can sometimes help overcome a lack of skill, and well-developed skills can go far to help overcome the effects of bad luck. But sometimes no amount of skill will save one from a gross portion of bad luck" (Sluka, 1995: 289). Planning before entering the field and being prepared to handle dangerous situations in the field can help improve safety, but ultimately, "danger is not a purely 'technical' problem and is never totally manageable" (Sluka, 1995: 289).

Flexibility is also an important for danger management. The researcher may realize once in the field that the planned methods and goals may not be done safely. Thus, researchers must be prepared to modify or even exit their work (Sluka, 1995: 285). As Polsky (1967) notes, the "final rule is to have few unbreakable rules" (quoted in Sluka, 1995: 285). He notes that unanticipated and ambiguous situations will arise for which one has no clear behavioral plan at all, and the researcher should be ready to revise plans accordingly (Sluka, 1995: 285). Sometimes however, like in my experience, there is not time to modify how the researcher acts in the field before an incident occurs.

### 5.7.3 Considering Exit

Besides planning ahead of time and during fieldwork, it is also important for researchers to think about what they would do if something would happen in the field. No set of standards can tell lone researchers when or if they should exit the field. Instead researchers should do their best to accurately measure the level of danger and decide if it is too great to continue. In doing so, both intellectual knowledge and emotional knowledge are important to consider. In my experience emotions dominated my decision, as the overarching theme in my journal of “I don’t feel safe” acknowledges (appendix I: 20). Even though I did a poor job of combining my emotions with intellectual knowledge, I did attempt to base my exit in part on a more intellectual basis, even though it was still shaped by emotions: “I’m feeling very alone and frustrated that my research will not really amount to anything, especially if I can’t get to know the people the programs are supposed to help” (appendix I: 18-20). This statement seems to recognize some desire to make the decision based on reason as well as emotion.

Based on my experience, adequate preparation for researchers should include thinking about “what if” scenario because following a violent encounter it is difficult to clearly weigh options and assess the situation. Preparing the intellectual knowledge before entering the field will allow it to be better combined with the emotions a researcher may feel after an incident occurs. It is difficult to not let emotions take over after a frightening incident in the field. In my case, I made my decision to exit the field very quickly based largely on my emotions (appendix I: 17-24). However, based on my experience I would recommend that researchers take a short amount of time, if it is physically safe, to consider whether or not to exit the field. If I could do redo my decision-making process again, I would spend more time in the safe confines of my bed and breakfast room to process the experience and combine it more with intellectual knowledge before making a decision to exit the field. In the end, I think I would have arrived at the same decision, but I would have doubted my decision less if I had taken more time in making it. It is quite possible however that the emotional danger or loss of safety that researchers feel may be too great to stay in the field. Sometimes, it is necessary for the researcher’s emotional or physical health to immediately exit.

#### 5.7.4 Activating Voice

If a violent event does occur, it is important to voice the experience. There is a natural tendency to want to forget what happened and to be “hesitant to tell the story” as I was in South Africa, but it is important that the researcher uses their voice to discuss the incident (appendix II: 45). Based on my experience, using voice helps the researcher to begin to process and deal with emotions attached to the experience (see also section 5.4.5). This can help them begin to address their emotional health, ideally with the support of their institution.

Talking or writing about the event also helps to place violence in a context. It is possible that what the researcher perceives as an isolated, random act of violence can tell something of the context of the culture or people when considered with the experience of other researchers. As Pieke (1995: 76-77) notes, incidents in the field:

are related because they take place in the same social and cultural setting and may even be causally connected. More important, subsequent...accidents may be experienced by the same field-worker. The efforts of the ethnographer to make sense of what seem to be random accidents at first sight are similar to the creative interpretive work native actors engage in to make sense of their world. Earlier events provide (part of) the interpretation of later ones and take on new meaning in the light of later experiences.

Telling about the experience can be important for future researchers to prepare them for the risks they face and to help them learn what to do and what not to do. The information from researchers can also improve the safety preparation institutions provide and remind them about the importance of managing risk. This thesis is one example of attempting to use voice to draw attention to the need to take safety seriously in my own institute. If researchers share the challenges they face in the field, institutions could feel more pressure to give more attention to preparing researchers for managing the risks they could face.

Voice is also important for the methodological aspect of research. Incidents in the field can change the methodology and maybe even the topic of research (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn,

Kemmer, 2000). These field experiences should be explained because they “are likely to influence and inform our understandings of the topic” (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn, Kemmer, 2000: 121). Using voice to express emotions from the field can also enhance the research because emotions are a vital part of research (see also Chapter Two). Voicing these emotions could offer a new and valuable perspective on the field and the data.

Voice also helps researchers to use incidents from the field positively. These experiences may provide an opportunity for interesting research and reflection (Peterson, 2000: 195). In my case, the incident in Nicaragua provided incentive to look into the issue of safety in the field. Had I chosen to remain loyal to my original topic, I would have relegated my experience to a single paragraph in the methodology or forgotten it altogether. Pieke (1995: 65) calls this process of using one’s experience evolving fieldwork: “Evolving fieldwork means that the “ordinary” fieldwork can prepare for a change and inform different research.” As my experience shows, an incident in the field may point the researcher to a more interesting or important area of research or an aspect of research that was not considered. In this way, if violent events are voiced they can be used positively in research to inform and expand on concepts that may not have seemed important or present in the field.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

Risks are inherent in the field, so managing risks should be the goal of both institutions and researchers (see also Chapter Three). Peace researchers especially have a need to manage risks, as the fields they enter are often areas of conflict with a heightened level of risk. Risks are not limited to peace researchers, however, and regardless of the academic field or the location of fieldwork, all researchers should consider how to best manage risks. The strategies presented in this chapter attempt to help manage these risks. Both institutions and researchers have a role to play in managing risk, each with different constraints that necessitate different strategies. These strategies aim to not only help manage risk but also to open a discussion within peace research on new methodologies and ways to improve the conventional research process (see also Chapter Four). Utilizing both substantive and experiential data, this chapter has shown that safety and risk should be an important part of any research process.



# 6

## Conclusion



Only the foolish learn from experience –  
the wise learn from the experience of others.

-Rumanian Folk Wisdom

## **6.1 Introduction**

This thesis is the product of a research process that was disrupted by violence experienced in the ambient fieldwork setting. This violent incident ultimately changed the focus of my project from foreign aid to the need to promote safety and risk management during fieldwork, especially in peace research. My unconventional research process enabled me to look with new eyes at what peace researchers may undergo in the course of their research. It also gave me the unique responsibility and opportunity to raise issues often ignored in the research process. Ideally, as the Rumanian folk wisdom notes, these discussions will enable others to learn from my experience instead of having to go through their own violent learning process.

## **6.2 Answering the Research Questions**

The stated purpose of this thesis was to answer two research questions:

1. How can researchers best manage risks encountered from the fieldwork setting?
2. What can be learned from these risks?

The first question has been answered by the creation of strategies for both researchers and institutions (see Chapter Five). These strategies identify both institutions and researchers as important to manage the risks researchers may encounter in the field. The strategies outline recommendations to help manage risk before, during, and after fieldwork. Using the strategies as a starting point for future discussions can also help lead to more ways to manage risks.

The second research question has been answered by looking reflexively at my own research experience (see Chapter Four). Analyzing my experience has shown that risk and safety should be a part of the research process (see Chapter Three) and that emotions should be validated as a source of knowledge (see Chapter Two). My experience has also shown that researchers face a variety of pressures when deciding whether to exit a topic, whether to remain loyal to a topic,

and whether or not to discuss, or voice, their experience (see Chapter Four). This framework helps use risks from the field and the reaction to these risks to inform risk management strategies. Thus, the more that is learned from risks in the field, the better future researchers can manage potential risks. This confirms the importance of voicing personal experience and openly and honestly discussing issues of risk and safety.

### **6.3 Theoretical, Practical, and Academic Implications**

This thesis has raised a number of theoretical, practical, and academic issues. One of the theoretical issues raised in the thesis is the value of the emotions of the researcher in the research process. This thesis has argued that emotions should be recognized as a valid source of knowledge that can contribute to academic work. Recognizing emotions has academic implications because it can improve research and lead to new insights about a research topic. Legitimizing emotional knowledge can highlight aspects of the field experience that researchers may ignore due to fears of being seen as weak or unable to withstand the “rope burns” of fieldwork (see Chapter Three). This thesis has proposed that one way to begin to analyze the emotions of the field researcher is through Hirschman’s (1970) lens of *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Through this lens, legitimizing emotions as knowledge can enable the activation of the researcher’s voice. This voice is an important way for the researcher to process their experience and deal with any negative incidents they may have had during fieldwork. Practically, activating voice is helpful in preventing researchers from exiting a topic. If there is not space for emotions in research, it is more likely that researchers will exit the topic or ignore emotionally sensitive portions of the research (see Chapter Five). Conversely, helping researchers to use their presentation of data as a way to deal with their experiences can actually increase their loyalty to the subject by providing the possibility that remaining loyal can positively benefit the researcher emotionally and academically.

This thesis has also highlighted the current lack of substantive literature dealing with the safety of the researcher and the lack of focus placed on safety and risk management in the research process and preparation for fieldwork. The well-being of the research participant has been the focus of most of the literature about safety, but this thesis has noted the importance of caring for

the researcher as well. Risk can never be removed from research, but it can be effectively managed with careful preparation and decision-making strategies. Both researchers and institutions can better manage risk through the use of such strategies (see Chapter Five). It is impossible to predict every risk in the field and there is no one-size fits all solution to risk, but through basic preparation, a focus on safety and risk management in the research process, and decision-making strategies, researchers will be better equipped when entering the field. This thesis has attempted to begin formulating these practical strategies based on substantive literature and personal experience. The importance of emotions and experience in research is thus demonstrated in the process of creating these strategies, which are based on both substantive literature and personal experience and emotions.

#### **6.4 Relevance to Peace Studies**

The findings of this thesis are especially relevant and important to peace studies. The nature of peace studies encourages research in conflict areas and leads peace researchers to areas of heightened risk. Safety and risk management should be a major focus for any research process, but especially for research in the area of peace studies. This thesis is also important for peace studies because of the implicit goal in peace studies to promote peace (Galtung, 1996: 10). One aspect of peace is the physical, emotional, and psychological health of not only the research participant, but also the researcher. Peace studies, more than other areas, has a responsibility to not only create peace through its research but also maintain peace and peace of mind for the researchers in the process of conducting research.

#### **6.5 Implications for Future Research**

This thesis has opened up a discussion that lays the foundation for future research. The idea of accepting the emotions of the researcher as valid knowledge in opposition to objective facts is a concept that deserves further exploration. Considering emotions as a valid source of knowledge could expand research in a variety of fields including, but not limited to, peace studies. While it may be considered controversial, validating emotions as knowledge could lead to an exciting marriage between current research on emotions and traditional academic fields such as

anthropology, political science, and development studies. This thesis has also laid groundwork for further academic study in the area of risk and safety. Research on ambient risks and the safety of the researcher are topics that can be expanded in future research. Finally, this thesis has also attempted to begin formulating strategies that institutions and researchers could use before, during, and after fieldwork. These recommendations are by no means comprehensive nor a one-size fits all strategy, but they are a useful starting point. The proposed strategies should be expanded, refined, and tailored to the local needs of the researcher and the institution. Future research could take these strategies as a talking point for research and policy formation.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Safety is an important consideration in all aspects of modern society, but especially important for peace researchers who often find themselves located within an enhanced risk society (see Chapter Three). The old saying that “it only has to happen once” (or in my case, twice) is a scary reminder of the importance of safety. However, safety does not have to be a horror story. Instead, methodical strategies can be implemented to help researchers and institutions manage risks. Emotions, substantive literature, and the experience of others can help in formulating useful strategies. This thesis has operated as a forum for me to share my experience and attempt to improve the safety of other researchers, so they do not have to go through the emotional rollercoaster that I rode. Although the writing process itself has been an emotional ride, it has only strengthened my belief that I am obligated to share my emotions and experience. It is my hope that this knowledge will be useful to others and will live on long after this thesis is placed on the shelf.

# 7 Bibliography



- Adelman, Carol C (2003). "The Privatization of Foreign Aid: Reassessing National Largesse." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 82, Iss. 6, 9-14.
- Baert, Patrick (2005). *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U., A. Giddens, and S. Lash (1994). *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Beck, U. and E. Beck-Gernsheim (1996) "Individualization and 'Precarious Freedoms': Perspectives and Controversies of a Subject-orientated Sociology", in P. Heelas, S. Lash and P. Morris (eds) *Detraditionalization: Critical Reflections on Authority and Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Birdsall, Nancy, Dani Rodrik and Arvind Subramanian (Jul/Aug 2005). "How to Help Poor Countries." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 84. Iss. 4. 136-152.
- Blau, Peter (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bosch, David J (1994). *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: John Wiley & Sons:
- Boynton, Petra M (2002). "Life on the Streets: The Experiences of Community Researchers in a Study of Prostitution." *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. Vol. 12, Iss. 1, 1-12.
- Brannen, Julia (eds) (1992). *Mixing Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Research*. Hants: Ashgate.
- Bryman, Alan (2002). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Second Edition.
- Bulmer, M. (1982). *Social Research Ethics*. London: Macmillan.
- Crow, Graham (1989). "The Use of the Concept of Strategy in Recent Sociological Literature." *Sociology*. Vol. 23, Iss. 1, 1-24.
- Crow, Graham and Graham Allan (1994). *Community Life: An Introduction to Local Social Relations*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Denzin, NK (1970). *Sociological Methods- A Sourcebook*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Denzin, NK and Lincoln, Yvonna (eds) (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- ELCA, "Quick Facts." Internet. Viewed 1 May 2006.  
<<http://www.elca.org/communication/quick.html>>.
- Emerson, R (1976). "Social Exchange Theory." *Annual Review of Sociology* 2. 335-362.
- Feenan, Dermot (2002). "Researching Paramilitary Violence in Northern Ireland." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 147-163.
- Fielding, Nigel (1981). *The National Front*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2004). "Working in Hostile Environments." In Clive Seale, et al. (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice*, 248-260. London: Sage Publications.
- Galtung, Johan (1996). *Peace by Peaceful Means*. London: Sage Publications.
- Gokah, Theophilus (2006). "The Naive Researcher: Doing Social Research in Africa." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 9, No. 1, 61-73. February.
- Green, L. (1995). 'Living in a State of Fear', in C. Nordstrom and A.C.G.M. Robben (eds) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Culture*, 276-294. Berkeley: University of California Press:.
- Gurney, Joan (1985). "Not One of the Guys: The Female Researcher in a Male-Dominated Setting." *Qualitative Sociology*. Vol. 8, No. 1, 42-62. March.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London: Tavistock.
- Hardin, Russell (1993). "The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust." *Politics and Society*. Vol. 21, No. 4, 505-529. December.
- Heelas, Paul, Scott Lash, and Paul Morris (1996). *Detraditionalization*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.
- Hirschman, Albert O. (1970). *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Homan, R. (1991). *The Ethics of Social Research*. London: Longman.
- Hubbard, Gill, Kathryn Backett-Milburn, and Debbie Kemmer (2001). "Working with Emotion: Issues for the Researcher in Fieldwork and Teamwork." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 4, No. 2, 119-137.
- Humphreys, L. (1970). *Tearoom Trade: A Study of Homosexual Encounters in Public Places*, London: Duckworth.

- Karp, D. and W. Yoels (1993). *Sociology and Everyday Life*. Itasca: Peacock.
- Kenyon, Elizabeth and Sheila Hawker (1999). “ ‘Once would be enough’: some reflections on the issue of safety for lone researchers.” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 2, No. 4, 313-327.
- Kovats-Bernat, J. Christopher (2002). “Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork amid Violence and Terror.” *American Anthropologist*. Vol 104, No. 1, 1-15.
- Lankshear, Gloria (2000). “Bacteria and Babies: A Personal Reflection on Researcher Risk in a Hospital.” In Lee-Treweek, Geraldine and Stephanie Linkogle (eds). *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Lareau (1996). “Common Problems in Fieldwork: A Personal Essay,” in A. Lareau and J. Shultz (eds) *Journeys through Ethnography: Realistic Accounts of Fieldwork*, 195-236. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Lee, Raymond M (1993). *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*. London: Sage Publications.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1995). *Dangerous Fieldwork*. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Vol. 34. London: Sage Publications.
- Lee-Treweek, Geraldine and Stephanie Linkogle (eds) (2000). *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Liamputtong, Pranee (2007). *Researching the Vulnerable*. London: Sage Publications.
- Lowry, Richard J (eds) (1973). *Dominance, Self-Esteem, Self-Actualization: Germinal Papers of A.H. Maslow.* Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.
- Menchú, R (1998). *Crossing Borders*. London: Verso.
- Meyer, Scott D. (2007). “Safety in the Field: Experience and Recommendations.” Presented at “Methodologies in Peace Research” conference at the University of Tromsø, Norway. March 21<sup>st</sup>-March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Conference Paper.
- Milgram, S. (1963). “A Behavioural Study of Obedience.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. Vol. 67, No. 4: 94-117.
- Molm, Linda D (1997). *Coercive Power in Social Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morgan D H J (1989). “Strategies and Sociologists: a Comment on Crow.” *Sociology*. Vol. 23, Iss. 1, 25-29.

- The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities in Norway (2005). "Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Law and the Humanities." Internet. Viewed 18 May 2007. <<http://www.etikkom.no/English/NESH>>.
- Nilan, PM (2002). " 'Dangerous Fieldwork' Re-examined: the Question of Researcher Subject Position." *Qualitative Research*. Vol. 2, No. 3, 363-386.
- Peterson, Jeff D (2000). "Sheer Foolishness: Shifting Definitions of Danger in Conducting and Teaching Ethnographic Field Research." In Lee-Treweek, Geraldine and Stephanie Linkogle (eds). *Danger in the Field: Risk and Ethics in Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Pieke, F.N. (1995) 'Witnessing the 1989 Chinese People's Movement', C. Nordstrom and A.C.G.M. Robben (eds) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Culture*, 276-294. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Roberts, Brian (2007). *Getting the Most out of the Research Experience: What Every Researcher Needs to Know*. London: Sage Publications.
- Sachs, Jefferey D (Mar/Apr 2005). "The Development Challenge." *Foreign Affairs*. Vol. 84, Iss. 2, 78.
- Sampson, H., Thomas, M. (2003). "Lone Researchers at Sea: gender, risk and responsibility" *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 165-189.
- Silverman, David (2000). *Doing Qualitative Research*. Second Edition. London: Sage Publications.
- Sluka, J.A. (1995) 'Reflections on Managing Danger in Fieldwork: Dangerous Anthropology in Belfast', in C. Nordstrom and A.C.G.M. Robben (eds) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Culture*, 276-294. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sogge, David (2002). *Give and Take*. London: Zed Books.
- Turner, Jonathan H. and Jan E. Stets (2005). *The Sociology of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 179-214.
- Urry, John (2001). *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage Publications. Second Edition.
- Vanderstaay, Steven L. (2005). "One Hundred Dollars and a Dead Man: Ethical Decision Making in Ethnographic Fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Vol. 34, No. 4, 371-409. August.
- Wallis, R. (1976). *The Road to Total Freedom: A Sociological Analysis of Scientology*. London: Heinemann Educational.

Yates, Timothy (1994). *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yin, Robert K (1984). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Young, E. and R. Lee (1996). "Fieldworker feelings as data: 'emotional work' and 'feeling rules'" in the first person accounts of sociological fieldwork. In V. James and J. Gabe (eds) *Health and the Sociology of Emotions*. Oxford: Blackwell. 97-114.

Zafirovski, Milan (2005). Social Exchange Theory under Scrutiny: A Positive Critique of its Economic-Behaviorist Formulations. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*. Electronically Retrieved: <http://www.sociology.org/content/2005/tier2/SETheory.pdf>. 2 November 2006.



8  
Appendices



**Appendix I:**  
Journal Entry 1  
Managua, Nicaragua  
2.July.2006

1 I got mugged today. Seems to be a tradition when traveling abroad. For the first time  
2 this trip I headed outside of this four block radius with Rachel. We headed to the Plaza  
3 of the Revolution. It was fine and when we decided to leave to go two blocks to the Park  
4 of Peace, I asked Rachel at least two times if it was safe. Whoops. As we walked there  
5 two guys walked at us. They separated and I could tell something was going down. One  
6 pulled out a 12-inch machete and was waving it in the air. They grabbed Rachel's bag  
7 first and I had this weird pull of wanting to run and wanting to help. I could have run  
8 away but instead I stayed there, calmly, talking her through it in my mind. "Yes just give  
9 them the bag. Stay calm." Then of course they came and got me. I made the mistake  
10 (again) of not carry cash in an easily accessible pocket, so they grabbed my camera out of  
11 a side pocket and ripped off my money belt with about \$20 and my Norwegian credit  
12 card. It was weird because it just felt normal. I didn't feel particularly threatened and  
13 knew exactly what to do. Even at the police station I knew how to fill out the forms and  
14 was prepared for their questions. The weird part was they drove us back to where it  
15 happened and had us stand where we stood when it happened. They drew a little map,  
16 which I think they needed because none of the streets in Managua have names. Well, we  
17 survived the police too. Now I don't know what to do. I don't want to be here. I don't  
18 feel safe and feel confined to this tiny neighborhood. Plus, I'm feeling very alone and  
19 frustrated that my research will not really amount to anything, especially if I can't get to  
20 know the people the programs are supposed to help because I don't feel safe. So yeah, I  
21 think I'm going to go home. Maybe it's the cop out, easy decision, but being safe and  
22 with people who care for me seems like what I need, more than proving to myself or  
23 others that I can survive here. Maybe I'll change my topic to the fair trade stuff. Who  
24 knows. Tomorrow at 9am mom calls and who knows, maybe by 9pm I'll be home.  
25 Crazy planes. Crazy world.

## Appendix II:

### Journal Entry 2

Durban, South Africa

16.January.2005

1 I have seen the dark and light side of travel in the past 24 hours and my mind is still  
2 racing. Yesterday after a fun afternoon with Des and her boyfriend Phil, Anna and I  
3 came back to the beach and met up with the Luther group. We chilled on the beach a bit.  
4 Anna then said she wanted to explore and Lindsey wanted to find a jacket. So CP, Anna,  
5 Lindsey, and I took our bags and starting walking away from the beach. We walked  
6 probably 8 blocks and it started to look a bit dodgy so we crossed the street and went into  
7 a restaurant where Lindsey got some take-away. After we left the restaurant a little kid  
8 started following us begging. I should have know that this was a sign we should get  
9 back, but instead kept saying no and ignoring him even though he was distracting and  
10 setting me up for problems. Anna, CP, and Lindsey were walking up front and I was a  
11 bit behind. We got to the corner of the street, a busy street with probably 40 people, a  
12 fruit seller, and a bus stop. Suddenly someone grabbed Lindsey's bag and took her  
13 wallet. I yelled "Hey" and turned to see who it was. Suddenly 3 guys surrounded me. I  
14 swung my elbow and hit one and then they pulled a knife and said, "Fuck you. Money."  
15 I said left pocket because I thought I had money there. They were unsatisfied with my  
16 change and as I was reaching into my money belt to get money they said, "Fuck you,  
17 bag!" The two guys behind me ripped my backpack with my journal, video camera,  
18 digital camera, and memory card, I-pod headphones, swimsuit, and kanga off while the  
19 other guy held the 12-inch knife at my lower left stomach. As soon as they got the bag  
20 they took off running and everyone just watched them. I was in shock and after a  
21 moment chased after them across the street without looking and into an alley. I saw the  
22 building they ran into called the Camden House and was ready to follow them in until I  
23 saw 10 really shady guys sitting on the steps drinking. In retrospect I should have yelled  
24 "Help, I'll pay for the bag," but I just stood there in shock...literally. My hands were  
25 shaking, my eyes darting, and I felt my rectum shrink and tighten into oblivion. Soon,  
26 the girls showed up after scattering during the mugging and an Afrikaaner man showed  
27 up and helped us get the police. He was extremely racist and cussing out blacks, but at  
28 the time he gave us a little sense of security. A cabbie showed up and we got in for  
29 safety sakes. Two street police walked by and would not help us. I was livid. Finally  
30 after 15 min the police showed up. I explained what happened and they told me to follow  
31 them into the building. It was the scariest place I've ever been. Dark narrow hallways  
32 with drunk and high people everywhere. The police were knocking on doors and  
33 throwing people around. One little girl let the police in and her parents yelled at her  
34 saying "never let the police in!" They went through the floors and supposedly had a tip  
35 that they were in the basement. They went down there and pulled their guns, starting to  
36 look ready to kill. I was freaked out. Also with me was another guy who had been  
37 robbed by the same guys. We were just looking at each other not sure what to do.  
38 Eventually someone said they ran out the front so we jumped in the police car and told  
39 the freaked out girls that I would meet them at the bus. I rode with the police for maybe  
40 10 minutes and the whole time they were saying stuff like "fucking Nigerians, we should  
41 just kill them all!" It became very apparent that it was a fruitless search so I gave

42 INSPECTOR BLOOD the info and a contact number, if any miracle would happen. I  
43 even spoke in language I thought they'd understand in terms of giving a reward, so  
44 maybe, but I doubt it.

45 I got back and was hesitant to tell the story. Was just aloof. Then the most annoying  
46 thing, the little kid who had been begging and saw me get mugged came up and asked me  
47 for money. I was pissed! I told Peter and cried a bit when he hugged me but otherwise I  
48 was tough. I called home and told Paul because mom and dad were gone. I know they're  
49 probably freakin' out now but I had to tell them and tell Paul I loved him.

50 After this insanity, I calmed down a bit and went out with the group to a township. It was  
51 amazing! These places that were supposedly dangerous was so warm and welcoming. T  
52 hey had huge Castes with 750mL for 9 rand and had sports highlights and great music.  
53 We drank and danced the night away! One nice guy told me how it wasn't because of my  
54 skin colour and said he hoped it didn't hurt my impression of S.A. It has but he reminded  
55 me how not all is bad. I came back with CP, Anna, Peter and Gab at 1.30am. We went  
56 skinny-dipping and smoked the new huka Peter and I bought. It was great! Very chill  
57 and soothing. I crashed right away when I hit my bed.

58 I woke up this morning just kicking myself and all the things I could have done  
59 differently. It's pointless, but hard not to. If I would have left my bag or came back the  
60 same way, or walked faster, or gotten more money out, or yelled for help maybe things  
61 would have been different. But, they're not. And I have to live with these memories and  
62 regrets instead of the ones on my camera.

63 It's hard to think of reconciliation after an experience like this. I mean, I'm not  
64 oppressed, I was just robbed and I can't imagine reconciliation. That's how I feel now.  
65 My academic journal was take so this will be both now and after 2 weeks in S.A. I don't  
66 think reconciliation will happen. There is too much distrust, hatred, and racism between  
67 whites and blacks and even within the black and white communities that I don't think a  
68 true change in all structures will change.

69 I pray reconciliation will happen and pray that I can move on and learn from this, but for  
70 the time being both seem unlikely.

### **Appendix III:**

Email correspondence with my supervisor

#### **E-mail 1:**

From: scottdavidmeyer@gmail.com  
Subject: An Unfortunate Change of Plans  
Date: 7. juli 2006 22.53.30 GMT+02:00  
To: daniel@sv.uit.no

Hi Diane-

I am writing with some frustrating news. A couple of days ago I was with a member of the church that I was working with in Managua, and we were mugged by two young men with a very large knife. They ran at us, threatened the woman with me, and took a camera and a small amount of money from me. I am fine physically and so is the person who was with me. The incident was of course scary, but what was scary to me was that I thought it could happen again. I talked to my parents and people in the church and finally decided that I could not successfully do my research if I did not feel safe. I made the decision to come back to the US and have now arrived back home in South Dakota.

I am sad that I had to leave, but I think it was the right decision. Now I am trying to think of alternative ideas for my thesis and wanted to ask your advice for what I should do next. Below are a few ideas I had:

One option is that I could use what I have (15 interviews from donors in South Dakota) and just look at donors of foreign aid and their perceptions and motivations.

The second option is that I could substitute the case study of Nicaragua with another case study. One exciting possibility is at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The Reservation is 7 hours from my home, but it is truly like a third world nation. I could interview donors to Pine Ridge and then go to Pine Ridge and interview recipients and see if the programs are meeting their needs. Similarly, I could interview donors to Pine Ridge and compare them to donors of the Nicaragua program and see how they are alike or different.

The third option is starting with a new idea and writing a theoretical paper. One idea I have had is to write about the consumption of items that are "fair trade." I am curious if there is a substantial market for fair trade goods, and how or why it has been growing or not growing. Also, I am interested in the standards for an item being considered fair trade and how it actually helps people in other parts of the world.

Those are the ideas I have. Please tell me how you think I should proceed. I also know there will probably be hoops to jump through at the Peace Center in terms of changing my thesis topic, so just let me know what I have to do. I am planning now on coming back to Norway the first week in September if there is paper work that can wait until then, otherwise, I could fax it to the University. I also e-mailed Georges with the news. I don't know if I should think about switching advisors since his speciality was Central America. If I do decide to change, I would

like to ask you. I know that you have a lot of advisees, but I would like to work with you if you have the time. Just let me know what you think. I'm just trying to find the best way forward at this point.

I am sorry to write with this news, but I hope to find a good alternative. Thank you for your continued advice.

Kind Regards,

Scott

**Appendix IV:**

Email correspondence with my supervisor

**E-mail 2:**

From: daniel@sv.uit.no  
Subject: RE: An Unfortunate Change of Plans  
Date: 10. juli 2006 11.44.53 GMT+02:00  
To: scottdavidmeyer@gmail.com

Dear Scott,

Thanks for your email.

I hope you are fine and are recovering both physically and psychologically, which often takes longer when things like this happen. Unfortunately, no matter how prepared and aware of safety issues, these things can happen.

I am glad you were able to leave safely and are now at home with your parents.

In terms of the change of topics and formalities, don't worry about those, i will authorise any paperwork and of course your safety is paramount not your research so there are no problems there.

The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation sounds interesting. Can you tell me a little more about it and do you have contacts there? On the one hand it would be good but not if it will be put undue pressure or strain on you. If you have any further info could you email me about it and I will have a think about it overnight and see what will be feasible in the timescale. I think we need to use what you already have and you have done an awful lot of work, so transcribing what you have so far and then maybe interviewing pine ridge donors may be one idea. Also if you have 15 interviews already depending on details and quality that could be enough with strong theoretical background for a good sound thesis. I can, of course, be your supervisor if you want to change.

Anyway, leave it with me overnight and any info you have please send.

Just take it easy for now,

best wishes

Diane

## **Appendix V:**

Email correspondence with my supervisor

### **E-mail 3:**

From: daniel@sv.uit.no  
Subject: RE: An Unfortunate Change of Plans  
Date: 11. juli 2006 11.58.25 GMT+02:00  
To: scottdavidmeyer@gmail.com

Dear Scott,

I hope you are feeling ok.

I have had a think about the best way forward.

As you have 15 interviews already and done a lot of work that is a good amount and it is also possible to work up a very solid theoretical basis. I assume from the 15 you have done all of the US interviews and a few in Nicaragua. Do you feel ok transcribing and using the Nicaragua interviews or do you want to abandon them because of bad memories? I think the situation can also be used to your advantage in that you can now write a very solid methods chapter for your thesis and discuss the predicament you faced and the decisions you took. There is a lot of material around about these issues but not much in peace research. If you felt up to doing some comparative work with Pine Ridge I think that would be interesting as it raises issues about the differences between donors who donate to abroad and those within the US. Obviously the justifications you provide in your methods chapter for a change of plan support you doing this work.

I do not think it is a good idea to start on something else from scratch.

How do you feel about still using the Nicaragua material? And if you want to use it what sort of issues are being revealed? The interview schedules can be recycled more or less for Pine Ridge I would have thought.

How do you feel about a comparative approach? Alternatively, depending on the material you have already it may be possible to confine your fieldwork to what you have with a strong methods and theory chapter.

Let me know what you think.

Diane

## **Appendix VI:**

Email correspondence with my supervisor

### **E-mail 4:**

From: scottdavidmeyer@gmail.com  
Subject: Re: An Unfortunate Change of Plans  
Date: 13. juli 2006 07.53.54 GMT+02:00  
To: daniel@sv.uit.no

Hi Diane-

Thank you for all of your help and understanding.

Unfortunately, I didn't conduct any official, recorded interviews in Nicaragua before I left. I feel like I got a good understanding on how the program works and I met key individuals who ran the programs (and I even helped out with a few of them), but I didn't record anything. I do however have a few phone numbers so I could conduct on the phone interviews if it would be helpful.

I think that the comparative approach with Pine Ridge would be interesting as well. If I pursue that, do you think it would also involve going to Pine Ridge and interviewing people who live there or would it just be people who give to the program? Also, another group involved is people who travel to Pine Ridge for 5 days and work on a specific project. Would these people be considered donors and be worth interviewing?

Also, you mentioned that there isn't a lot material in peace research about decision made in tough situations. What do you mean by that? It would be interesting if I could contribute something new and valuable.

Thanks for your help and suggestions. They are always welcomed. I'll keep you up to date on what's happening.

-Scott