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Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Challenges to the Study of Immigrants: Perils and Possibilities

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Abstract

Research on immigrant communities has often been reductionist, stereotypical, and simplistic, and even the most well-intentioned researchers are susceptible to using cultural deficit models. This chapter critically evaluates some of the dominant tensions and problem areas with respect to researching immigrant communities. Specifically, we analyze three primary challenges that researchers encounter: the heterogeneity of immigrant lives, adequate representations of immigrant communities, and researcher privilege. In addition to identifying these unique theoretical, methodological, and ethical concerns, we draw from critical theory, feminist scholarship, and cultural psychology to provide an interdisciplinary solution. For researchers investigating immigrant communities, we advocate the following: (a) grounding of intersectional frameworks; (b) reliance on a risk and resilience framework; (c) phenomenological understanding of immigrants' everyday lives; (d) inclusion of immigrant participants' voices; and (e) cultivation of negative capability. Finally, we briefly review selected studies that address three recurring challenges that researchers face and heed our five recommendations. © 2013 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

America is heralded as a land of opportunity that has attracted millions of immigrants over centuries. Whether or not such a lauded image of the New World is justifiable, the United States of America has shaped the imaginations and dreams of many immigrants. Most of the early immigrant research was shaped by the concerns and anxieties over the nativists' anti-immigrant attitudes (i.e., large number of immigrants will pollute the cultural purity, disrupt the communal harmony, and present a menace to the public health of the American culture; Jacobson, 1999). Early research on immigrants either tried to assuage, legitimize, or challenge nativists' concerns (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 1999). Most of the early researchers of immigrant communities were outsiders. Often, their access to the immigrant communities was limited due to language and cultural barriers.

Ethical obligations of a researcher go beyond obtaining proper human subject approval and consent to participate. Anthropologist Bourgois (1990) called for a "*moral argument for theoretical compassion*" (emphasis added; p. 45) and a methodological praxis that contributes to the empowerment of "poor and powerless." Narayan's (1993) evocative discussion about the need to rethink the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" resonates with the predicaments of researchers:

> One wall stands between ourselves as interested readers of stories and as theory-driven professionals; another wall stands between narrative (associated to subjective knowledge) and analysis (associated with objective truths). By situating ourselves as subjects simultaneously touched by life-experiences and swayed by professional concerns, we can acknowledge the hybrid and positioned nature of our identities. (p. 682)

In line with these hybrid and positional identities, we emphasize the theoretical, methodological, and moral implications while doing research in immigrant communities where the different possibilities of performativities for the researcher and the researched profoundly shape all stages of conducting research. We propose an interdisciplinary framework drawing from anthropology, critical theory (academic enterprises that offer social commentary with the goal of liberating all human individuals; Bohman, 2012), and feminist scholarship (projects that assume gender is a critical category around which humans organize their individual and social lives; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). We then use this framework to foreground the epistemic position of a researcher whose privileged subject position has the power to create, silence, or reify the various subjectivities of the object of their inquiry. By epistemic position and standpoint, we refer to the ways in which an individual's various social identities interact, which ultimately inform the ways in which he or she perceives and is perceived by society. The epistemic standpoint of a researcher specifically has a unique vantage point that has the potential to empower as well as

marginalize the subject position(s) of immigrants. Occupying such a distinct epistemic vantage has profound ethical implications for how to theorize and what methods to use to study immigrant communities. Our chapter is shaped by this overarching goal.

We argue that the ethical challenges for a researcher encompass theoretical and methodological consideration of the unique predicaments of immigrants (many of which parallel those addressed in Hernández et al. in Chapter Four of this volume). In this chapter, we identify three major interrelated challenges faced by researchers: (a) heterogeneity and immigrant communities, (b) representations of immigrant communities, and (c) privilege. We then offer five recommendations to meet these challenges. First, we need to include an intersectional framework where the situated nature of social identities and social location guide the researchers' research questions. Second, we need to use a risk and resilience framework to study immigrant communities. Third, we need to have a phenomenological understanding of immigrants' lived experiences to fully understand their lives (including the consequences of embodying certain racialized and stigmatized identities). Fourth, immigrant research also needs to have a collaborative component whereby immigrants are given opportunities to authentically speak about themselves. Using Photovoice as an example of a research tool, we illustrate how to develop an emic perspective to develop a deeper understanding of immigrant lives and the power difference between researcher and the participant. Fifth, drawing on Keats' (1817) notion of *negative capability*, we suggest the researcher must cultivate negative capability to have an empathic understanding of the phenomenology of the lived experiences of immigrants.

Heterogeneity and Immigrant Communities

Cultural approaches to studying immigrants frequently essentialize ethnic identities. Often, national identities are conflated with ethnic identities. For instance, Chinese immigrants in the United States come from a wide range of geographical locations (e.g., Vietnam, Taiwan, Hong Kong) including mainland China. The label "Chinese immigrant" fails to take into account the social location and shared (and at times antagonistic) histories among these geographical groups. Instead of locating immigrants' identities to an ethnic label, researchers need to understand the sociocultural contexts of specific immigrant communities. Broader ethnic labels, such as "Asian immigrant," may not capture the nuanced cultural differences between and within ethnic groups. The social location of immigrants is also situated in transnational locations (Pedraza, 2006).

Social location plays a critical role in how immigrants transform their identities. Researchers need to move beyond essentialist assumptions about immigrant identities. Identity is situated, meaning that the interplay

among our various social category memberships dictate the kinds of information to which we have access (Anderson, 2012). Therefore, researchers must examine the situated nature of immigrant identities, locating immigrant identities to a set of cultural practices where immigrants participate, reproduce, and transform their identities. Immigrants are *folk anthropologists and informants* (Mahalingam, 2006). They interpret and inform the dominant culture about their ethnic cultural practices. The contours of their cultural practices are also shaped by their transnational connections. It is critical to understand the heterogeneity in an immigrant's understanding of culture at two levels. At one level, culture as a *mental representation* refers to the predicament of immigrants whereby they must consciously reflect on their culture due to their displacement. At the other level, culture as a *situated practice* refers to the enactment of culture in everyday practices that authenticate identities. To study immigrants, researchers need to be careful about the *concordance* as well as the *discordance* between these two levels of understanding culture.

Representations of Immigrant Communities

One of the major ethical challenges for any researcher is how to represent immigrant communities. The responsibility of representing the immigrant community lies with the researcher because these representations shape the lives of immigrants in complex ways. We identify two major interrelated ethical challenges in the representation of immigrants: (a) deficit model and (b) ethnophaulism.

Researchers view the lives of immigrant communities through a cultural gaze that implicitly views the dominant cultural practices, values, and norms as normative and desirable. Approaching immigrant communities with such hegemonic values and assumptions results in research findings that portray immigrant communities as culturally inferior and deficient; such an approach is considered a *cultural deficit model*. Using dominant cultural referents to study immigrants fails to explore the cultural psychological underpinnings and salience of certain practices and values that are pervasive in the immigrant communities. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) cautioned against using a cultural deficit model to study immigrant children. Harry and Klingner (2007) pointed out that the social cultural deficit lens used to explain disparities in developmental and academic outcomes pathologizes ethnic minority children. Within ethnic minorities, variations from dominant practices are seen as aberrations and causes of observed deficits (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). For instance, research based on deficit model assumptions shapes intervention programs that are designed to help immigrant children compensate for their assumed deficits in a variety of developmental outcomes (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Research derived from normative and hegemonic

assumptions about cultural practices and child development perpetuates cultural stereotypes about immigrants. Taken together, such stereotypes—and cultural deficit models more generally—are problematic not only because of the negative portrayals of immigrants but also because of their adverse impact on immigrants' psychological well-being.

Ethnophaulism refers to slurs and negative social representations of immigrants (Mullen, 2001). In an archival study of representations of ethnic immigrants over a period of 150 years, Mullen (2001) found that two facets (complexity and valence) of immigrant representations characterize how dominant cultures viewed immigrants. The first of these two representations, complexity, refers to the ways in which members of immigrant communities are often portrayed as "simple" beings who are not as cognitively complex as "native" individuals. The second of these two representations, valence, refers to the ways in which members of immigrant communities are often portrayed as embodying negative, undesirable characteristics. According to Mullen (2001), ethnophaulisms help to preserve intergroup boundaries and shape immigrant policies. Mullen and Smith (2004) found that ethnophaulisms were also a significant predictor of suicide rates among immigrants. Thus, research findings based on deficit assumptions of immigrants have the potential to perpetuate ethnophaulisms, which in turn could shape how immigrants view themselves, attitudes toward immigrant groups, and policies that affect the lives of immigrants. Researchers, therefore, have the ethical responsibility to be reflective and mindful of their theoretical and methodological approaches to study immigrant groups. (Guiding principles and practices toward doing so can be found in Chapter Four of this volume). They also must be aware of unintentionally adopting a deficit model assumption about the immigrant groups they study.

Privilege

Privilege awareness is an important ethical consideration when we study immigrant communities. Understanding one's relationship with immigrant communities is critical to the study of immigrants. Researchers of immigrant communities are members of powerful institutions and maintain privileged social locations. Social constructionists have delineated the role of power and privilege in our ability to construct social categories, such as race, gender, and sexualities (Grosz, 1994). Privileged social location enables a researcher to define and construct a representation of an immigrant community. Researchers have several axes of privileged identities. Language fluency, socioeconomic status (SES), and the cultural capital that comes with being a researcher are some of the most prominent kinds of privileges. In addition, affiliations with the academy—such as formal university appointments and relationships with research funding

organizations—confer additional status with respect to access to higher education and the corresponding social prestige. Researchers may not live in an ethnic enclave or have established socially ties to an immigrant community. Power differentials between the researchers and their participants span all these dimensions and, ironically, have the potential to marginalize the voices of immigrant participants.

Without substantial contact with immigrant communities and consideration to empower them, findings from such "commuter researchers" (Elise & Umoja, 1992) may result in caricatures of immigrants. Embodiment is central to the process of becoming the "other." Such caricatures vis-à-vis embodiment reduce the physical and figurative bodies of immigrants to empty placeholders in which to inscribe dominant narratives (Grosz, 1994). Although immigrants come with wide ranges of cultural capital, there still exists a large power difference in the cultural capital between the researcher and immigrants. Apart from SES and language, bodies also play a prominent role in relegating unique immigrant individuals to a generic "other." Bodies of marginalized group members become targets of various cultural transmutations in the dominant cultural narratives. The body is one of the most critical sites to construct ideologies that control and constrain the lives of those who embody marginalized identities (Grosz, 1994). Researchers who work with immigrant communities have the potential to cast immigrants as the "other," thus legitimizing and reifying the representations, values, and practices of the majority culture.

In sum, we identified three interrelated challenges for a researcher who researches immigrant communities: (a) heterogeneity among immigrant groups, (b) representations of immigrant groups, and (c) power and privileged social locations of the researcher. In the following sections, we provide five major recommendations to overcome the challenges, with some examples.

Embrace an Intersectional Perspective

Critical feminist theorist Crenshaw (1995) called for an intersectional approach to study how various social identities simultaneously affect the lives of marginalized community members. Embodying multiple marginalized identities has adverse consequences that are multiplicative in nature and thus cannot be adequately explained by an additive approach (the dominant method to study identities in the social sciences). For example, race, class, and gender as identities simultaneously affect a person's lived experience in ways that are more than a sum of the discrete effects of race, class, and gender. For professional Latina mothers who are lesbian or heterosexual identified, "the psychological consequences of everyday interactions will be qualitatively different, despite their shared identity as a mother" (Stewart & McDermott, 2004, p. 533). In response, intersectional

theorists have emphasized the need to understand a social identity not exclusively but inclusively at the intersections of various other social identities that are embedded in a particular social location. Using the previous example, differences in key social interactions such as the negotiation of household division of labor and relationships with the legal system would be obscured if the research project examined Latina motherhood irrespective of the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Mahalingam (2007) defined intersectionality as an interplay between a person and his or her social location. A person's experience of race, class, gender, and sexuality is situated in a matrix of social and cultural factors. Put differently, "intersectionality is a triangulation of a subject vis-à-vis his or her social location and social positioning along race, class, gender and caste. This process is dynamic, multidimensional and historically contingent" (Mahalingam, 2007, p. 43). Stewart and McDermott (2004) defined three tenets of intersectionality: (a) no social group is homogeneous; (b) people must be located in terms of social structures that capture power relations implied by those structures; and (c) there are unique and nonadditive effects of identifying with more than one social group.

Psychologists can take advantage of an intersectional framework in a number of ways to more ethically and comprehensively study the lives of immigrants. Mahalingam, Hajski, and Sanders (2012) outlined three different ways of adopting an intersectional framework. One way to adopt an intersectional framework is to focus on how the embodiment of various social identities simultaneously affects the lives of an immigrant. For example, gender role expectations of immigrant sons and daughters are shaped by the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and social class. As such, being a woman and an ethnic immigrant affects gender role negotiation. A second approach is to emphasize how the *intersecting contexts* shape the experience of social identities. Mahalingam, Balan, and Molina (2009) defined *transnational intersectionality* to study the unique predicaments of transnational mothers whose identities were situated across national boundaries. Villenas (2001) studied Hispanic immigrant women's narrative accounts of idealized beliefs about motherhood in opposition to American motherhood. Marginalized immigrant location accentuated the need to construct an idealized belief system about motherhood. A third approach is to study intersectional awareness as an individual difference variable. This approach focuses on immigrants' awareness about the intersections of multiple identities and the privileges and disadvantages associated with his or her identities. Such critical intersectional awareness is found to be positively related to coalition building, perspective taking, and awareness of various kinds of privileges (Mahalingam & Hajski, 2012). An intersectional perspective will thus enable researchers to understand the heterogeneity in the immigrant experiences and allow for complexity in the lives of immigrants, while in the process addressing a shortcoming of conventional cultural deficit models.

Identify Risk and Protective Factors

Often research on immigrants uses a cultural deficit model, which portrays the immigrant experience as a simple and negative endeavor. For an immigrant, migrating to a new culture means leaving behind one's cultural heritage and homeland. This requires perseverance, courage, and resilience. As folk anthropologists (Mahalingam, 2006), new immigrants learn how to negotiate the demands of a new culture where they have to rethink, reinterpret, and enact their complex cultural identities. Additionally, many immigrants embody multiply marginalized social identities. Many factors adversely affect their lives. Yet immigrants thrive and work hard to overcome these barriers to success to create a better life for themselves and for their families. Thus, it is critical to identify risk as well as protective factors that shape the lives of immigrants.

According to Ungar et al. (2007), research on resilience tended to focus on individually mediated factors associated with positive outcomes. Instead, resilience can be conceptualized not just as an entity but also as a process. We argue for a process-based approach to studying resilience, where the focus is on the *interaction* between individuals and their cultural and ecological contexts. Here resilience is conceptualized "both as an outcome of interactions between individuals and their environments, and the processes which contribute to these outcomes" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 288). Instead of comparing immigrants to the ideal U.S. citizen—a "healthy," White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied man—Ungar et al. (2007) instead advocate a cultural approach to study resilience where culture is not used either as a confounding variable or as a variable to explain the difference between mainstream groups and ethnic minorities (Boyden & Mann, 2005, cited in Ungar et al., 2007). Resilience research needs to be sensitive to culturally embedded notions of positive development where resilience is viewed as a person's ability to overcome adversity in relation to the capacity of his or her "environment to provide health-enhancing resources *to culturally relevant ways* (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 288). Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003) caution against conceptualizing cultural differences as traits. Instead, the focus should be on the history of engagement in a repertoire of practices that are culturally valued (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Researchers who study immigrant communities also face the challenges of understanding practices that often seem at odds with mainstream cultural practices. For example, children of immigrants often act as cultural brokers to help their parents in a variety of tasks, ranging from talking to cable companies to translating contracts to buy a new house (Trickett & Jones, 2007; Weisskirch, 2007). Cultural brokering is an experience unique to immigrant children that carries positive and negative consequences. Weisskirch (2007) found that while cultural brokering enhanced the self-esteem of adolescents, it was also a source of stress. In

line with this finding, using a risk and resilience framework will help to overcome the deficit model that perpetuates ethnic stereotypes, instead offering a deeper, more nuanced understanding of immigrant lives.

Phenomenological Approaches

Understanding the unique predicaments of immigrants is a challenging task. A phenomenological understanding of immigrants' lives and experiences is essential to explore the situated nature of their identities, which are also often embedded in a transnational cultural context. In "The Productive Paradoxes of William James," Allport (1943) presents six quandaries that will at some point riddle all psychologists. One of these riddles is that of *positivism*: "Are the objective methods you by preference employ suited to the subjective facts that are your ultimate data?" (p. 96). *Positivism* refers to an essential belief that all reality is observable and that these observations can be conducted objectively. Allport described observing a shift in James' writing toward a more radical empiricism inspired by phenomenological concerns:

> As the years went by [James] shifted his emphasis more and more from the positivistic empiricism to which he himself had given such impulse, and defended that special form of subjectivism which he chose to call "radical empiricism." Radical empiricism has never become integrated with modern psychology. It might have served as the foundations for an American school of phenomenology, but it did not. (pp. 100–101)

We call for such a "radical empiricism" where objective quantitative approaches are complemented by the use of critical qualitative methods to fully understand how immigrants make sense of their life experiences (see Hernández et al., Chapter Four of this volume). According to Allport (1943), James's understanding of radical empiricism entailed "a tentative theory of knowledge, admitting all experiences of fact as hypotheses to be verified in the course of future experience" (p. 101). This is consistent with *phenomenological approaches*, "the study of essences ... the conscious experience of how a person relates to the lived world that she or he inhabits" (Orbe, 2000, p. 605). These approaches may seem unscientific or incompatible with contemporary psychology, given their avowed repudiation of an objective reality (Orbe, 2000), but in fact many of the earliest, seminal psychology studies were informed by qualitative and naturalistic methods (e.g., Atwood & Tomkins, 1976; Freud, 1898; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961).

Drawing from Marxist metatheories, Hartsock (1983) argues that *feminist standpoint theory* can be used to understand all forms of domination and oppression, because it describes "female experience at a particular time and place, located within a particular set of social relations" (p. 303). Most societies are marked by sexualized divisions of labor that inevitably

structure social relations. As such—because women and men have categorically different experiences—each group possesses unique, valuable information. This is in strong contrast to positivism, which would argue that men and women have access to the same (objective) information regarding their material surroundings.

A related but distinct notion is Haraway's (1988) conceptualization of *situated knowledges*. According to Haraway, "[a]ll Western cultural narratives about objectivity are allegories of the ideologies governing the relations of what we call mind and body, distance and responsibility" (p. 583). In other words, the only way to achieve "objectivity" is by adopting "partial perspective[s]" (p. 583); the more of these partial perspectives we consider, the richer and more multidimensional our models and theories can be. Taken together, these understandings of and calls for feminist standpoint and situated knowledges inform what it means to be the "other," a position often inhabited by immigrants.

As mentioned, embodiment is central to the process of becoming the "other." Racialization of immigrant identities—a process by which immigrant identities are triangulated in the White–Black racial continuum—is pervasive in the United States (Bhatia & Ram, 2009). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), embodiment mediates the relationship between a person and his or her world. If the relationship is disturbed because of misidentification, then there are profound consequences for those who embody those identities. They pay a heavy price (sometimes with their own lives) for such misembodiment (Mahalingam, 2012).

There are several examples in the history of immigration that illustrate the dire consequences of such misembodiment. In 1982 in Detroit, Vincent Chin, a Chinese graduate student, was shot to death point-blank because the shooter, a laid-off auto industry worker, thought he was Japanese (the perpetrator was acquitted and did not spend any jail time). According to Prashad (2012), there were 645 attacks on Sikh immigrants after 9/11 because they misembody (Mahalingam, 2012) a Middle Eastern looking "Muslim terrorist" identity. In a study of Sikh adolescents in New York City, Verma (2006) found that after 9/11 Sikh youth have been targets of bullying and harassment (both verbal and physical) in school. The recent killing of seven Sikhs in a Gurdwara in Milwaukee is another such example.

Taken together, a phenomenological understanding of embodiment where misembodiment affects the everyday lives of immigrants is critical to understand immigrants who are misidentified. Sikh men in particular are vulnerable to being misread and misidentified. They are stopped more often at airports and are disproportionately at the receiving end of verbal taunts and insults (Ahluwalia, 2011). Thus, a phenomenological understanding of misidentification and misembodiment is critical to explore the complex dimensions of racialized immigrant identities and the resulting adverse impact on immigrants' psychological and physical well-being.

Give Voice to Immigrants: Immigrant as a Research Collaborator

Researchers of immigrant communities, given their privileged standpoint in the academy and society more generally, must consciously and thoughtfully contend with this privilege. With deliberate effort, it is possible to separate a researcher's positionality from the materials or people he or she studies. Otherwise, participants are at risk for becoming dehumanized "subjects" who only provide us with data to discern an unequivocal "truth" and contribute to a value-free science. Therefore, the epistemic position of the researcher needs to be considered. How do we incorporate these concepts of standpoint theory and situated knowledge into systematic, rigorous psychological research on immigrants? Most important, these theories can facilitate and inform the ways in which we "give voice" to marginalized groups. What does it mean to give voice? An informal examination of psychology research articles drawing from this concept suggests that "to give voice" means to "represent" previously "unheard" experiences and accounts (e.g., Harper, Jernewall, & Zeal, 2004; Worcester, Nesman, Raffaele Mendez, & Keller, 2008). Often, studies aiming to amplify previously unheard voices incorporate qualitative methods. One such approach is Photovoice, which we conceptualize as both a methodological refinement and conceptual intervention.

"Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique … [vis-à-vis a] participatory means of sharing expertise and knowledge" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 369). Thus, Photovoice users are "visual anthropologists" (Wang, Burris, & Ping, 1996). The aims of Photovoice are threefold: to facilitate the identification of community assets and areas for improvement, to raise awareness and consciousness regarding these assets and areas for improvement via the sharing of photographs, and to enable communication between Photovoice participants and stakeholders (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice techniques locate their roots in documentary art, feminist theory, participatory action research, and Freirean critical theory.

Given these origins, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of the research using Photovoice interventions has sought to understand and empower disenfranchised groups. We now describe an example of how Photovoice can be used to address problems that arise when attempting to represent the "Other."

One of the first implementations of Photovoice occurred in the Yunnan Women's Reproductive Health and Development Program (Wang & Burris, 1997). Facilitators spent 1 month training approximately 50 women from Yunnan, a rural, impoverished province in mainland China. Facilitators addressed the following topics: basic photography skills (including camera care, shooting techniques, and film developing), ways

to approach portrait subjects, ethics surrounding requesting consent from subjects, and methods to evaluate photographs. Facilitators must be sure to *facilitate* and not *micromanage*; whenever possible, facilitators ought to give less, rather than more, technical information (to *enhance*, rather than *constrain*, creativity).

Once the Yunnan women were trained with respect to basic technical and ethical issues in photography, they were instructed to capture "the spirit of village women's everyday lives" (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 378). Once developed, the photographs were projected on a screen for all of the participants to see, accompanied by captions created by the respective photographers. In addition to providing participants with a creative outlet and opportunity to "compliment" their communities, another purpose of Photovoice is for community needs assessment (taking "inventory" of a community's virtues, values, difficulties, and vulnerabilities). As such, using Photovoice for needs assessment entails three stages: identifying images that most authentically capture a community's assets and areas for improvement, sharing information to clarify what the images mean, and ascertaining recurring stories and dominant concerns. These stages closely parallel the key steps that characterize phenomenological modes of inquiry (Orbe, 2000).

Each of these three stages—identifying images, sharing information, and clarifying meaning—can be conducted by the participants. After all, it is participants who capture the photographs; they, too, can select and organize the images in a way that best represents their daily lives. Thus, the first stage of the Photovoice technique entails participants capturing images that represent "a day in the life" of their community. The second stage can be represented by the acronym VOICE—voicing *o*ur *i*ndividual and *c*ollective *e*xperience (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 381). Through small group discussions, participants enact their roles as "visual anthropologists" to create captions and share stories that help expand or clarify the meaning of the images. Finally, in the third stage, participants can systematically (and informally) codify the images to identify common narratives and shared experiences. Indeed, after the Yunnan women collected, analyzed, and shared their photographs, they then displayed them in public forums, wherein the images undoubtedly resonated with community observers.

In addition to highlighting the importance of shared experiences and strengthening connections within communities, Photovoice sometimes directly facilitates communication between participants and policymakers. Moreover, this participatory action research method can also help particular groups of people communicate about sensitive and "weighty" topics (e.g., Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). Given the projective (rather than structured) nature of the tasks involved, Photovoice allows participants to address community problems in a safe, judgment-free context. To our knowledge, there are only two reported applications of

Photovoice to immigrant communities (Fitzpatrick et al., 2009; Rhodes & Hergenrather, 2007). Although Photovoice is by no means the only way to ethically research immigrant communities, we present it as one illustration of a mixed-methods research design that breaks down the power differential between researcher and (immigrant) participant.

Thus, Photovoice can be used as a tool to take "inventories" of community issues and elucidate new information regarding schools, parks, and health concerns. Moreover, the information collected can produce rich artifacts for disenfranchised groups, and in the process empower them to be folk anthropologists. The "byproduct" of administering a Photovoice intervention also offers a visual narrative that can complement quantitative data. Feminist scholars, postcolonial theorists, and psychologists employing qualitative methods have embraced phenomenological methods in a way that can coexist within empirical psychology. Taken together, these subaltern approaches to psychology research methods can allow us to "give voice" to marginalized, underrepresented, and otherwise silenced communities. Photovoice—given its lack of preconceived assumptions, consideration of participants as co-researchers and folk anthropologists, and inherent goal of community change—is one such approach to incorporate the experiences of immigrant communities into our theories and research questions in an ethically responsible way. Moreover, Photovoice represents a mixed-methods research design whereby researchers can relinquish power and privilege, given that the central research questions and content of the project are largely participant driven, ultimately centralizing a community's perspective on a given health or policy issue.

Limitations of Photovoice

As with any research tool, there are a number of concerns that researchers ought to consider when deciding to implement a Photovoice project (see Catalani & Minkler, 2010 for a review). For example, the immigrant-origin youth experience is one often marked by feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty (see Suárez-Orozco & Yoshikawa, Chapter Five of this volume). This negative affectivity coupled with their liminal social status not only renders them a vulnerable population but also could contribute to a distrust in the research process.

Second, participatory research methods such as Photovoice do not easily align with positivist research traditions. For example, the goal of many Photovoice projects is not replication but rather an in-depth slice of understanding of a particular community's strengths, needs, and everyday experiences. Along these lines, Photovoice tools are best used for smaller samples and discussion groups, so generalization should proceed with caution. As such, Photovoice research projects might not conform to dominant research and publishing models. We are confident, however,

that as more researchers consider incorporating Photovoice as a tool to enhance research undertakings a number of these concerns will be addressed and resolved.

Cultivate Negative Capability

We suggested that giving agency to empower immigrant voices is an important step to safeguard against the unintended consequences of the privileged subject position of the researcher. Recognizing privilege and handling it in a responsible way requires reflection, equanimity, and sustained commitment. Romantic poet Keats (1817) characterized *negative capability* as the capacity to reside in situations where an open-minded approach to a situation is critical, "*when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason*" (emphasis added, Keats, 1817, p. 43). Negative capability is a sublime form of extreme empathy. Cornish (2011) emphasized the following components of negative capability essential to working with diverse communities: (a) open mindedness, (b) attentiveness to diversity, and (c) suspension of ego. T. S. Eliot (1921) called for such suspension of ego as an exercise in self-sacrifice to be fully present in the moment at the cost of continual extinction of his or her personality.

Simpson and French (2006) observed that negative capability enables us to be patient and gives us the ability to tolerate frustration and anxiety. Working with an immigrant community has many challenges. Cultivating negative capability will help researchers to be open and fully present when they interact with immigrants. Such cultivated personal disposition will deepen their empathic understanding of the phenomenology of immigrant lives. Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism, also have emphasized a mindful approach (what Kabat-Zinn [2011] calls a beginner's mind) whereby the recognition and acceptance of our own privileges is related to greater mindfulness and compassion. In a study of college students, Mahalingam and Hajski (2012) found that those who scored high on privilege awareness and critical intersectional awareness also scored high on mindfulness and compassion. Cultivating negative capability is particularly crucial for a researcher who works with immigrant groups who are marginalized and racialized for embodying their ethnic and religious identities.

Concluding Thoughts

We argue that the ethical considerations of research involving immigrants need to be developed with awareness of the privileged epistemic standpoint of the researcher. Unreflective understanding of privilege could result in unintended consequences for the very subjects about whom the researchers care deeply. Safeguarding against the perils of essentialist representations of immigrant communities that could reify negative

stereotypes of immigrants should be a prime concern for any researcher. We offer theoretical and methodological recommendations to successfully conduct meaningful research on immigrant communities that is scientifically rigorous and has the potential to empower immigrants.

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