



## Being Familiar, and Yet Strange: Conducting Research as a Hybrid Insider-Outsider in Uganda

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Social sciences research involves the study of individuals and communities, and the patterns of behavior that shape different groups of people. In pursuit of new knowledge, researchers undertake field research in which they spend time studying a particular community in order to conduct analysis and draw conclusions about this community. For some researchers, they will be in some way connected personally to the subject group, as an ‘insider.’ Other researchers will study a group with which no substantial prior contact has been established, as an ‘outsider.’ Sections of the literature relating to conducting field research have come to recognize that some researchers do not fall into this dichotomy of insiders and outsiders, and instead fall somewhere along a spectrum of insider and outsider.

In preparing for my own fieldwork in Uganda in the first half of 2016, I conducted a literature review of the experiences of field researchers in Uganda and other East African countries, in an effort to prepare for likely challenges and experiences I might face. Having lived in Uganda

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previously, from 2011 to 2013, I was somewhat familiar with the national context. As a former employee of the site at which I proposed to begin my research, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Kampala, I was also partially familiar with the institutional context in which my research would take place. I was therefore finding myself somewhat stuck between the two categories of researcher proposed by the literature: I was in some ways positioned as an insider to the studied community, but in other ways an outsider.

This chapter proposes a third category of researcher: a hybrid insider-outsider researcher, in which a researcher shares some characteristics of the studied group, but nonetheless is an outsider in regard to other important characteristics. A hybrid insider-outsider may have some familiarity with the subject group based on limited personal experience or experience in the past, but lack sufficient experience to be considered a genuine insider. As the globalization of research and the mobility of researchers increase, an ever-growing number of researchers will experience conducting research as a hybrid insider-outsider. In this chapter, I will detail my experiences as a hybrid insider-outsider researcher, with the goal of complementing the existing literature with the unique insights this positionality can offer.

### POSITIONALITY: INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS

In the process of undertaking field research, the social sciences researcher is attempting to locate, analyze, interpret and represent knowledge, acquired through the study of others. An important question for the researcher to ask of themselves is how they are positioned in relation to their research subjects, and how this positionality may affect the collection, interpretation and representation of knowledge they are seeking to undertake. Through a process of reflexivity, the researcher considers how their own position in relation to the subject will affect the outcomes and processes of research (Hellowell 2006, p. 483). By reflecting on their relationship to the studied community, the researcher identifies the effect that the researcher's own beliefs, assumptions and values will have on the research methodology, results and presentation.

One reflexivity mechanism through which a researcher's positionality can be identified is through identifying whether the researcher is an insider or an outsider in relation to the subject community. A significant body of literature exists in defining and exploring these categorizations.

In these discussions, authors offer definitions of insider versus outsider researchers, and there exists a degree of overlap between these definitions. For example, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 58) describe insiders as those who share a particular attribute with the studied community, such as languages, roles, identities or experiences. Hellawell (2006, p. 484) defines an insider as a researcher who has *a priori* knowledge of the studied community, as a result of personal knowledge of the community and its members. Hockey (1993, p. 199) indicates that a researcher may be familiar with the location being studied, or may be a part of the community of people being studied. The similarities of these definitions indicate that insider researchers are generally defined narrowly: they are members of the studied community, or share its key attributes. Outsiders, defined in the opposite, are those who are said to be approaching the community of study from beyond its borders, to share no attributes with the community, or have no previous experience of it.

A substantial portion of the literature relating to conducting social research in the field is devoted to assessing whether a researcher who is an 'insider' is better placed for conducting research than an 'outsider.' For example, Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 55) compare their respective experiences of conducting qualitative research in communities to which one researcher related as an insider and one researcher as an outsider. Both insider-researchers and outsider-researchers are thought to have some advantages in being able to conduct research, and so contribute to the body of knowledge on a particular community or topic. Many authors within the ethnographic, anthropological and international development literatures have developed arguments in favor of being either an insider-researcher or outsider-researcher, in terms of the advantages of each position. In favor of being an insider, authors such as Unluer (2012, p. 5) argue that insider-researchers can form a greater level of trust with the studied community due to their existing personal connection to it, have greater familiarity with the community and knowledge of the topic under study, and superior knowledge of the group dynamics of the studied group, in comparison to an outsider-researcher. Paechter (2012, p. 77) adds that an insider-researcher may be more able to access the studied community than an outsider, due to already being familiar to the studied group. The insider-researcher may also benefit from improved rapport and communication with the group, and reduced culture shock (Hockey 1993, p. 199).

While these arguments present some of the advantages of conducting research as an insider, on the other hand, insider-researchers could potentially be affected by disadvantages arising from their closeness to the studied group. These include a loss of objectivity in relation to the group (Unluer 2012, p. 6), interview participants not revealing key information because they assume that it is already known to the researcher (Breen 2007, p. 164), or an insider-researcher overestimating their knowledge or understanding of the group (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle 2009, p. 59). An insider-researcher may resist approaching difficult topics with the studied community for fear of damaging their friendships with group members (Hockey 1993, p. 213). Sherif (2001, p. 437) adds that for an insider-researcher, the boundaries between the researcher and the studied community can be difficult to identify, potentially posing challenges for the insider-researcher to separate themselves from their research with adequate detachment. The insider-researcher may also be at risk of making assumptions or pre-judgments about the research subjects that arise from their familiarity with their context, or may assume that their views of the group are more representative than is in fact the case. There may also be antipathy between the researcher and the studied group, or between the researcher and individuals within the group, potentially leading to the studied community providing incomplete or inaccurate data to the researcher (Hockey 1993, p. 199).

For outsider-researchers, challenges arise from their unfamiliarity to and with the group being studied. These challenges include negotiating the permission to access the studied group (Breen 2007, p. 167), a lack of prior knowledge of the group and of the dynamics within it, and a lack of a pre-existing relationship upon which trust can be based (Unluer 2012, p. 6). The studied community does not regard the outsider-researcher as one of 'their own,' and so may be reluctant to share controversial or damaging information about the community with the researcher. The outsider-researcher may experience practical barriers in conducting their research, such as language barriers or cultural misunderstandings, that are less likely to be faced by an insider (Hockey 1993, p. 199).

On the positive side, the outsider-researcher has some advantages over the insider-researcher. The outsider may be more able to be objective about the studied group than the insider-researcher, and have a greater level of detachment from the community. They are less likely to overestimate their understanding of the material, and less likely to

bring prior assumptions about the group into the research (Unluer 2012, p. 6). They do not need to be as concerned about maintaining pre-existing or subsequent relationships with the group, and so are at less risk of self-censoring the topics they choose to discuss with the group (Hockey 1993, p. 199). Overall, as this section has shown, several authors within the literature acknowledge that there are both advantages and disadvantages to being either an insider-researcher or an outsider-researcher.

### INSIDER AND OUTSIDER: A DICHOTOMY OR A SPECTRUM?

Following from this group of authors who discuss the advantages and disadvantages of being an outsider or an insider, are authors who instead argue that the division between insider and outsider is theoretical, and not applicable in the practical application of fieldwork. For these authors, the concepts of insider and outsider should not be considered as dichotomous, but rather as a spectrum along which researchers are located. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 62) argue that the concept of the insider as opposed to the outsider may be oversimple; there may in fact be a third space for the researcher to occupy. Deutsch (2004, p. 897) notes that any social group contains diversity, so the researcher may experience similarities or differences with different individuals within the group, rather than being an insider or outsider relative to the entire group. Greene (2014, p. 2) describes 'partial insiders,' who share some characteristics of the group, but remain in other ways distant from it. Finally, Ganga and Scott (2006, p. 3) argue that the process of conducting fieldwork can, for someone who thought themselves an insider to a particular group, instead reveal to them the ways in which they are an outsider to the group. Furthermore, the researcher may come to understand aspects or divisions within the community of which they had not previously been aware, despite considering themselves to be an insider relative to the group.

Authors further argue that given that very few researchers are either a complete insider or a complete outsider, researchers are instead located along a continuum. Along this continuum, each researcher is able to draw on some of the advantages of each researcher category. For example, Ganga and Scott (2006, p. 3) argue that a researcher can draw on

the ways in which they share more similarities with the group in order to overcome other areas in which they are a relative outsider, such as researching within an age cohort (as an insider) to partially overcome cultural differences (as an outsider). In this way, a researcher can use an aspect that they share with the studied community to form a connection with the studied community, compensating for aspects they do not share with the studied community. Breen (2007, p. 163) explains that by locating herself at a particular point along the insider-outsider spectrum, she was able to draw together the advantages of being both an insider and an outsider, while avoiding the disadvantages of being exclusively one.

For these authors, researchers can be said to be located along a spectrum or a continuum between being an insider and being an outsider, in the sense that the researcher shares characteristics with the studied group, but only to a certain extent. For example, a researcher may share the ethnic background of the studied community, but not a common language, meaning that they are an insider but only to some extent. The imagery of the 'continuum' from insider to outsider implies a sliding scale, where a researcher may be more strongly an insider or more strongly an outsider, depending on the extent to which they share certain characteristics with the studied group.

The imagery of a continuum or spectrum of insider/outsider status creates a useful initial point for understanding the positionality of researchers who are neither complete insiders nor complete outsiders. However, in my own experience, the complications that arose in conducting fieldwork are not fully captured by the 'spectrum' model. In the remainder of this chapter, I propose an expanded definition of the insider-outsider researcher continuum, namely the concept of the hybrid insider-outsider. The hybrid insider-outsider researcher is in some ways a part of the studied community, and an insider to it, but in other ways entirely removed from it—and in addition, this relationship can change over time, as the researcher moves into and out of the studied community and its shared attributes. In the following section, I will relate my own research experience as a former public servant in Uganda, and explain the ways in which the hybrid researcher model frames this experience. My experiences as a hybrid insider-outsider researcher can be useful to researchers who have at some point in time shared the attributes of the studied community, but not all attributes, and who are neither insiders nor outsiders to the community.

## THE HYBRID INSIDER-OUTSIDER

Building on the literature described in the preceding section of the chapter, I offer an addition to the concept of the insider-outsider researcher as a continuum or sliding scale: the notion of the hybrid insider-outsider researcher. In this definition, a researcher shares fully some characteristics with the research group, but other characteristics not at all, and these shared attributes may have been shared more strongly at some time periods than in others. In other words, rather than sharing several aspects with the research group to some extent, the researcher shares some characteristics or aspects completely, but in other aspects is a complete outsider, and the researcher may have been an 'insider' to the group to a more concrete extent in the past. For example, a researcher may come from the same professional background as the studied group and fully understand the employment context of the group, but may also be from a separate ethnic group and linguistic background from the studied group. An example of this would be an automotive mechanic from Sweden conducting research with a community of automotive mechanics from Lesotho. While the researcher will be an insider in terms of the group's profession and fully understand the demands and processes of the work being undertaken, in every other respect, the researcher is an outsider to the studied community.

The researcher is thus in some respects an insider-researcher, but in other aspects, an outsider-researcher. This allows the researcher to capture some of the benefits of each of the insider and outsider categorizations, but also brings unique challenges that must be carefully considered by the researcher. In the above hypothetical model, the researcher has the advantage of knowing well what the challenges and demands are of working as a mechanic, and through this knowledge can gain the trust and respect of the studied group. As an outsider in other respects, the researcher has the advantage of being an objective observer of this specific community, and will be at less risk of bringing preconceived assumptions of the group's dynamics into the research. On the other hand, the researcher will face barriers in terms of communication and cultural understanding that would not be faced if they were an 'insider' in this respect as well. As a result of this hybrid status, with insider understanding of some aspects of the community but outsider understanding of other aspects, the knowledge developed by the researcher of this community is multifaceted and complex. The positionality of the researcher

relative to the studied community is mixed, and represents an evolving positionality relative to the insider–outsider dichotomy described in the earlier literature.

### CONDUCTING RESEARCH AS A HYBRID INSIDER-OUTSIDER: A PUBLIC SERVANT IN UGANDA

My own experience of conducting research as a hybrid insider-outsider researcher arose from conducting doctoral fieldwork in Kampala, Uganda, for the first six months of 2016. My research focuses on the processes of fiscal decentralization and the delivery of public services by government agencies. The quality and efficiency of service delivery are affected to a substantial degree by the strength of the relationships between public servants in different areas and branches of government. My research therefore required that I learn more about the professional experiences and opinions of public servants in government agencies in Kampala, including both central ministries and sectoral agencies.

Throughout this six-month period, I interviewed public servants from the Ministries of Finance, Education and Sports, Health, Local Government, and Public Service. The studied group comprised of public servants at the technical level (for example, ‘Economist’) to the middle-managerial level (for example, ‘Commissioner’), aged from their late-twenties to mid-forties, and all were Ugandan nationals. In common with the studied group, I have myself worked as a public servant, am Anglophone, hold a master’s degree, am an economist, and am middle-class. Differently from the studied group, I am an Australian national, a non-resident of Uganda, am not religious, am of European ethnicity, and am unable to converse fluently in any indigenous Ugandan languages. I am also at the lower end of the age group of those interviewed. In the aspects listed above, I can be positioned using the model of a hybrid insider-outsider researcher, in the sense of clearly sharing some characteristics with the studied group, but being in other ways a clear outsider.

Furthermore, my status as an insider in the studied community contains a temporal aspect. This aspect is that several years prior to travelling to Uganda to conduct doctoral research, I lived in Kampala, and worked in the Ministry of Finance. I thus have some familiarity with the contexts of both Uganda and the Ministry, and some familiarity with the interviewees within that Ministry, and it was my hope that this familiarity



would provide a strong base from which to begin my research. However, as I lived in Uganda for a relatively short period (two years), and had then been absent from Uganda for a further three years before returning to Uganda for fieldwork, I do not consider myself to be a fully-integrated member of the studied group, and consider myself to be a partial-insider at most.

The complex positionality of myself relative to the studied community in this case posed unique challenges in terms of the care needed in collecting, interpreting and presenting data. Firstly, the aspects in which I am a clear insider and a clear outsider required careful management to ensure that none of the disadvantages of these positionalities described earlier affected the process of research. Secondly, the temporal aspect of having previously been, but no longer, a member of the studied community added a further layer of complexity to my positionality relative to the studied group. Finally, the complexity of conducting research as a partial-insider within the Ministry of Finance itself posed challenges, as my position relative to interviewees in other ministries could be affected by the relationship between those ministries and the Ministry of Finance. Overall, the complexity of my relationship with the studied community necessitated a nuanced and flexible approach. In the remainder of this section, I reflect on the experience of undertaking research as a hybrid inside-outsider, and strategies put in place for successfully negotiating this positionality.

### *Complete-Insider—Advantages and Disadvantages*

The advantages I experienced while conducting fieldwork as a complete insider in some respects, and a partial-insider in other respects, generated certain benefits for my ability to conduct my research. Most significantly, my professional experience as a public servant, albeit in a different national context, proved to be a valuable source of prior knowledge. The similarities in the structure, function and mechanisms of the respective public services of Australia and Uganda allowed me to arrive in Uganda to conduct fieldwork with pre-existing contextual information. For example, I was familiar with the process and timing of the budget cycle, the hierarchy of ministries within government, and the various methods of communication between elected officials and public servants. From a practical perspective, I was aware that an important first step in my

research was obtaining written permission to undertake interviews within the Ministry from its most senior public servant, to reassure interview subjects that their senior manager agreed that they could be interviewed by me.

Most importantly, as an insider researcher in terms of being a public servant myself, I was familiar with the main tasks performed by public servants on a daily basis, such as preparing briefings for ministers, consulting with stakeholders within the community and the public service, and conducting data management and research. I was also familiar with the tensions, pressures and expectations faced by public servants, such as demands to facilitate the political objectives of elected leaders even where this necessitates reductions to funding to other priority areas. Given this 'insider' knowledge of the experiences of public servants, I had the advantage of being able to direct my interviews toward some the tensions involved in public service. For example, I was able to discuss with officials in the Ministry of Finance how they handle political pressures that impact the balance of expenditures across sectors, using terminology that was relevant to the professional context of the studied group.

On the other hand, as an insider in respect of being a public servant, there was also the possible disadvantage that I may bring pre-conceived ideas or assumptions into my research. In preparing to undertake fieldwork, I attempted to identify some of the risks that I might need to address, in terms of bringing pre-conceived ideas into the fieldwork process. One of these risks was that my experience as a public servant may lead me to believe that the experiences of all public servants are universal, or that the pressures faced by public servants in Australia were similar to those faced by public servants in Uganda. To the extent possible, I attempted to overcome this problem by reflecting on the assumptions I may have been making at different stages of the research, and asking myself whether these were valid. For example, given that a challenging aspect of the role of a public servant in Australia is working with other departments on joint policy portfolios, I had initially assumed that this challenge would be faced by Ugandan public servants. However, my research revealed that this is a far less common practice in the Ugandan public service than the Australian one, and so is far less of a concern for public servants in Uganda. I also attempted to triangulate and crosscheck my findings where possible, so that each conclusion I have drawn from my research should be based on multiple data points. For example, conclusions I have drawn about the budget process in Uganda are based on

similar findings from interviews, documents and budget data itself. In this way, I have attempted to overcome the risk that as an insider to the professional sphere of public service, I have drawn assumptions into my fieldwork that were not warranted or supported by local evidence.

### *Complete-Outsider—Advantages and Disadvantages*

I was, at the time of conducting fieldwork, not a resident of Uganda nor a Ugandan citizen, and in these respects I was a complete outsider relative to the studied community. I had initially expected this separation from the studied community to pose barriers to the research, such as challenges in obtaining sensitive information from interviewees. However, I in fact found this factor to be advantageous in one important way. Specifically, I found that my status as a clear outsider to Uganda itself allowed research participants to place their trust in me, particularly when discussing issues that were politically sensitive. While this may seem counter-intuitive, as it may have been thought that an insider was more likely to be able to gain the trust of the studied community, being completely foreign appeared to generate trust very successfully. This may be because interviewees felt more comfortable discussing sensitive topics with an outsider, because an outsider to Uganda is unable to cause or generate any repercussions for an interviewee who offers controversial information. Research participants may have been more comfortable knowing that the information they provided to me would subsequently depart Uganda with me, and would be anonymized in any future publications. For example, many interviewees reported to me that they were not concerned whether I recorded their name and job title, as they did not perceive that there would be any risk or consequence of my research being connected to them in the future. As a result, research participants seemed to be honest and forthright in their responses, including when discussing sensitive topics or information, and did not appear to hold any reservations about critiquing government institutions or decisions.

Conversely, as a complete outsider to Uganda, I was disadvantaged in a number of ways in the process of conducting fieldwork. A major disadvantage is my relative unfamiliarity with Ugandan indigenous languages, other than basic Luganda (which is primarily spoken in Kampala and in central Uganda). This aspect of being an outsider to the studied community posed clear barriers, such as

being limited to interviewing only interviewees with a strong grasp of English (although most public servants work primarily in English). Interviewees occasionally spoke in indigenous languages while being interviewed, often to express an idiom or parable, which meant that I had to interrupt to ask the phrases to be expressed in English; this occasionally interrupted the flow of the interview. More importantly, by not speaking any indigenous languages, I lost some status in the eyes of the interview subjects, as a foreigner's ability to speak indigenous languages is held in high regard in Uganda. My lack of language skill in particular highlighted the way in which I am a clear outsider in Uganda, despite having spent two years living in the country previously.

### *Partial Insider, Partial Outsider*

The complexity of my specific positionality in relation to the studied community posed unusual challenges, but also granted specific benefits, compared to those experienced by a complete-insider or complete-outsider. My previous professional experience in the Ministry of Finance, and lived experience in Kampala, granted some advantages beyond those experienced by an insider into public service generally. For example, I was granted access to the research site (the Ministry) upon arrival in Kampala, on the basis of being remembered by the administration staff and security staff of the Ministry—indeed, I was warmly welcomed. The office administrator from the team in which I had formerly worked began referring to me as ‘our returned daughter,’ and introduced me to secretaries and administrators within the Ministry who had been hired during the period I had been away from Uganda. Based on this network of secretaries, I was then able to arrange meetings and interviews with senior members of Ministry staff. In some cases, I was familiar to them as a former colleague, and so was granted permission both to interview them directly and to conduct research within their teams. As a result, I conducted interviews with former colleagues across the Ministry, and those contacts then referred me on to other contacts in other Ministries and agencies, allowing the research to proceed with a ‘snowball’ selection technique for locating interviewees.

As a final advantage of my hybrid insider-outsider status, my previous professional relationship with the studied community meant that interview subjects were able to provide me with smaller amounts of

preliminary information, and instead focus on areas of greater complexity. For example, interview subjects were able to pass briefly over explanations of the mechanics of the Ugandan budget process, knowing that I am already familiar with these mechanics, and instead discuss the more complex political-economy factors driving resource-allocation decisions. Compared to my partial insider knowledge of the Ministry's operations, a complete-insider in the Ministry context would likely have had to invest more time in gaining access to the Ministry, in obtaining permission to undertake research within in, and in developing a core level of understanding about the day-to-day operations of the Ministry, before more complex research could begin to be conducted.

On the other hand, my status as a partial-insider posed some disadvantages, in contrast to the advantages described above. Most importantly, my existing familiarity with the Ministry's functions and systems presents a risk that interviewees would bypass important information, in the mistaken assumption that I am already familiar with this information. During several interviews, the interview subject exclaimed that I am already familiar with the material raised by the interview questions, for example responding to questions with, 'But Christine, you know this already!' On occasion, interviewees had to be encouraged to pretend I was not familiar to them, and to tell 'the whole story.' By encouraging research participants to disregard my previous knowledge, I attempted to overcome the risk that interview subjects may have passed over critical information. Nonetheless, compared to a complete outsider to the studied context, it is possible that I may not have received important information, owing to the interviewees' overestimation of my *a priori* knowledge of the studied context.

A final disadvantage of being a partial-insider, but partial-outsider, in the context of the Ugandan public service is that I may not hold sufficient knowledge of the studied context to be entirely confident that the research subjects have provided me with accurate information. While I do have some background understanding of the specific ministries and broader national context under study, there nonetheless remains a risk that the interview subjects may provide me with information that is either misleading or inaccurate. In order to mitigate this risk, I attempted to base analysis and conclusions on information points that were provided by multiple sources, such as more than one interview, or within interviews as well as databases, or verified in the existing literature. The risk of being provided with incorrect, inaccurate

or incomplete information is a greater risk for me as an insider/outsider hybrid researcher than would be the case for a complete-insider researcher, as a complete insider is more likely to have a stronger ability to ascertain the accuracy of provided information. Conversely, the complete-outsider researcher is more likely to observe the risk of their own inability to discern incorrect information, and so take mitigating steps to crosscheck the information provided. For the partial insider-outsider researcher, the risk remains that the researcher's familiarity with the context of the research will lead them to overestimate their ability to identify inaccurate information that has been provided to them.

A final point of reflection for the partial-insider/partial-outsider researcher, who has an incomplete familiarity with both the context and the individuals who are the focus of study, is to ask what assumptions or pre-conceived ideas I might have brought into the research. These assumptions may affect each stage of the research, from the approach to collecting, analyzing to presenting data; my task is to examine how these pre-configured ideas might influence the research process, and how this influence can be managed. For me, these assumptions relate both to the Ugandan political-economy context, and my potential interactions with my own former colleagues. I had expected that the process of persuading interview subjects to participate in the research would be difficult, based on my assumption that interviewees might be reluctant to discuss the sensitivities and political nuances of the resource-allocation processes. This affected the research in that the interviews conducted in the initial stages of the research discussed non-core topics to the research initially, in order to build up to more challenging topics. However, this proved to be both unnecessary and a barrier to concluding interviews on schedule, so this practice was discarded. Furthermore, I had expected that public servants might be reticent to critique the actions of elected leaders, particularly within Cabinet or other senior government positions, but again this proved not to be the case. Overall, I had overestimated the unwillingness of researchers to discuss politically sensitive topics, and so used more time than was necessary during interviews to introduce these topics.

A second risk for my research that was caused by drawing pre-conceived assumptions is the risk of assuming that the research conducted represents a general, rather than specific, position. My familiarity with the political-economy context of Uganda might lead me to erroneously conclude that the findings from my (limited) research are

representative of general opinions in Uganda, or even of all public servants in Uganda. I run the risk of concluding, where the research findings align with my pre-existing ideas of the research, that these findings are therefore either 'true' or 'general,' rather than a collection of data and information from a limited number of sources. For me, it is imperative to maintain the standpoint that the research conducted occurs within limits of space and time, and these limits should be reflected in the conclusions drawn from the research.

### REFLECTING ON THE HYBRID INSIDER-OUTSIDER EXPERIENCE

Reflecting on my positionality relative to the studied community reveals the complexity of a researcher who has some lived experience of the studied group, but nonetheless remains an outsider to it in many respects. Having had a similar education and professional background to the studied community, but a different national background, poses challenges in collecting and representing data. The additional complexity of having been a part of the studied group, but both briefly and in the past, further contributes to my evolving positionality relative to the studied community. The literature on the relative experiences of the insider-researcher and outsider-researcher suggests that a researcher can be located along a spectrum of inclusion relative to the studied group. In contrast, experiences such as mine indicate that positionality can evolve to a situation of still greater complexity, where a researcher can share some attributes of a group but not others, and can move into and out of the studied group, even before research itself has begun. The situation of a researcher who has been in the past an insider of the studied group, but has now returned to being an outsider, warrants separate consideration. This 'hybrid' insider-outsider researcher's positionality evolves over time, and varies according to the various attributes that they share or do not share with the studied community.

My partial familiarity with the studied community occurs along two planes: familiarity with the studied site, and familiarity with the studied people (or, using Hockey's terminology (1993, p. 199), 'places and peers'). Initially, in terms of data collection, being familiar with the studied site allowed me to capture the advantages of being an 'insider,' such as access to the research site, despite no longer holding the formal status of an insider. Familiarity with 'place' was also beneficial in managing cultural shock, logistics, and other elements of feeling comfortable

in the physical space of the research. While these advantages were beneficial to me, familiarity with the individuals in the studied group was of more value, in terms of data collection. Personal familiarity, and the sharing of some attributes with the studied community, meant that I was warmly welcomed, allowed me to arrange interviews quickly, and to rapidly re-establish rapport with the interviewees who had previously been known to me. While my membership as an insider of the studied group had expired, and I was now an outsider-researcher relative to the studied group, the re-establishment of this previous insider relationship allowed me to bypass many of the barriers to collecting interview data.

In terms of interpreting and analyzing the collected data, my previous partial experience as an insider in the space of the conducted research allowed me to have a stronger understanding of the context in which the data occur. Compared to a complete outsider researcher, I have an at least partial knowledge of the relevant social, political and economic context, and am able to interpret the data within this context. However, it remains important for me to resist becoming over-reliant on this prior knowledge, and mistake the positionality of a partial-insider as being one of a complete insider. Finally, my status as a hybrid insider-outsider in respect of the individuals participating in the research can be beneficial, but can also present risks when analyzing and interpreting the collected data. Should I wrongly assume that my partial prior knowledge of the context grants me substantial insight into the studied community, I risk assuming that the information I received from interviewees is true, or universal, in ways that may not in fact be substantiated. Having been warmly welcomed back into the research site and studied community, it nonetheless remained important for me as a 'returned daughter' to remain as objective as possible in analyzing and communicating the data collected.

## CONCLUSION

When conducting field research, the social sciences researcher is seeking to collect and interpret information to contribute to the body of knowledge about their topic. In doing so, the researcher engages with individuals within a studied community, and with the context in which that individual resides. The researcher may take a range of position- alities in relation to the studied community, and this positionality may



take different forms at different times. The researcher may themselves be a part of the studied community, they may have at one time (but no longer) been a part of the community, they may share some attributes with the studied community but not others, or they may be a complete outsider to the studied community. The positionality of the researcher relative to the community and the individuals they are engaging with for their research will generate opportunities and challenges in the process of collecting, analyzing, and representing data. For the hybrid researcher, sharing some attributes in common with the community, but not others, or perhaps not any longer, can allow the researcher to derive some of the benefits of being both an insider and an outsider relative to the studied community. However, this situation also poses unique risks and challenges to be overcome. For the researcher with an evolving positionality, such as a researcher who has formerly been an insider within the studied community but is now a researcher approaching the community from outside it, the complexity of this relationship introduces a still different set of challenges and opportunities. As the practice of fieldwork becomes more internationalized, with researchers being drawn from a wider range of positionalities relative to their community of study, the importance grows for the researcher of reflexively contemplating their positionality relative to the studied group. In doing so, the researcher is able to identify the challenges and opportunities they are likely to encounter in the process of conducting fieldwork, and the contributions they may be able to make to the body of knowledge in their field.

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