

Article

Contextual Reflexivity: Towards Contextually Relevant Research with South African HIV/AIDS Home-Based Care Volunteers

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Abstract

What are the processes through which researchers understand context and its value in the qualitative research process? This is an important question for researchers to consider and is especially pertinent in non-Western environments where Western research precepts have traditionally been followed. This article proposes that continually addressing ethics in practice (ethical reflexivity) and maintaining methodological reflexivity keeps the researcher on the path to a deeper and broader perspective of the contextual salience of emerging data. The combination of the latter, which is referred to as ‘contextual reflexivity,’ produces an iterative-reflective-generative process, consistent with an Afrocentric view on research. This process includes ethical reflection on research activity beyond institutional requirements, as well as inter-relational reflexivity. Field material and reflective research journal extracts from a study on HIV/AIDS home-based care and support volunteers’ (HBCVs) identity provide illustration of this process in practice.

Keywords: contextual reflexivity, culture, ethics, HIV/AIDS, HIV care, translation

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Introduction

The centrality of the context to understanding the construction and communication of life stories has been emphasized by theorists (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). The methodological implications of describing and interpreting context in relation to text while maintaining its relative parity have received less attention (Bishop, 2007; Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach, & Lieblich, 2008). Until recently, consideration of context in qualitative research has been an addendum to the core business of a focus on text. In order for data to be relevant, context should be taken into account throughout the research process.

This is especially pertinent in non-Western environments, where little has been written about qualitative research methodology. Most qualitative researchers and writers are from the West. Little has been said to date about conducting qualitative research in the general context of a collectivist culture or specifically in a collectivist African rural context. African culture can be described as collectivist (Mkhize, 2004). Collectivist cultures give precedence to group goals over personal and individual goals. There is more focus on the context rather than the content in making attributions and communicating. People define themselves as part of a group and give less credence to internal than to external processes as determinants of social behavior. Collectivist cultures define relationships with in-group members as communal; make more situational attributions and are likely to be self-effacing (Triandis, 2001; Wang, 2008).

Denzin & Lincoln (2003) note, “sadly qualitative research serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, for power and for truth” (p. 1). They assert that colonizing nations relied on the human disciplines to produce knowledge about strange and foreign worlds and representations of the “Other” thus contributing to qualitative research becoming a “dirty word” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p1). Currently there is greater cultural sensitivity amongst Western researchers; this facilitates collaboration with indigenous researchers in the application of novel approaches to research. Likewise, an emerging group of researchers from non-Western cultures use research approaches and methodologies suited to the cultures from which they originate and within which they perform research (Lincoln & Gonzalez y Gonzalez, 2008). Africa has generally been an outsider on the world stage of qualitative research. Western research methodologies, which are primarily rooted in individualist ideologies and perfunctorily applied, perpetuate norms of Western-based research.

There is still a paucity of literature by African researchers advocating for an Afrocentric approach to qualitative research (Mkabela, 2005). The Afrocentric paradigm as proposed by Asante (1987, 1988, 1990) offers alternative research paths to those presented by “colonial or neo-colonial researchers” (Mkabela, 2005, p. 178). This paradigm locates research from an African viewpoint and creates Africa’s own intellectual perspective focusing on Africa as the cultural center for African experiences and interpreting data accordingly. Mkabela (2005) proposes that in the multicultural reality of the South African context, the Afrocentric paradigm serves as a liberating intellectual movement towards a pluriversal perspective on research. This Afrocentric view is not intended to foster an ethnocentric ‘them vs. us’ perspective aimed at rebuking Western researchers and Western-inspired methodological approaches. Rather, it is an attempt to draw attention to the alternative possibilities and perspectives that could unfold with locally inspired approaches in Africa and possibly other parts of the world.

The two authors of this article are South African by birth but not of indigenous African ancestry, not personally affected by poverty, not rural dwellers and non-isiZulu speakers. We therefore take the perspective of ‘outsider –insider’ in relation to the women in this study. Our strong relational

position of over ten years of experience in the field provides a tangible link to the context. The 'outsider-insider' position compels greater attention and reflexivity. The effects of this process are presented in this article.

Although the Afrocentric view represents a useful paradigm from which to advocate for more contextually relevant research in Africa, the issue of pragmatic application remains. What tools are available to the qualitative researcher to facilitate an understanding of context and its resonance with data in the research process in Africa? Reflexivity is an essential and recognized tool in qualitative research (Bishop, Sonn, Drew & Contos, 2002; Denzin, 2000; Flick, 2002; Finlay, 2002; Bishop, 2007). Moreover, reflexivity in qualitative research is consistent with the principles underlying the Afrocentric research paradigm in which researchers are expected to be a 'centered' or located as an agent instead of as the 'Other' (Mkabela, 2005). We propose a consideration of ethical reflexivity and methodological reflexivity in qualitative research practice to achieve contextual reflexivity. South African researchers Gilbert & Sliep (2009) offer a perspective on how reflexivity can be employed in the practice of social action and towards contextually relevant research. They advocate moving beyond reflexivity of self- in- action to an understanding of reflexivity within inter-relational processes. They elaborate further, suggesting that inter-relational reflexivity occurs dialogically and has the inherent capacity to initiate social action. Its processes entail the collaborative deconstruction of power, negotiation of accountability and responsibility, and a concern for moral agency. The application of inter-relational reflexivity then has the potential to initiate the translation of critical awareness relative to others into social action (positive performativity).

We unpack the processes of accomplishing contextual reflexivity using the example of a qualitative research study exploring AIDS home-based care volunteer identity in an African collectivist, resource-poor context. A position of openness and "positive uncertainty" was adopted to achieve a constantly reflective approach (Gelatt, 1989, p. 252). We show how and why a three-stage interview process emerged from the intention to give voice to the HIV/AIDS home-based care and support volunteers' (HBCVs). This process of giving voice, creating the platform to be heard, and realizing the value of being heard was the social action we intended to implement. The processes of contextual reflexivity offered the means through which to achieve this in a contextually relevant manner. We describe how ethical reflexivity and methodological reflexivity were employed to attain contextual reflexivity. As a consequence of this the research process was dynamic as new insights and data generated from the reflections were acted upon. Bishop et al. (2002) describe this as an iterative-reflective-generative approach to the research journey where each step of the research process informs the next by a process of reflection on action and action on reflection.

Orientation to the study

Volunteers form the core of home-based care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in resource-poor countries like South Africa; yet, little is known about their identity and their reasons for volunteering. The aim of the study was to understand the social construction of identity by HBCVs. As the research process progressed, we realized that there was a need to create space for volunteers to tell about their work, their lives and themselves in ways that facilitated legitimacy and awareness of their identity. This study was part of a large project investigating various dimensions of social capital around the care and support of HIV and AIDS in a specific region of rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

HBCVs are unemployed women in the community who care for AIDS patients who are in an advanced stage of the disease stage or other sick people who are unable to care for themselves. The study participants were usually not related to the patients; HBCVs performed their duties in addition to personal obligations to their families. The volunteers' commitment was evident from the fact that there is limited access to running water and electricity in the community and daily household chores often include fetching water from a communal tap, collecting firewood and tending to the family food garden, in addition to cooking and cleaning the family home before tending to patients. Local government gives some of the women a stipend of R500 (€60) a month; this is referred to as 'soap money.' Most of this is spent on minibus taxis (the only available public transport) in the hilly community where houses are spread over a large area. For example, visits to three houses, on foot and public transport, could take a full day. HBCVs regularly use the money that they are paid to buy food, soap and other necessities that their patients cannot afford. HBCVs' family members sometimes also contributed financially or in kind to the 'work' of HBCVs. In the AIDS care and support hierarchy, HBCVs occupy the lowest rung. Until recently there has been little government acknowledgment of the indispensable role which the volunteers play in AIDS care and support in rural South Africa. As a result, HBCVs have been invisible as a group and as individuals. The women hope that participation in community-based AIDS care, a contribution based on altruistic sentiments and communal cultural expectations, will lead to paid work and the opportunity for self-improvement (Akintola, 2010).

In this study, fifteen HBCVs were interviewed in three successive interviews. The interviews were conducted in isiZulu (an indigenous and official South African language) and translated into English in situ by a mother-tongue isiZulu speaker fluent in English. We show how the interview process was continually altered in response to contextual reflexivity towards the social action of initiating the home based care volunteers' realization of the power of voice.

Ethical reflexivity: Ethics in context (practice)

Reflexivity in qualitative research practice may be used as a means to achieve ethics in practice such that ethics and reflexivity are co-dependent. Our intention was to pose a challenge to ourselves as researchers in this context: to maintain a constantly reflexive ethical position rather than to accept that our ethical responsibility was fulfilled once ethical clearance had been approved by the institution. A position of ethical reflexivity requires researchers to interrogate the relationships between their value positions and the ways in which they conduct and write about their research (Gerwitz & Cribb, 2006; Bhattacharya, 2007). We aimed to maintain an attitude of applying ethics in practice rather than be satisfied with ratified "procedural ethics" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 263). According to Sliep (2009), participation in social action that will strengthen marginalized voices requires moral action or agency derived from a shared understanding of the local context and a shared value system.

Conventional ethical processes were followed. Institutional ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. The purpose of the study was explained in isiZulu to each interviewee separately at the beginning of interview process. A consent form in isiZulu (with English translation on the reverse) was signed by each interviewee. The issues of confidentiality and access to interview data were discussed and presented in writing. Participation in the study was voluntary and the HBCVs were informed that they could withdraw consent at any time in the process. In addition to the conventional processes, ethical reflexivity was carried out as it related to community setting and interviewee selection.

Ethical reflexivity: The community setting

Prior to commencing the research process, it was necessary to consider the community's tacit rules about behavior and relationships. Gaining entry into the community and obtaining permission to conduct the research was a process that required consideration of the traditional and cultural requirements of engagement with the community as a whole and with individual members. Gilbert & Sliep (2009) characterize this as "action in the creation of social space in which stakeholders representing different interests come together to engage in joint activities to address issues of inequality and power" (p. 469). We took this position in order to address ethical concerns and preempt, if possible, potential ethical problems before they arose (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The project was presented to the local traditional leader (chief) to obtain consent prior to conducting the research. The complexity of deconstructing power became apparent when the local traditional leader would not offer support for any research or intervention that had AIDS prevention as its aim. This was because of his belief that HIV does not cause AIDS. Having previously been a supporter of prevention, he adopted this position after attending an international AIDS conference in Montreal. Mindful that without his consent we would not have the co-operation of the people, we had to carefully consider how to present the project. We presented the project emphasizing care and support as pivotal. Care was presented as imperative for the community regardless of the causes of AIDS. A Western perspective might see the researchers as having taken a position of acquiescence. However, considering the community members' support and respect for traditional leaders, we realized that adopting a challenging position, supported by the dominant (Western) scientific discourse on AIDS, would not be contextually resonant. This would likely have alienated the traditional leader and provoked him to exercise his power to deny permission for the study. Moreover, community members would not have participated or co-operated without the chief's approbation.

The cultural precepts of this rural African community were acknowledged and followed in keeping with and accepting the value of understanding an orientation to collective values in African indigenous culture. Mkabela (2005) describes this as using the collective as a centered paradigm. This paradigm recommends that researchers adopt a participatory approach which allows for learning by, with and from community members in order to establish a working relationship in which people's interests and values are more authentically represented in research. Moreover, spaces of social action created by activating relationships with others provide possibilities for the development of transformational agendas that foster new social practices and institutions (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). This attitude was advanced by complying with certain expectations from community members. For example, people often required car rides to the public transport stop or into the city. HBCVs also made enquiries about how to access government, non-governmental and educational funding and resources. The tacit implication in this collectivist setting was that a request for help could not be refused. Travelling with members from the community provided the opportunity for unrehearsed conversations between HBCVs and researchers, thus providing access to social facts and other elusive information not easily accessed in formal interviewing (Brown & Durrheim, 2009). During such conversations, the interviewer was able to hear further information about how women construed identity; AIDS care work, and different groups and organizations in the community. This information informed interview questioning and contributed to deeper and more informed engagement with the women's preferred outcomes.

We adopted our ethical position based on the previously observed pattern in which community members believed that when people in the community receive attention from outsiders, significant change would follow. We were mindful, in planning, methodology and performance, to offer realistic responses without creating false hope. Furthermore, a request for help also

included an implicit offer for future help should this be required. Access to resources, such as a car, implied privilege and knowledge about resources. This obligated one to help others who were in need. Through participation, the interviewer is accepted by community members and the conditions for communal participation through inter-relational reflexivity are established. Questioning of the current power relations and *status quo* then becomes possible. As 'critical consciousness' is embedded in action, it is necessary for researchers to find ways to work towards collectively negotiated conditions and preferred outcomes (Freire, 1970; Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). Engaging with community members increased the interviewer's awareness of being part of the webs of power and created opportunities for the interviewer to work towards discovering shared values with the participants as a starting point for moral agency.

Ethical reflexivity: Interviewee selection

The selection of interviewees was organized by the leader of the home-based care group. Given our ethical stance as researchers, we respected this process and the leader's authority, despite the possibility that people chosen could have been biased to the leader's interests and causes. We explained the importance of the selection process and that the main interest was in discovering who the HBCVs were and learning about their ideas about themselves as individuals and as a group. This was done in order to share power in a way that incorporated precautions against bias and ensured synergy between the researchers' and the leader's ideas. An Afrocentric view sees research in communities as a negotiated partnership which encourages people to define the degree and conditions of their participation (Mkabela, 2005). The women chosen by the leader expressed varied perspectives and we concluded that the leader's intention to present a comprehensive view of the volunteer and group identity appeared to supersede other biases. Indeed, many of the interviewees did further the cause of constructing a community care center, which was the group's collective agenda. However, some interviewees told of a lack of faith in the leadership as a result of poor understanding and support at a time of personal need and the overall lack of transparency in leadership style. It must be noted that in such a collectivist environment it is unusual for people to speak out against people in positions of authority.

Methodological reflexivity

Research that incorporates an attitude of 'positive uncertainty,' reflection on the research process and an iterative-generative-reflexive approach, creates openness to the unexpected in the research process (Gelatt, 1989; Bishop, 2002; Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). The researcher is then able to integrate knowledge based on theory (conceptual) and on reflection in action (professional) (Bishop et al., 2002; Bishop, 2007; Denzin, 1997). "All parties in the dialogue have subjectivities and emotional lives that they bring to the research relationships" (Riessman, 2005, p. 467). This notion of interconnected subjectivities in qualitative research is one that has been extensively explored and much emphasis has been placed on the researcher's consideration of her reflexive position as part of the action contributing to the construction of the narrative (Spry, 2001; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Gerwitz & Cribb, 2006; Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). There is a need to move beyond the reflexivity of self-in-action to an understanding of reflexivity in relational processes and an acknowledgement that reflexivity is relational, tied to context, dynamic and perpetually iterative (Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). Inter-relational reflexivity created in the relational space of social action creates the conditions for transformative social action.

The interviews were not static in structure or purpose. A reflexive position was employed throughout the interview process using a variety of means. The following elements, which evolved through the research process, are discussed in detail: dynamic interview process,

dialogue between researchers, reflexivity of self-in-action (interviewer's reflexive journal), dialogue and interview with the interpreter, and reflexivity in the interview setting.

Dynamic interview process

The interview process was continually revised as we considered the type of interview approach to adopt. We began with a structured interview guide. In reviewing and reflecting on the first interview guide, it became clear that this approach would make the voice of interviewer/researcher overly dominant. The interviewee's voice, and by association important contextual information, would be silenced. In light of our ethical position (that reflexive practices should work in the direction of making that which is unseen visible and that which is silenced, heard), we altered our research process to create space for the interviewees' voices to be represented proportionately (Sliep, Weingarten, & Gilbert, 2004). The semi-structured interview guide had the potential to provide useful data in the overall study, so rather than abandoning it, we incorporated it as the first of three interviews with participants. The second interview was a narrative life-story interview. The interview process emerged from constant reflective discussion between the two researchers and the interpreter. The interviewer (TN) used the forty-minute drive from the city to the rural area where the interviews were conducted to reflect on imminent interviews. During the round trip journey between the interpreter's home and the interview venue, the interviewer and interpreter discussed the planned or completed interviews. On the return journey to the city the interviewer made a stop at a coffee shop in a nearby town to record reflections on the interviews and discussions with the interpreter.

Dialogue between researchers

One of the researchers (TN) conducted the interviews whilst the other (YS) acted as an ethical sounding board, intentionally uninvolved in the actual interviews but actively involved in an ongoing reflexive process with the interviewer. This determined the shape of the interview process. YS also negotiated entry into the community with all stakeholders and gave particular attention to the *Inkosi* (traditional leader/chief). At these meetings the *Inkosi* asserted his position of power by speaking in isiZulu. He also raised issues of concern about other researchers who had previously concluded research in the area without offering feedback to the community when the study was completed. YS took responsibility for bringing research findings to the community in an accessible format; the traditional leader agreed to take responsibility for dissemination of the details of the project amongst his *izinduna* (headmen). This is an example of negotiating accountability and responsibility.

Given our intention to deconstruct the influences of power from institutional structures and discourse we examined the influences of power which we, as researchers, were subject to. In addition, we examined the influences of power within the discourses of qualitative research that we were subjected to as African researchers. Consequently, we made a commitment to continually examine our ethical and methodological positions through a process of dialogical reflexivity. In defining the research question, we actively reflected and readjusted accordingly. Initially, our broad research question was based on concepts generally associated with volunteer identity. However, as the project progressed the question came to include contextually relevant aspects of identity in Zulu culture and the local socio-historical environment. For example the women in the home-based care volunteer group based their volunteerism on personal and communal identity precepts of women as mothers and women as caregivers. In Zulu culture becoming a mother is consistent with attaining status as an adult woman in the community. Older women are traditionally respected as mothers of the community (matriarchs). As our research

progressed it became evident that the mother identity in Zulu culture was related to the women's motivation and identity as volunteers. This was explored further (Naidu, 2011a).

The following example indicates that dialogue with a co-researcher can keep the interviewer oriented to the context within which interviewing is being conducted. Following a reflective discussion between the researchers about a series of interviews conducted in the field, YS suggested that community voices could be evoked and included in a more discernible way by asking the women what family members, friends and community members thought about their work. The women would also be encouraged to reflect on how their ideas about themselves and their work were influenced by being interviewed about it. Reflection on contextual evidence they offered, provided an authentic means to achieve this. Evidence from the interviews showed that volunteers' work was largely unrecognized or ignored in the community. There were traditionally and culturally based expectations that their role as women and mothers compelled them to care. However the women's personal life stories revealed the unseen aspects of their identities as ambitious, future-oriented, decisive, innovative, proactive and entrepreneurial. These qualities set them apart from those who did not volunteer. Through our discussions we realized that by creating the conditions for these hidden aspects of identity to be witnessed, through the voices of significant others and dialogical reflection on the content of the interviews, the women could realize the power behind the own voices. An extract from the interviewer's reflective journal offers some insight into how this influenced the interview process.

The part of this identity that needs witnessing is the ambitious, future oriented, decisive, innovative, proactive and entrepreneurial attitude – to be developed in reflective interview. The structure of the interview process developed and was altered according to the data that emerged. At this stage the reflective interview needed to be expanded to explore:

- How the HBCVs ideas about themselves changed through their involvement in home based care work.
- How their ideas about their work and themselves were influenced by the interview process (the co-construction of a narrative identity?)
- Whether they or others in their lives could bear testimony to the veiled aspects of their identity (the ambitious, future oriented, decisive, innovative, proactive and entrepreneurial attitude) that emerged as a undercurrent in the work and life stories

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The third interview encouraged reflective dialogue about the content of the first two interviews and, most significantly, called upon the volunteers to reflect on the voices of the community and of significant others as they reflect on HBCV work.

Reflexivity of self-in-action (interviewer's reflective journal)

As illustrated above, a reflective journal and reflective poetry writing served to track the ethical positioning of the interviewer by ensuring constant involvement supported by reflection outside the actual interviews (Naidu, 2011b). Keeping a reflective journal represented introspection or reflexivity of self-in-action (Finlay, 2002; Gilbert & Sliep, 2009). This aspect of reflexivity is well known, widely practiced and recommended in qualitative research. It contributes significantly to validating the qualitative research process. After each interview, the interviewer made field and reflective notes addressing issues that were missed during the live interview. These issues were raised and discussed with the interpreter and addressed in future meetings with

the interviewees.

Dialogue and interview with the interpreter

The researchers' dialogue highlighted a journey of performance that went beyond the event of the interview alone. The interview was a dynamic course of interaction between all the parties (interviewer, interviewee and interpreter), each with particular intentions. The boundaries were flexible and permeable. Reflexive journal extracts illustrate this:

Casper's [interpreter] translation is of a very high standard – she translated directly using the interviewee's "exact" words. Elizabeth [interviewee] seemed at ease with her and was clearly familiar with the process. My presence was sanctioned by Casper's or perhaps by the familiarity with researchers. My interview would have been more "bumpy" without the preliminary smoothing of the path.

However, I still felt a little excluded from the process and therefore disempowered in tracking and following potential narrative leads. I wonder if it is possible to conduct narrative interviews with translation? The performance of the interview is certainly affected. How the interviewee positions herself is also influenced by her having to consider both the interviewer and interpreter as audience. Is the whole process too fragmented to contain a narrative ...?

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Preconceptions on the part of the interviewer about how the process should unfold inhibited the interviewer's participation in the interview process. The realization that the interview process was dynamic and that holding on to such preconceptions would inhibit the process and ignore a noteworthy contributor led to active planned discussions with the interpreter.

On the ride to S today, I briefed Casper (interpreter) in detail about what my intention is with the interviews, explaining that I was interested to hear the life stories of the women I would be interviewing today. I went on to explain my hypothesis about the two different types of interviews and the plan of piloting each style to assess which would be the most appropriate to generate the stories of home-based care volunteers. As usual, Casper listened intently and nodded knowingly. Her clarifying questions put me at ease that she understood my intentions. She expressed concern that we would get what we wanted with the life story style. I was happy to tell her that I was interested in whatever emerged and in the performativity aspect of the interviews.

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Actively including the interpreter in the reflective process and acting on her insights enhanced the research process and the richness of the data elicited. This is supported by other scholars who have suggested that including interpreters in the debate on reflexivity and context generates valuable insight into the politics of location and identity, and contributes to the deconstruction of power in the research process. (Temple & Edwards, 2002; Temple, Edwards & Alexander, 2006; Gilbert & Sliep, 2009).

Reflexivity in the interview setting

Denzin (2001) argues that the interview is not a mirror of the real world or a window into the inner life of a person; rather, it is a miniature of the real world. "The interview is an active site where meaning is created and performed" (Denzin, 2001, p. 28). In introducing a third reflective interview, we presented the possibility for mutual collaboration in which the participant is enlisted as co-researcher. This practice acknowledges and applies participants' capacity to act as reflexive beings (Finlay, 2002). One of the interviewees mentioned that, to be a good home-based care volunteer one had to have "the mind of a mother." This metaphor was used reflexively as a generative metaphor to explore other interviewees' ideas about personal and group motivations and identity associations with their work (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990; Naidu, 2011a).

Gugu: yes that what it means, because when you are a mother you are like a chicken that protects its chicks. So if you are going to do this work you have to like that. You have to be like a chicken to the people you are caring for. When you arrive at the house they should feel that you have arrived, that you are going to protect them, they should feel warm in your presence.

Applying this metaphor in the reflexive interview seemed to have the dual effect of the interviewees' more in-depth realization of the nature and motivations of their work as well as creating a platform on which they were able to offer the interviewer a richer reflective picture of their experience. This represents an illustration of how performativity can create possibilities for constructing identity, subjectivity and agency where dominant discourses have blocked and complicated the visibility of marginalized voices.

Another interviewee commented that being able to talk about and reflect on her work and her own life story in such a way had led her to the realization that the performance was in itself beneficial. She expressed that she was inspired to use the method with the people that she visited.

Elisabeth: Yes, there are things that I have thought about; there is a revival that I got from that personally as Elisabeth.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Elisabeth: So the questions that you ask build me, and in some ways and they remind me as well of the life that we live here.

Interviewer: What does that mean to be built?

Elisabeth: It means that in terms of my personal story that I can go around telling people about where it all started and how it all came about like from my roots. So that for me is...now I am able to do that, so that is the process of being built.

Interviewer: Is that important for you, Elisabeth?

Elisabeth: It is and I saw it as a good thing to do and I think that it would be helpful for someone else as well if I sat down with them and asked them the same questions. I think that would clarify things for them as well.

These quotations are examples of positive performativity on a micro or interview level as a result of maintaining contextual reflexivity in the research process. Once insight and understanding are developed, decisions have to be made about the forms responsibility and accountability will take and these decisions must be translated into concrete actions. The HBCVs who participated in this study worked on a narrative theatre production, which was a method for communicating to the community. This feedback method had been agreed upon with the traditional leader. In this production the identity-based reflection initiated in the study and discussed in this article was taken a step further. The HBCVs performed a drama based on data and discussions. The drama was performed at a specially organized gathering of the community, researchers and government

officials responsible for AIDS care and support. This interaction has the potential to deepen understanding in and create opportunities to change attitude and behavior in both the HBCVs and the community members that witnessed the production (Sliep & Kezaabu-Kasimbazi, 2011).

Current position

Much of the discourse on qualitative methodology originates in the West; therefore, as South African researchers embarking on qualitative research in Africa, we are aware that this context carries with it some responsibilities. Amongst these responsibilities is the duty to maintain a constant awareness of the influence of context on emerging data. In order to keep context salient, ethics in practice (ethical reflexivity) and constant reflection on method (methodological reflexivity) must prevail. We labeled this practice 'contextual reflexivity. As far as we are aware, this article represents a new perspective in the literature by taking into consideration a specifically African perspective on reflexivity in context. Furthermore, we have offered some practical strategies and insights for keeping context in focus in an African setting.

In this article we showed how we created the space for HBCVs to acknowledge their legitimacy of voice and identity through social action inherent in a contextually reflexive interview process. This perspective emphasized the researcher's responsibility to maintain consistent methodological reflexivity and a focus on ethics in practice. Assuming a position that is contextually relevant creates the conditions for qualitative researchers to explore new dimensions and perspectives.

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