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Negotiating Insider Research through Reactive Collaboration: Challenges, Issues and Failures

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to highlight the ways in which reactive researcher collaboration helps to manage some of the challenges present in insider research.

Design/methodology/approach – Employing (auto)biographical reflections from across two different case-studies the authors explore the ways in which reactive collaboration is enmeshed with issues associated with researching the familiar in a marketized university environment.

Findings – The authors develop the term 'reactive collaboration' to explore the ways in which insider research projects have to deal with a range of challenges from within their own research community. Reactive collaboration is as much about insider research solidarity as it is with reacting to anticipated and unanticipated events during the research process (and how inside researchers do and do not deal with them). Reactive collaboration highlights the successes as well as the failures of insider researchers negotiating complex research situations.

Originality/Value – The authors show how reactive collaboration occurs in challenging research environments, including the joys, sorrows and failures. The authors argue that the challenges and benefits of insider research can be helpfully crystalised through reactive collaboration.

Keywords – Insider research, Collaborative research, Reactive Collaboration, Researcher familiarity

Paper type – Technical Paper

Introduction

The role and value of insider researcher has a contested history within the social sciences (Strathearn, 1987; Atkinson, 2015; Birckhead, 2004). Within ethnographic traditions, recognising the importance of the native insider was linked to decolonisation practices as well as challenges to Eurocentric ideas of the exotic 'other' and who could write and speak about particular communities (Qamar, 2020). As a result, 'native insiders' (Gallinat, 2010: 27-29) were increasingly recognised as providing an important challenge to Western-centric notions of knowledge production, construction and dissemination (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021, Simpson, 2014). At the same time however, doing ethnography at home (Jackson, 1987) was often positioned as a problem with insider knowledge potentially falling foul of too much academic

introspection (navel-gazing) and not being able to see the wood for the trees (Behar, 1997; Delamont, 2009). These debates became further complicated by post-modern concerns about the ways in which academic writing failed to account for the messiness and complexity of fieldwork encounters and the range of textual (and other) strategies researchers adopted to try and capture these experiences (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; James et al, 1997; Mannay, 2010). As a result, insider research revealed the power and politics of academic representation and ongoing issues around the meaning and purpose of research (Reinhart and Earl, 2016).

We start this paper from the position of two native/insider researchers who recognise the concerns levelled at researching the familiar, however will show the ways in which some of the problems associated with researcher familiarity were negotiated by a collaborative process of thinking, writing and working together. In particular, we look at insider research first from the perspective of working alone (the benefits and challenges this raises), followed by a process of collaboration and what this highlights about insider research. We illustrate this through the example of dealing with feedback from our research participants, family and friends who sometimes found our research conclusions problematic, hurtful and even wrong (Scheper-Hughes 2001, Ellis, 1995; Goffman, 2014). Collaboration, we argue, is often a reactive process to people and events that the researcher can (and often cannot) anticipate. Whilst much collaborative research highlights the reflexive, feminist and co-creative process involved (Phillips et al, 2021; Linabery et al, 2020; Satchwell et al, 2020; Zapata-Sepulveda et al, 2016), we demonstrate how collaborative research is as much an act of learned and anticipated knowledge creation as well as ongoing academic solidarity. We argue that reactive collaboration reveals the pressures and challenges of engaging in insider research in an audit-culture that increasingly demands user involvement and engagement with research.

Unpacking Collaboration

Collaboration within academia has long been championed as the way forward for researchers to work together between and across institutions and research projects, as well as enabling academics to meet the growing demands of audited outputs and research income through working in research teams (Reinhart and Earl, 2016; Milyaeva and Neyland, 2020). Collaboration is thus promoted as a way for researchers to better manage their 'time', whilst also bringing with it a range of interdisciplinary and multinational benefits for both researchers and their institutions (Lewis, 2017). Despite this, collaboration is very differently understood

and implemented according to disciplinary background, where medical and natural sciences produce papers with multiple authors, in contrast to the humanities and social sciences where single and dual-authored papers remain the norm (Endersby, 1996). Collaboration covers the practice of writing research bids, managing research teams, and the collection, analysis and writing up of findings in papers and reports.

As a result, collaboration has come to be associated with a range of practical as well as ethical issues: who writes what and is credited how? In what ways are different language and cultural differences negotiated when working collaboratively with non-academics? How are power dynamics managed when working with junior academics? Collaboration then can cover a range of exploitative and challenging working practices that are not always transparent or easy to see (Bozeman et al, 2013). This has given rise to a series of creative responses drawing specific attention to the *ways* in which collaboration does and does not happen. For example, Linabary et al (2020) call for 'collaborative feminist reflexivity' to better situate the processes of doing research through shared Google docs, texts and emails. They draw attention to the process of 'reflecting on our reflections' and the organic co-production of knowledge between and across their team of researchers.

In a similar vein, Reinhart and Earl (2016) argue for duo and collaborative research that takes into account a variety of perspectives and views and the creative unease and mess that can arise from such engagements (see also Farquhar and Fitzpatrick, 2016). Whilst research by Satchwell et al (2020) suggest that knowledge production can be creatively harnessed through the writing and sharing of fiction accounts by research participants and collaboratively shared and discussed. Extending ideas around co-creating knowledge further, Phillips et al (2021) argue for using autoethnographic texts as a way of highlighting research *with* rather than on particular research groups. What the research discussed here has in common, is a desire to use collaboration as a process of critical reflexivity and co-production of knowledge that carefully situates the views of researcher and researched and is meaningful to both.

However, whilst these methodological innovations are to be welcomed, collaboratively sharing published research findings with participants has a chequered history. Scheper-Hughes' (2001) return to the Irish community twenty years after her celebrated *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* was published, was met with hostility regarding her characterisations and representation of rural Irish life. Equally Ellis' return to the fishing community in the Chesapeake Bay was met with anger and derision. Both authors were confronted by the fact

that although they considered themselves 'ethical' researchers, much of what they had written did not mesh or align with their participants' worldview. Critiques from participants can also be extended to critiques by the academy. Alice Goffman's (2014) book *On the Run* about life in a black urban ghetto resulted in widespread calls for her academic fellowships to be revoked (see Benson 2015 for further discussion on this). As a result, calls for research by insider researchers of the specific communities are seen as more empowering and sensitive to that group's particular needs (Skeggs, 1997; Breeze, 2015; McKenzie, 2015; Qamar, 2020) and are less likely to result in problematic and unfair representations. Rather, researching from within that community is more likely to represent a worldview that has closer bearing on the lifeworlds, language and culture of the participants (Mannay, 2010). Being an inside researcher enables more ethical and collaborative research and knowledge to be co-created and co-produced.

It is therefore clear that research on collaboration calls on ideas around accountability, reflexivity and biographical situatedness. Although collaboration in the audit-culture of Higher Education is problematic (Lewis, 2017), collaboration across research teams and with research participants has increasingly come to be seen as a way to measure and understand the impact of research on people's everyday lives. Being an inside researcher is arguably a research boon as it enables greater familiarity and sensitivity to the worldview of participants. Collaborative research then, should be a hopefully engaging and creative co-endeavour. Over the coming pages we detail the ways in which our insider positionality made our knowledge suspect and our findings derided – despite our best intentions. It was out of these experiences that we coined the phrase 'reactive collaboration' to document the ways in which collaborative research/ers can fail just as often as they can succeed.

Researching the Familiar

The two case study examples presented here could not be more dissimilar. One case study is of the card-game bridge and the other the intentional life-sharing Camphill community movement. However dissimilar these case studies are, they are tied by the fact that both authors have over 20 years of deep immersion in their respective fieldsites *prior* to placing bridge/Camphill under an academic gaze.

Miriam Snellgrove grew up in a Camphill community on the shores of the Belfast Lough. Camphill is the name given to intentional life-sharing communities that provide care and

education for children and adults with a range of learning and behavioural disabilities. After 20 years of living in a Camphill community, Miriam left (though her parents and many of her friends did not). For her doctoral research, Miriam decided that Camphill and its alternative approach to understanding disability, shared living, care and education, would be a worthwhile study (Snellgrove, 2013). A key aim behind the project was to make the research useful for her participants. Miriam's initial data collection period was a year-long multi-sited ethnographic study with three Camphill Communities in central Scotland. One of the three fieldsites included family, friends and Camphillers[1] who had known Miriam her entire life. Throughout the doctoral process and for many years afterwards, Miriam was invited to a variety of participant-led workshops, seminars and conferences to present findings and results. However, disagreements with participants over her analysis of Camphill principles and practices has resulted in Miriam moving away from continuing her research on Camphill.

Samantha Punch has recently embarked on an extensive (and successful yet time consuming) fundraising initiative from within the bridge community to research the benefits, challenges and joys of playing the card-game bridge. As an avid bridge player for the last 20 years, Samantha has represented Scotland at many international tournaments alongside pursuing an academic career in childhood studies. However, desiring an academic change of focus, Samantha decided to place her academic gaze on the world of bridge and to try and establish a new sociological field into mindsport. What initially started as a fun pre-retirement project interviewing her bridge heroes (Punch, 2021), has developed into multiple bridge projects researching gender inequalities, dynamics of the game and teaching bridge in schools to name a few. An ethnographic approach has been used where Samantha was able to draw on her own lived experiences in the social world of bridge to conduct insider research. Qualitative insider interviewing (Kitchen, 2019) was the main method enabling players to discuss their social experiences in dialogue with Samantha. Qualitative email questionnaires were also used for the *Bridging Gender* project (https://bridgemindsport.org/home/research/bridging-gender/). By bringing her passion for bridge into academia, Samantha has merged both professional and personal worlds in ways she did not initially anticipate, with the boundaries between work and hobby becoming permanently blurred (Russell et al, 2022).

Samantha is at the beginning of her research engagement with bridge and one she hopes will last the next 15 years until retirement. Miriam in contrast is at the end of her engagement with

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[1] Name given to people who live and work in camphill communities

Camphill (or as much at the end as familiar research allows one to be). During their respective projects, both authors kept research diaries documenting their own biographical struggles and challenges on the process and practice of research (Crang & Cook, 2007). When Miriam joined Samantha on the bridge project, conversations around the challenges of familiarity showed similarity across the two projects. However, it was when both authors began thinking through how and in what ways collaboration with research participants was (and was not) working that the concept of 'reactive collaboration' was born. Reactive collaboration refers to the specific moments and events that force insider researchers to rethink research strategies and interactions with their participants, families and friends. It is reactive because it is often unintended and unanticipated and even when anticipated (as we shall show) has long-term ramifications for researcher engagement with their community.

We begin by sharing some of benefits to being an insider researcher and then develop this to show challenges that arose in our different research contexts. We then demonstrate where reactive collaboration was exemplified through disseminating and sharing research with our familiar communities. We show how reactive collaboration combines collective solidarity (found through our team research) but also contains the problems and pitfalls of negotiating the reactions from our insider research communities during the research process and beyond. We refer to bridge and Camphill as shorthand for our separate research topics and fieldsites. We do so in order to draw attention to our own individual struggles within these *separate* sites that are simultaneously collective but equally transcend the specificity of the particular research context. In this way we demonstrate the commonality of issues facing insider researchers.

The Benefits of Insider Research

There are a number of obvious but crucial benefits to being a known person in a familiar field. Access, that thorny and often time-consuming aspect of qualitative research was easily managed in our projects and something that required little work or effort. Indeed, it was the need to follow University ethical guidelines on access arrangements that slowed down the data collection process, as many of our informants were quite quick and willing to grant access and to discuss Camphill and bridge with us respectively. Indeed, it was common to have participants raise baffled eyebrows that we were spending time on researching Camphill/bridge. That they thought their respective fields were interesting and important was

never in doubt, that academia would also find it interesting was often greeted with scepticism (we return to this later on).

Alongside ease in gaining access to our participants, was our understanding of the particular cultural logics at play in the worlds of bridge and Camphill. Both areas have their own distinctive language and cultural practices that insiders are well versed in and are alien, confusing and time-consuming to learn for an outsider. Miriam grew up knowing for example that she was a 'staff child' and her parents 'co-workers.' Furthermore, seasonal festivals like Michaelmas, Martinmas and Advent were a known quantity, to the extent that Miriam was often asked to sing, arrange flowers and even co-write a Christmas pageant during fieldwork, as her childhood background in Camphill was taken-for-granted and unashamedly put to use.

Bridge too has its own language around the game itself, but also in relation to the different strategies and approaches to tournament bridge. This meant that Samantha in her *Bridging Minds* project (https://bridgemindsport.org/home/research/bridging-minds/) could probe and question elite bridge players much more successfully. For example, knowledge of different types of techniques or the relative advantages of aggressive versus conservative approaches to the game was important and useful. Equally, insider knowledge of international tournaments enabled interview conversations to include World or European championships without having to stop and ask for clarification of key terms or scenarios.

This 'knowing' by both authors created quick and easy rapport with participants to the extent that assumptions were made about the level of knowledge and 'insider' expertise. For example, Miriam never asked for an explanation for phrases such as 'penetrating the space' and 'excarnated', assuming that these phrases were tied to Camphill's philosophical background and its work with Anthroposophy.[2] When Miriam did ask for clarity regarding why cow horns were buried in the Earth she was greeted with either bewilderment or laughter and it was clear that her participants thought she should already know this and/or was just teasing them needlessly. Similar issues occurred with Samantha during the writing up of the *Bridging Minds* project. It was only then she realised that she had not sufficiently asked about the transferability of bridge skills to other aspects of players' lives. Hence much of the existing material on life skills is implicit rather than explicit and Samantha has to refrain from drawing on her personal

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[2] A particular kind of esoteric philosophy, known as Christian Science pioneered by Rudolf Steiner. It had its major (and more widespread) heyday in the 1920s/1930s in the UK and is most publicly noticeable through the Steiner/Waldorf school system. The founders of Camphill used Steiner's philosophy when creating the organisation of early Camphill (see Müller-Wiedemann, 1990)

experiences and knowledge of this area. It became clear that familiarity, whilst enabling swift access and quick rapport with participants, also resulted in assumptions being made about the knowledge of the authors by participants, and equally by the authors themselves about the 'self-evident' nature of their findings.

These assumptions about knowing in their respective fields also highlighted many aspects which the authors remained in ignorance of. Samantha, though an international bridge player herself and having competed in many international tournaments had, like most competitive bridge players, regarded the role of organizations (like the World Bridge Federation and the European Bridge League) as bureaucracies that often hindered the efforts of players rather than helped them. It was only after researching the bridge world more closely that she fully appreciated the difficult and competing demands such organisations face, and the complex and often thankless role in navigating such challenges. Likewise, Miriam had always assumed she knew what Camphill was, its principles and practices, because she grew up in one. Having always been told that co-workers in Camphill did not receive a wage and volunteered their time in exchange for food and board, it came as a shock to realise that contractual employment was increasingly the norm in the majority of Camphill places across the UK. Further, employment of staff had caused and was causing serious existential questions to be asked about the future ethos of Camphill in the 21st Century. It was this challenging of assumed knowledge (whether about bridge organisations or employment in Camphill) that highlighted the limits of insider knowledge and understanding, and the challenges that insider researchers can face.

The Challenges of Insider Research

A key desire for both authors was to make their research useful to the people whom it is about, and within the audit marketized culture of higher education is arguably even more important (Milyaeva and Neyland, 2020). As a result, both authors have presented findings from their research to respective bridge and Camphill audiences. Miriam spent five years immediately post-PhD presenting at Camphill research seminars, conferences and events, to the exclusion of publishing academic papers to the detriment of her academic career. For Miriam, her familiar position within the broader Camphill movement was initially regarded as someone who 'knows' Camphill and therefore has a degree of legitimacy and authority to speak about what Camphill is, who it is for and how it should be run. Miriam's biography and past were used by usually older, more conservative Camphillers to demonstrate how far Camphill had moved

from its roots and consequently, what had been lost. In particular, concern about the decline of the spiritual in Camphill, the rise in employment and increased policy legislation around vulnerable children and adults with learning and behavioural needs, was seen by many as problematic and in direct contradiction of the early ideals and principles of the founding generation over 80 years ago. As a result, Miriam's biography and familiarity was used as a way to sanction those within current Camphill communities who were seen as digressing too much from Camphill principles and practices of the past. Due to her status as a staff child and a researcher, Miriam was invited to a range of workshops and seminars to speak about her research findings. Crucially, many of these invitations were to conferences where Miriam was implicitly and sometimes explicitly invited to participate in a narrative of 'crisis' around Camphill's future. Miriam's fieldwork data was thus used to tell other Camphill places what they should <u>not</u> be doing. Her research and her Camphill biography, was used as proof of ongoing changes and that these changes, simply put, were bad.

The fact that Miriam challenged these simple narratives of a seamless happy past in Camphill and pointed out the fragmentation and internal gendered fights, was disregarded by those who would rather use her biography and research to support their own agenda. As a result of not reinforcing these kinds of narratives, Miriam increasingly found herself ostracised from within wider research policy discussions about Camphill in the 21st Century. This was most clearly demonstrated when evidence in support of Camphill was being given at a House of Commons select committee. Miriam only heard about this event once the programme and speakers had been formally arranged and agreed. Though she turned up at the event and listened to the evidence, it was made clear to her afterwards that she had not been asked to speak as it was thought she would be 'too critical' of Camphill and potentially damage the positive image being offered to the select committee. Miriam realised that her questioning about Camphill and its 80+ year identity, who it was for and who could speak about it was not particularly welcomed or supported. Indeed, she realised that her understanding of Camphill was only regarded as useful if it validated and confirmed a particular male-centric narrative. When she declined to change this, other academics more aligned to supporting a particular spiritual image of Camphill, were promoted (see McKanan, 2020).

Samantha has had similar challenges around bridge research being seen as important and relevant by some within the wider bridge community. Though a much beloved game and spoken about enthusiastically by her participants, research into bridge was viewed sceptically and seen as stating the 'bleeding obvious' (Punch and Rogers, 2021). Alongside this, some

within the bridge community thought that Samantha was setting the project in competition with clubs or national federations and this made some of them sceptical and even somewhat dismissive of her research agenda. This was made clear to Samantha at a research meeting in Norway, when the head of the Norwegian Bridge Federation (NBF) suggested she clarify that her research was aimed at *supporting* clubs and federations and that she wanted to work with them to promote the positive angles of bridge. This clarified some of the negative reactions her requests for funding and support from bridge clubs and organisations had, to date, received. To some extent it seemed that some of them may have been feeling threatened by what she was proposing, assuming it was a linked to a critique of what they should be doing rather than it being seen as a collaborative endeavour. The NBF suggestion of simply adding the phrase 'to use research findings collaboratively with bridge organisations…' to the project aims emphasised her academic role and research focus which helped to resolve the misunderstanding around BAMSA's intentions and possible overlaps with the work of federations. This encounter with a key stakeholder was a critical moment (see Thomson et al. 2002) that enhanced mutual understanding of partnership roles as well as enabled wider collaborations. It made clear that although familiar with bridge as a competitive player, moving into researching bridge and requiring help from clubs and organisations was an area where Samantha was relatively strange. This strangeness could lead to misunderstandings with powerful bridge networks.

What these two examples make clear is that the position of the native researcher is accepted, tolerated, even made fun of, but only if the researcher is not in a position of power to challenge or produce findings that could disrupt how participants view themselves (and by extension the inside researcher). As Ellis (1995) and Scheper-Hughes (2001) also found to their cost, publishing work where the participants do not recognise themselves, and/or find the representations incorrect and hurtful can cause lasting damage to the particular community as well as to the researcher. In Samantha's case engaging with bridge stakeholders as a researcher rather than 'merely' a player made some people view her negatively as a potential critic and/or competitor for limited resources. Miriam recognised that her insistence on speaking about the complexity of lived experiences within different Camphill communities was too empirically messy and hard for many to listen to, which in turn, shows the limits of researcher/participant-led dissemination and participation.

What is clear is that managing relationships within the field and the ways in which research is used and understood by participants, can place a range of situational and conceptual burdens

on the familiar researcher that they subsequently have to manage and navigate on their own. In contrast to Ellis (1995) and Scheper-Hughes (2001), native researchers have familial/friendship relationships in the field where such disagreements and sanctioning can be ongoing and repetitive. Negotiating and managing the challenges between participant-led knowledge and academic-sanctioned knowledge can often be in conflict (as in Miriam's case). In our final section we unpack and explore the development of reactive collaboration as an illuminating aid in familiar research contexts.

<u>Developing Reactive Collaboration</u>

Throughout the process of her PhD and beyond, Miriam was very aware of the many challenges that faced her as a familiar researcher. Though some of the benefits have already been discussed, Miriam increasingly realised that researching the familiar was just too difficult and the drain on personal relationships too exhausting to manage. Though her collected data was consistently useful (and challenging as this paper has made clear) for her Camphill participants, finding ways to make Camphill intelligible to *both* academic peers and research participants was something she failed to adequately manage. Her one paper (2013) on food and rituals in Camphill was described by a participant as 'like someone was spying on us.' Miriam became increasingly wary about further academic publishing around Camphill. Rossing and Scott (2016: 623) have discussed how the academic gaze has a 'spoiling effect' on the field and the researcher. Miriam found that the combination of the academic gaze and growing hostility to her research amongst key and powerful participants silenced her ability to write without either a) engaging in conceptual academic reductionism or b) offending and exposing her Camphill participants to external claims of exoticisation and institutionalisation (see Goffman, 2014).

However, it was when Miriam joined Samantha on her BAMSA projects that the process of thinking through the dynamics of insider research and the ways in which collaboration did and did not work that they developed the idea of reactive collaboration. Key to this development was that Miriam is entirely ignorant of the game of bridge. She knows how to play simple card games and is familiar with some of the language of suits, tricks and bidding. However, the complexity of bridge, is and remains a complete mystery to her. This combination of the stranger's gaze (Miriam) and the familiar gaze (Samantha) became a highly desirable way of collaborating (Farquhar & Fitzpatrick, 2016). Samantha had many familiar benefits of ease of access to participants, speaking the language of bridge as well as being a well-recognised player on the international circuit. However, as we have already discussed, these benefits were often

undermined by a lack of seeing the wood for the trees, or the intellectual significance of participants' lives due to a familiar lens privileging insider accounts over what outsiders/academics might find more interesting.

By bringing Miriam's gaze into the world of bridge, much of the academic blindness that hampered and eventually silenced Miriam in her work with Camphill was creatively challenged. For example, Samantha's familiar gaze was crucial in explaining the technical sides of bridge, the politics of the bridge world as well as being aware of the key sensitivities that players, clubs and national bridge organisations, had towards certain topics like sexism in the game and the problematic image of bridge. To mitigate these more sensitive and contentious issues, Samantha deliberately engaged in a targeted publishing strategy to avoid the *Bridge: A MindSport for All* (BAMSA) research being labelled negatively or dismissed too quickly from within the bridge community. More neutral research around interactions at the table and managing emotions was published first, before the data on sexism and cheating was written up (Rogers et al, 2022).

Nevertheless, despite this publishing strategy, the backlash against discussions around sexism in the game has been intense with Samantha receiving many personal emails and comments via social media unconstructively challenging the quality and validity of the research and calling into question the very notion of sexism in bridge (Punch and Rogers, 2021). Samantha has spent hours reading and responding to social media comments about the research whilst being both professionally and personally attacked and undermined. Though Miriam understands how draining and difficult it is for insider research to be challenged by family, friends and participants – she is not an insider researcher in this context, and therefore finds these criticisms easier to dismiss. Indeed, for Miriam, such a strong reaction to the work on sexism in bridge, further demonstrates the importance and validity of such research. In a personal email to Samantha, Miriam wrote that 'this is a good fight and one worth having.' Listening and engaging with participant viewpoints does not mean that those viewpoints are beyond critique and this is something that the academic gaze does well. In this situation, reactive collaboration was demonstrated through Miriam having already experienced a negative backlash from the Camphill community and Samantha, as an insider, anticipating much of the anger. Reactive collaboration meant that although the bridge community was hostile to the research, solidarity was found in a collaborative academic space where such research was recognised as valuable and important.

In this way, by combining different insider/outsider perspectives, many of the problems and challenges experienced by solo familiar researchers embarking on important and informative research, is overcome. We do not claim that reactive collaborative research is the solution to all challenges regarding researching the familiar, however, we both recognise that combining insider/outsider perspectives on the topic of mindsport has proved academically fruitful in multiple and often unforeseen ways. Reactive collaboration manages to be both insider and outsider, familiar and strange, knowing and unknowing. We are together that most sought after qualitative researcher – able to hold and understand often mutually contradictory ideas in one place and still function.

Conclusion

This article has explored the benefits and challenges of insider research and developed the concept of reactive collaboration. Insider researchers can often easily access participants' worldviews and research settings in ways not always so available to non-native researchers. However, familiarity can also be used by participants in particular ways that are challenging for researchers to manage. Demands may be placed on the kind of findings that are seen as beneficial to that particular group and an assumption that the more negative and challenging sides of the fieldsite be either ignored or played down. If researchers do not do this (as Miriam demonstrated), the end result can be to not publish findings for fear of hurting or harming participants' feelings and can change the insider researcher's relationships with participants in the field.

We further demonstrated the ways in which powerful individuals and organisations within familiar research settings can sanction insider researchers in an ongoing and continuous manner. It was out of this process of sanctioning from our participants that reactive collaboration was born. Reactive collaboration is made possible when an insider researcher works with a non-insider researcher. It is this meshing of insider/outsider perspective that enables reactive collaboration to work as a space of solidarity and support when insider research communities are hostile to the research conducted by insiders. We offer reactive collaboration as a lens and process for other insider researchers working within their own communities as a way to negotiate and manage competing expectations around the purpose and outcomes of research. In the time-pressured and audit-driven cultures of higher education, reactive collaboration is an important site of resistance and encouragement.

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