

ETHICAL

DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

A PRIMER FOR RESEARCHERS



RUTH SIDCHOGAN - BATANI

ETHICAL DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES: A PRIMER FOR RESEARCHERS

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MESSAGE

Benguet State University continues to pursue its commitment of providing extension services that are research results aligned with quality education and sustainable development practices. This year's University Foundation theme, "Creating Milestones toward Global Engagements: BSU @102," makes this knowledge product (KP) timely and relevant. It concretizes important steps to bring to fruition our vision of delivering quality education and client satisfaction that promotes sustainable development.

Through this primer, BSU has upscaled research-based initiatives and technologies thru handy materials for use of researchers interested in understanding and documenting indigenous knowledge system in an ethical manner. By circulating this knowledge product, the development of a critical mass of users adopt and champion BSU technologies will be facilitated effectively and support sustainable development and continuing innovations from the field. With this knowledge product, it is our fervent hope that in the long run, it will contribute in improving quality of life and increasing income of our communities and clients.

I congratulate the Office of Extension Services' team for producing this knowledge product which is a testimony of BSU's prolific knowledge generation and continuing commitment to serve its communities. This should encourage other knowledge holders to work on translating their knowledge to tangible KPs.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

FELICIANO G. CALORA JR.

University President

Benguet State University

27 September 2018



MESSAGE

The Research and Extension (R&E) sector's goal explicitly states, "developing relevant and gender sensitive research and extension programs for institutional development, sustainable communities, climate resilience, industry innovation, and partnerships." To do this, there is a need to share research results in different platforms for BSU-R&E outputs to reach the widest audience possible. The knowledge product development by the Office of the Extension Services is a step towards addressing the different needs of our clients in this increasingly competitive and changing world. With many years of extension work, there is an increasing recognition to capacitate extension service providers and one way is to use knowledge products tailored to answer this emerging need. Hence this primer, which puts together long research work outputs as well as actual experiences, aims to facilitate and guide field researchers and extensionists. This primer can also serve as a useful reference for students of research and the general public who are interested to know about ethically guided research and documentation.

It is hoped that this material will be utilized and will serve its purpose which is to serve as handy guide for researchers interested in understanding and documenting indigenous knowledge systems. The primer is a concrete manifestation of technologies generated in the academe and translated into a language that can be used by the popular sector which is the mission of the University research and extension.

I congratulate the Extension sector for coming up with various knowledge products which is a timely response to the very fast changing and challenging prospects of the times. Being the lead University in the region, it is but proper that we also lead in this kind of engagements, while working for excellence and innovation for client satisfaction.

CARLITO P. LAUREAN

Vice-President for Research and Extension
Benguet State University
27 September 2018



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of a handbook on documenting traditional knowledge that is ethically guided was actually an experience of serendipity. Just when I was about to give up because of the long and arduous process of getting ethical clearance of my proposal, I was asked by the National Ethics Committee (NEC) to come up with a Manual of Fieldwork that is ethically guided. After finally getting the Free Prior and Informed Consent and Ethical (FPIC) clearance, my permission was taken to allow the use of the developed manual by Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD) Traditional Knowledge researchers. And again through serendipity, I had taken on the task of chairing the committee that is in charge of setting up the Research Ethics Board of Benguet State University. This sparked the need for me to seriously study "ethics" which also entailed reflexivity of my research practice, and this time this innovation has to be translated into tangible material - in the form of a primer.

Aside from the CRHRDC, PCHRD and NEC of the DOST, the communities of Benguet (Kibungan and Buguias) where I did intensive fieldwork have been influential in terms of shaping my research and documentation practice. My gratefulness goes to the community members in these field sites as well as my other research collaborators, who have taught me what life is and what matters to them. I am equally grateful to my colleagues, to my OES team mates and to the administration specifically my supervisor, Vice-President Laurean who always believe we can do things and to President Calora Jr. for the all-out support. The understanding and kindness of my family has also been my inspiration. Of course gratefulness is also due to Betty Listino, the woman who kept the fire burning for this kind of engagement.

PREFACE

The benefits of having an ethically guided research is that it alerts first time researchers and reminds seasoned researchers of their ethical obligations to communities and research participants. The growing concern for ethics in doing research and documentation especially in Indigenous Peoples communities is not having without basis. The IPRA Law of 1997 defines the need to get Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) through A.O. NO. 1 or The IKSP and Customary Laws Research and Documentation Guidelines of 2012 and later strengthened through AO No. 3 S of 2012 or the Revised Guidelines on FPIC and Related Processes' which has been harmonized with the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB) in 2016 with the aim of protecting and promoting the dignity, well-being and rights of research participants. These guidelines have become imperative in the quest for robust and responsible research and documentation engagements.

Much of the practice of research with ethics largely rests on the researcher herself or himself, meaning her competencies such as exposure, track record, listening skills and work ethics that is anchored on respect and sincerity. This primer therefore provides guideposts that gives importance to participant-researcher interaction. Perhaps an important reminder is that 'we do research beyond the scientific value of research but as member of the same community concerned of the dignity of research collaborators and ultimately, research results should also benefit communities that we work with.

This primer is also informed of actual field practice, local knowledge/s, conversations with peers and mentors, and personal reflection as a researcher. While it might appear that fieldwork that observes ethics are too tasking for researchers, when rendered with understanding of the reasons behind, everything else would come easy.

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INTRODUCTION

The field is a very big space that researchers and communities can interact. Many stories and accounts of journeys come from the field. Many ethical violations are consciously or unconsciously done, as well. Hence, new realizations and discourses including reflexivity become important and precautionary.



The following are the most important components that need to be considered:

1. preparing researchers to go to the field; and
2. ensuring that the rights of research participants/informants are recognized and respected.

If a project employs ethnographic method, it usually requires months of fieldwork. To ensure this, the team composition will have to involve staff trained in the social sciences and one who has an exposure in doing fieldwork. Ideally, the lead researcher should be trained in anthropology and will have to ensure that the field staff is trained and given the proper orientation. The project leader is also required to do substantial fieldwork. Substantial fieldwork would mean ample time for the researcher to immerse oneself in the community so that the needed social preparation is fulfilled. In the present day practice of ethnography, researchers are expected to immerse in the study site for at least two months to include rapport establishment, community preparation and data gathering. In the tradition of anthropology, however, classic fieldworkers require two years of fieldwork to ensure rigor in data gathering.



Ethics in research started with biomedical research where concerns for the human subject is given premium. In the social sciences, research misconduct and exploitation starting from fieldwork up to research utilization is very possible. Ethical research is therefore very important in the following senses:

- a) a show of respect for those who take part in research;
- b) a commitment to positive values; and
- c) to ensure responsible power sharing.

It is assumed that when a researcher goes on-field, he/she already has with him/her privileges and an effort to 'bridge this gap' is by assuming an ethically guided role in the community.

Basic principles of ethics as commonly cited in the literature include:

- autonomy which refers to the research participants' right to self determination;
- beneficence or the promotion of well-being;
- non-maleficence or the 'do-no-harm' policy; and
- justice to include promotion of integrity, free prior and informed consent.



KEY ELEMENTS OF FIELDWORK

1. Previous work engagement

Previous work engagement in a research site is an advantage as familiarity and acceptability is already established. With the view that 'extension' work is part of the RDE continuum, for on-going research and development projects, the study site is usually an extension site. This should be taken as part of the take-off point as far as community immersion is concerned. Balancing research with extension work is also an ethical practice as participants are not only the source of data but are also beneficiaries of any research result.

2. Respect of community rights and particularity

Informants are looked at as knowledge holders, thus their rights are to be respected by facilitating full informed consent. It is therefore necessary to anticipate the costs and benefits involve in a certain project and as Kimmel would say, "ethical problems can arise from the decision to conduct research and the decision not to conduct the research" (Kimmel, 1988).

What community members need to know:

- the overall purpose of the project;
- role of the participants or would-be participants;

- statement of why the subject is chosen;
- the possibility of obtaining secret or sensitive information;
- methodological issues such as 'when, where and how long' the interviews will take;
- description of the benefits to participants;
- how the data can be given back to the study site; and
- data utilization.

The following are the guidelines promulgated by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, but may be adopted by all researchers to suit specific methods and needs (Kimmel, 1996):

- description of the overall purpose of the research;
- information of the participant's role in the study;
- statement of why the subject has been chosen;
- explanation of the procedures – time required, setting, other participants;
- description of the benefits to participants;
- offer to answer any questions; and
- disclosure of alternative procedure where applicable, like medical research.

3. Kinship

When one goes to the rural areas, one's identity and acceptance in the community is more often facilitated by invoking kinship. University researchers usually find themselves going back to their hometown and their identities are established by simply naming relatives and kin in the community and demonstrating familiarity of the culture. If a researcher's work is facilitated through kins, all the more that the residents lack responsible for any ethical violation.

4. *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*: researching the 'indigenous way'

Sikolohiyang Pilipino as a school of thought started with the late V. Enriquez, who forwarded a Filipino style of researching, basically exploratory that allows more participatory approach. The *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* would later become a movement advocating the use of indigenous approach in research.

There are forms and levels of interaction worth noting in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* that aims at discovering cultural particularities (Pe-Pua, 2006) and therefore a cultural sensitive research practice:

- *pagmamaisid* or participant observation;
- *pakiramdam* or feeling one's way through;
- *pakikilahok* or participation;
- *pakikibagay* or conforming;
- *pakikisama* or adjusting and being-along-with; and
- still, other elements are the *pakikipag-palagayang loob* (or building mutual trust), *pakikisangkot* (involvement) and *pakiki-isa* or full trust.

There is also the recognition that the main instrument in all this engagement are the researchers himself/herself. For example, since the research instrument is less structured and open-ended, there is a need to sharpen the skill of listening and alertness in following the drift of the narrative to be able to ask the right questions. The manner of doing things, ethical orientation, and awareness of the implications of every action, has to be noted.



FIELD PREPARATION AND GOOD PRACTICE DURING FIELDWORK

Aside from preparing oneself for fieldwork, there are important documents including field notebook that one needs to bring along during the entire fieldwork duration. Certainly, 'how to start conversations' is problematized as this is important to ensure that informants are 'engaged' in the whole process.

1. Copy of the ethical clearance

One cannot go on fieldwork without the clearance. As of the last Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB)- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) resolution, this agency is already the ethics clearing body that will determine if the study will go through the next step, which is the Free Prior and Informed Consent. For health and health-related researches, it is the same office that will issue the final ethical clearance.

2. Copy of the certification of pre-condition

This works on the assumption that before the start of the fieldwork, the FPIC is already undertaken with NCIP as the main facilitator. This is enshrined in the IPRA law, documentation and research guidelines on IKSPs (AD No. 1, s. 2012).

3. Field guide

Use this primer to imagine the possible scenarios before, during and after fieldwork. Ensure that the team members are given the proper orientation and understanding. The work and financial plan will have to be another important document that a field researcher has to be guided with.

4. Conduct home visits

While on-field, you will visit prospective informants and make appointments through home visits and scheduling of date and time of interview. During these visits, you can already give an initial overview of the research.

5. Take note of what is acceptable to ask in an interview

David Jones (1998) notes that it is acceptable to interview people who have already talked about similar topics before or in this case who have been practicing the theme of the research. Where there is strong taboo, you have to wait for your informants to open the discussions of it. In this case, it is important to have the skills of listening and sensing.

6. Maintain a diary or journal

One cannot underestimate the power of a journal and/or a diary while on-field. At the level of the project leader, keeping a record of what transpired will guide the supervisor in terms of respect of the rights of the project partners and for quick response for any issues that will come out. At the researcher's level, the diary will remind the researcher of what needs to be done, what was not done, etc. Finally, in the writing of reports, the diary will always be a handy guide in pointing out the context scenarios of narratives or idioms/metaphors expressed.

7. Complete a report of every fieldwork and receipts of any transactions

An important reminder for the research team is the reference to local knowledge. In anthropology, it is called the emic (insiders' perspective). It is important to take note of the informant's own

categories, perspectives and classification of any phenomenon. The process of data gathering should therefore be respectful of the insider's views and this can only be done when there is comfort and mutual trust. This usually entails researchers and participants being open with each other, i.e., "Ang pagtatalambuhay ay hindi lamang mula sa informant kundi pati na rin ang nananaliksik." In the first place, researchers are to listen to life stories which can be intrusive of the personal and so it is but proper that both researcher and informant share their own stories.

On a personal note, I did my dissertation on pesticide ingestion in one community in the Mountain Trail areas and this entailed ethical clearance even if UP-Diliman at that time was not yet requiring it. Part of the reflexivity was to tell my own stories (fear, anxiety, dreams) including having a special child which I find paradoxical as I see young lives wasted through pesticide ingestion, while I have been living and struggling to care for my special son.

Additional checklist, especially for Research Assistants can include:

- clearances (FPIC, ethics);
- plan in dealing with emergencies or tension, this means having contact with the local supervisor, the local focal person which can include an elder or council of elders or the Punong Barangay;
- ensure preliminary visits are made; familiarize yourselves with the names of the locals whom you have talked with earlier; members of the kin, etc.;
- coordinate with the locals to ensure that in-depth interviews or focused group discussions (FGD) are scheduled at a time that is convenient to informants. This also means researchers must be aware of the community's agricultural cycle. Even if scheduled, if informant is unavailable, then the researcher has to adjust;
- food, flashlights, proper clothing, etc.;
- hardware and software;

- logistics;
- copies of documents;
- literature review;
- think about what to expect on field, i.e., make arrangements as to lodging, sleeping with host's house if needed and the proper food and work counterpart;
- create local network/support and be open for possibilities;
- orient oneself of the local norms and proper behavior;
- keep track of the seasonal calendar of the community; it is unethical if one becomes a nuisance during days where workload is full but it can also be a potential area for participant observation to happen but only if one can effectively participate, otherwise one can become annoying;
- prepare yourself in terms of observing courtesy, listening and questioning skills, observing, and documenting;
- be conscious of scheduled activities and be prompt in meeting with community members; and
- take note of the cultural meanings attached to expressions, metaphors or even the other forms of expressions as these can be social communicators of other relevant phenomenon.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Recognizing that there is low enforceability of norms and customary laws and the fact that it is always the formal, legal that is enforced (Cariño, 2018); therefore, be mindful of the following reminders.

1. Research participants are collaborators.

Research projects should always be guided by the framing that research participants are collaborators, with the local knowledge recognized as having equal standing with science. Subsequent planning of activities for the research as well as in response to their (community informants) needs will therefore involve the research collaborators. In the present day efforts of framing indigenous research methodologies, there is the assumption that there is willingness on the part of the indigenous researchers (like ourselves) to provide a textual construction of the community's indigenous knowledge systems.

2. Take note of the context.

Context is taken not only as the backdrop of knowledge system surrounding a chosen theme, but is crucial in the understanding of local memories and effectiveness of such specific knowledge. Correspondingly, contextual analysis entails looking for meanings and the need to interpret events for meanings and to avoid falling into the trap of wrong interpretations, the collaborative nature of the project should somehow ensure the needed contextual

understanding. Contextualized research is argued to allow participants to explain themselves so that local concepts and constructs figure (Tan, 2002; Goulding, 2005).

3. Establish good relationship with research partners.

The principles of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) should pave the way for establishing relationships to make the research relevant and address issues and concerns of research partners. Ultimately, this also aims at establishing good, equal and respectful relationship in the process.

4. Participatory Action Research completes the intended collaborative research.

This will involve people not only as participants but also as learners in the data gathering processes. Local protocols and customs will be given premium throughout the research process. To ensure this, the researchers have to be informed of local history and local norms so that the interactive process of documenting and writing is altogether undertaken. As interview guide is open ended, the formulation of interview questions will have to seek the active participation of key people in the locality.

5. Consent seeking is not a one-shot event.

The FPIC that is done with the NCIP is just one part of the whole project phase and is done to formalize the engagement. Consent seeking will be done in a continuous manner and throughout the project phase. For instance, consent will also be sought during documentation phase (taking of photos, taking down notes), during the interview such as when it is alright to use tape recorder, during the packaging of reports (which data are to be retained in the community, and which data is for the public), and whenever the researchers deem it is necessary to talk about it.

The manner of consent seeking is not necessarily formal but has to be made clear that the participant's consent is asked and given. Most

indigenous communities in the Cordillera still observe consensual decision-making and this practice will guide the practice in the whole research cycle stages.



In each research stage, guideposts as cited in the notes of Canilao (2002) and Steinar Kvale (1996) include the following:

1. Thematizing

The purpose of the study should go beyond the scientific value of the knowledge sought and consider the improvement of the human situation investigated. For example, in a digitalization project, the researchers share the value of documenting and preserving through digitalization, with the community's consent.

2. Designing

Ethical steps under research design include obtaining the subject's informed consent to participate in the study, securing confidentiality, and considering the possible consequences of the study on the subjects.

3. Interview situation

During the interview, the confidentiality of the subjects' report needs to be clarified and the consequences of the interview be taken into account, such as stress during the interview and changes in self-image.

4. Transcription

Again, confidentiality plus faithful written transcription of an interviewee's oral statements are ethical considerations.

5. Analysis

Ethical considerations include how deeply and critically the interviews can be analyzed and whether subjects should have a say in how their statements are to be interpreted.

6. Verification

It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to report knowledge that is secured and verified as possible.

7. Reporting

Again, confidentiality is important when reporting the interviews, as well as careful concern for consequences of the published report on the interviewees as well as on the group or institution they represent. Again, feminist ethics reminds us that there is ethics in data processing. One can guard violations of rights by showing the end result such as the articles or write-ups for publications, rather than the unedited transcript (Maynard and Purvis, 1994 cited in Canilao, 2002).

As Tan would emphasize, finding common threats in interview data and drawing the key messages is what matters.

8. Secret knowledge

With the issues surrounding secret knowledge for a particular community, it is recommended that at the very outset, any secret knowledge of the community will have to be kept in the community by the community, and so informants should not reveal it to the researchers; (roundtable discussions with Philippine Indigenous Knowledge Network (PIKN, 2018).

As also laid down in the project concept template (Sia et.al, 2011) is the principle of collective authorship and capacitating research partners which can be both empowering and ethically responsible. The capacity building component will be embedded in the participatory approach where documentation skills can be taught aside from more formal trainings on documentation. Policy lobby is with another area where people's participation can be taken, specifically the LGU and the elders. Still another is the development of instructional materials for use in the school, specifically in Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) of the Department of Education.



SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND CARE ETHICS

An important element and cross cutting value in this kind of research project is the fact that 'what we are studying' is part of our 'culture and identity.' These are the compelling reasons why we wish to engage in this project in the first place. This means that we carry a big accountability to our 'knowledge holders' who are themselves the rights bearers, and to the next generation and to this particular indigenous communities whom we also belong. In the discourses on feminist research, the issues of gender, class and ethnicity is a conceptual framing that cannot be ignored. So that part of our 'reflexivity' is to conduct any project in rigorous, accountable, responsible manner as we are part of the culture we are studying. This would also mean awareness of the many ways the research project can have to our communities, to our individual and group research participants and we take responsibility in 'caring' for these communities by respecting and giving premium to the different 'subjectivities' including our own 'subjectivities' and biases and to be able to temper whatever 'power' gaps that may come in between. It is always good to go back to our values as an individual and how much we can be open to 'learning' and in transforming ourselves in the journey of research.

Part of ensuring comfortable project implementation is to observe basic rules. Again, community immersion is very basic where feeling one's way (in *Sikolohiyang Pilipino*, *pakapa-kapa* and *pakiramdaman*) and getting familiar of the norms is very important. Transparency and 'getting accepted' is the main aim of the first weeks of fieldwork. Other basics are presented in the next section.

Data Gathering Techniques

These techniques were employed and enriched from 2012-2015 during my doctoral dissertation on the topic pesticide self-ingestion in a community in Northern Luzon. These are then modified from the submitted document for ethical clearance to the Cordillera Regional Health Research and Development Consortium (CRHRDC) and UP-Diliman Department of Anthropology.



1.

Participant observation

This shall be employed to validate analytic themes and how such theme explain behaviour in a variety of setting. Participation and observation of particular events and activities will also be employed to further build on the emic perspective.



2.

Key informant interview

These are community members who are knowledgeable of the social and cultural life of the community and considered as authorities of the culture and even history of the place. Some educators or even health caregivers can also be included as their answers can provide an interesting caveat in the study.



3.

In-depth interview

In the literature, this is described as conversation with a purpose. This will be coupled with informal conversational interviewing with individuals or groups of individuals.

Focused group discussion (FGD)

Many literature have already talked much about FGDs and for this particular project, the use of FGD needs social preparation so as to avoid any negativity to the members of the focused group. The basic principles of conducting and reporting FGDs will have to be noted.



Case description

The data gathered through case studies are different from the other methods of data gathering, but these can also synthesize the whole community story of the subject matter. The value of case presentation rests on the manner it is able to weave the story of the storyteller in relation to the story of the whole community.



Do's and Don'ts for Researchers

1. For every phase of the project, there should be consent seeking.
The individual consent form should be brought along, even if this is not to be immediately used or signed by the research participant.
2. If research participants refuse to answer a particular question or if prospective participants do not want to be disturbed at the time of set schedules, then the researcher is the one who will have to adjust and prepare for another round.
3. Take care of yourself as you can be the subject of observation and the way one present himself/herself matters a lot – it can be encouraging or otherwise. Depending on how one carries oneself in the field, fertile discussions can come about (from the Fieldwork Manual of La Trobe University).
4. Doing fieldwork carries responsibilities including proper dress code, appropriating oneself with local norms.
5. As the project entails extended fieldwork, one has to prepare for a somewhat different life (compared to the life one is used to). If one has to interrupt fieldwork for family or any personal reasons, one has to properly inform the team and the key persons in the communities you are working with. This is a responsibility of fieldwork.

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Using an anthropological lens, her research interests include women studies, identity studies, indigenous peoples and development, and agricultural anthropology. She has extensive fieldwork in Benguet and recently, has engaged in “extension” activities as part of her ethical practice in research and development.



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