

Emancipatory methodologies for youth research: Social network interviewing

Sharlene Swartz, PhD
FXB Centre for Health and Human Rights,
Harvard School of Public Health
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Outline

1. Interaction, Participation, Emancipation
2. Research ethics, and research as intervention
3. Social Network Interviewing (SNI)
 - Provenance
 - Theory
 - Process
 - Interview design
4. Examples of SNI
 - Young fathers
 - Risk
 - Opportunity
 - Young men and condoms
 - Race (coming soon)
 - Navigational capacities (coming soon)
5. Strengths and limitations of SNI

Interaction, Participation, Emancipation



**Interactive
methods**

**Participatory
methods**

**Emancipatory
research**

Interactive research

1. Photo-elicitation
2. Photo-voice
3. Mini videos – current and desired
4. Voting (with beans)
5. Life story drawings
6. Community mapping
7. Sentence completion
8. Rank order activities – circle of influence
9. Mind maps
10. Interactive assessment activity

Participatory research

1. “Recognizes the value of **engaging** in the research process those who are intended to be the **beneficiaries**, users and stakeholders of research” (Biggs)
2. **Key feature - location of power**, commitment to the democratisation & demystification of scientific research
3. Community members as **knowledgeable collaborators**
4. **Underlying values** - action-oriented, dialogue, relevant and iterative, justice (Lewin - “Northern Tradition”)
5. **Core elements:** Mutual respect and trust, accountability and reflexivity
6. **Biggs’ modes of participation:** Contractual, Consultative, Collaborative and Collegiate

Lewin (1946) on 'action research'

“comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action”

that uses

“a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action”.

Emancipatory research

1. A **feminist** approach – to dissolve the “**the knower-known**” dichotomy
2. What do you know, what do you **want to know**?
3. To counter “the imbalance of benefit’ (Baker, Lynch et al), **non-exploitative** research, **transfer of technology** from the developed countries to poorer nations
4. Part of a **radical social agenda of equality** (Freire - “Southern Tradition”)
5. Critical **to the poor and the voiceless**, aims for **self-determination** and sovereignty, transference of **research ownership**

Evaluative analyses

“Anglo- American ideology . . . [suggests that] the poor are not just immoral, alcoholic and degenerate, they are stupid, they lack intelligence.”

(Pierre Bourdieu, 1998, p. 43)

“They used to say we were unproductive because we were lazy and drunkards. All lies. Now that we are respected as men, we’re going to show everyone that we were never drunkards or lazy. We were exploited!”

(Paolo Freire, 1972, p. 39)

Paulo Freire on Emancipation

- Advocated '**conscientisation**' and '**dialogue**' among the 'poor and oppressed' about the conditions of oppression, to be able to '**name their world**' (Freire, 1972, p. 61)
- To 'perceive the reality of oppression **not as a closed world** from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can **transform**' (p. 25-6).
- Using '**problem-posing**' rather than 'bank-deposit' methods
- So that 'men and women [are able to] **deal critically and creatively with reality** and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world' (Freire, 1972, p. 13-4).

Challenges of emancipatory research

1. Time consuming
2. Internal validity – iterative nature
3. Sustaining participation
4. Uncertain outcomes
5. Who is included, who excluded, who decides?
6. Dependence on local stakeholders
7. Unintended consequences of participation
8. Money issues (e.g. funding, and paying for research)
9. Ownership of knowledge

Aims of ethical research within an emancipatory framework

To 'go deep' and utilize 'an ethics of parallax perspectives'

Polyphonic voices

Language and representation contributed to or prevented a 'colonizing discourse'?

Transparency and self-reflection to make clear researcher's politics of involvement?

To 'give back' by employing an 'intentional ethics of reciprocation'.

Commitment to 'research-as-intervention'

Mutuality, respect and trust to diminish inherent power differences

Emancipatory and relational rather than dominating and oppressive?

(Swartz, 2011)

SNI - Provenance

1. Recent methodological research and intervention innovation (Hamilton Harding, 2010; Swartz & Bhana, 2009, Swartz et al., 2012).
2. Interviews conducted by formal research participants with members of their community without the presence of the researcher.
3. Unique opportunities for research participants to discuss topic with friends, family, peers and community members – rich nuances
4. Added benefit of being a prototype intervention.

SNI - Theory

1. Draws on Social Network Analysis - sociological method to understand patterns and motivations for behaviour (Vera & Schupp, 2006).
2. Individuals interconnected by links through which information, cultural norms and other social resources travel
3. Webs of connections explains how behaviour is both constrained and facilitated (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).
4. Assumes flow of social resources within networks will shift behaviours.

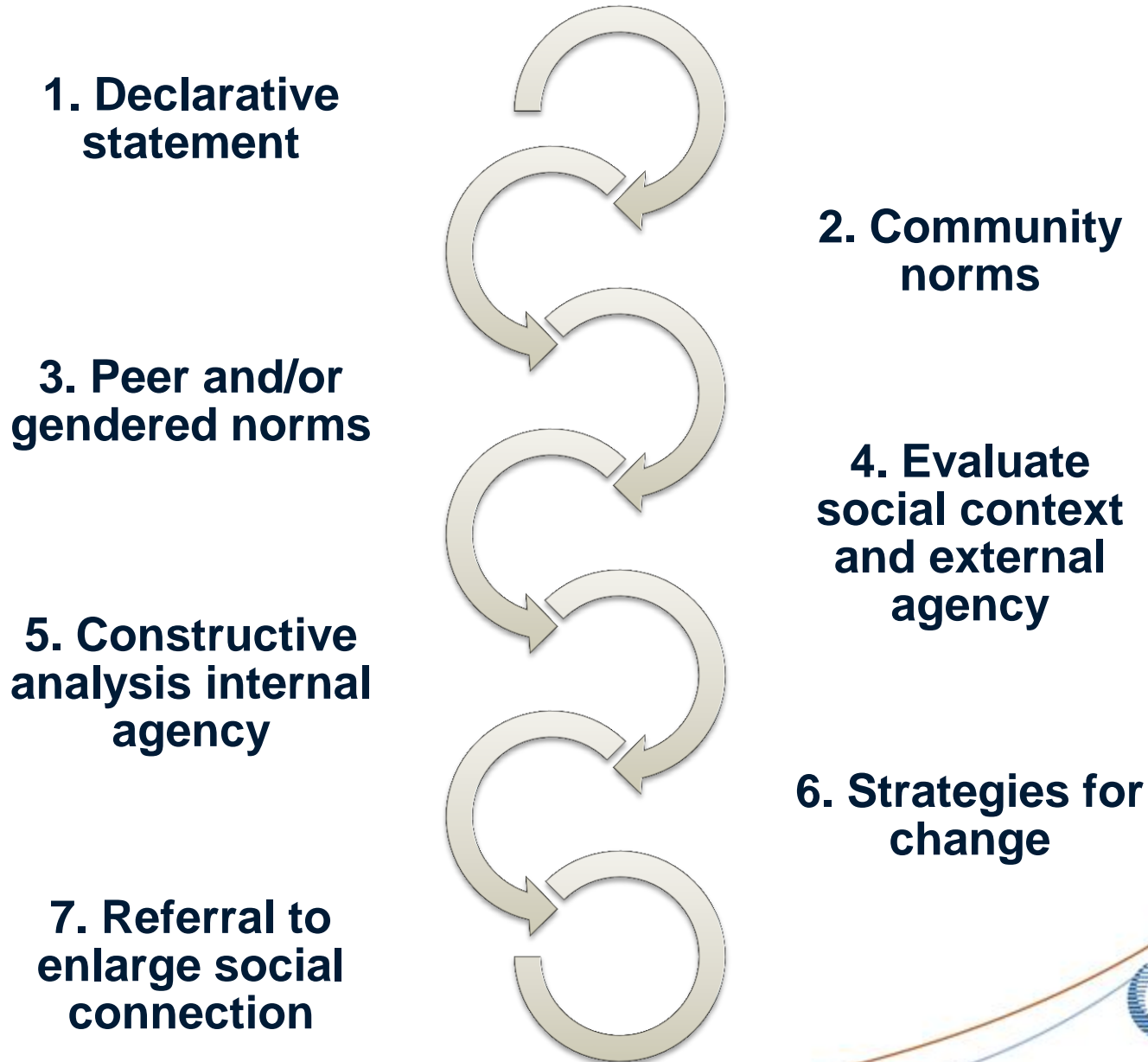
SNI - Potential

1. Interacts with youth both as individuals with personal contexts, challenges, restraints and opportunities AND as groups with shared obstacles and experiences
2. Explains behaviour by focussing attention on the relationships between individuals and society
3. Closes the gap between individual intervention (workshops, counselling) and wider social change with benefits to the communities in which young people live
4. Allows for discussion of the effects of culture, poverty and opportunity on behaviour

SNI – Potential (cont.)

5. Highlights individuals' ties to religious organisations, educational institutions, recreational activities, family, cultural and peer groups
6. Creates opportunities for youth to engage in self-evaluation with those impacted by their choices and actions
7. Addresses stereotypes, encourages behavioural change and supports gender equality.
8. Aids youth reflection on initial answers (between sets of interviews), and allows youth to evaluate answers through a grid of community and peer responses

SNI - Interview Design



SNI - Process

1. Recruit community informant and study group
2. [Decide on topic]
3. Introduction meeting
 - Present SNI methodology
 - Collaborative interview design (including who should be interviewed)
 - Training in data collection and ethics
 - Decide on incentive/reward
4. Conduct interviews
5. Transcribe and analyse data
6. Feedback meeting with study group

Examples of SNI Interviews

See accompanying handout:

1. Young fathers
2. Risk
3. Opportunity
4. Young men and condoms
5. Race (coming soon)
6. Navigational capacities (coming soon)

Teenage Tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa

Research question

What is it like to be a young father in an impoverished community in South Africa? What are the obstacles and enablements of teenage fathering?

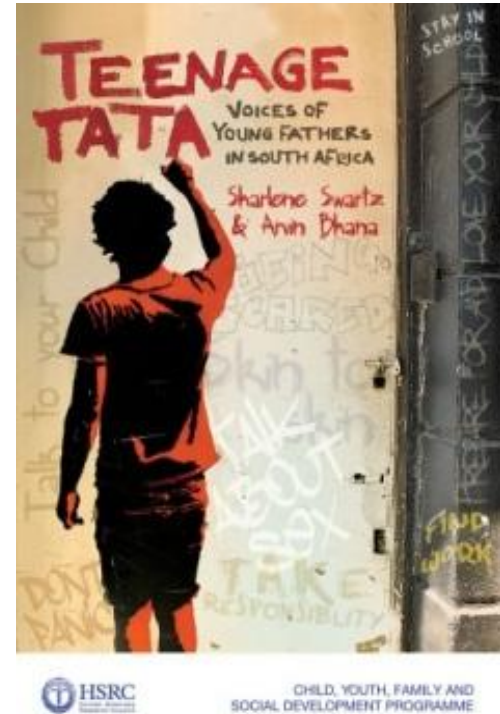
Sample

27 teenage fathers, and social networks

Methodology

Qualitative and innovative (SNI)

- Two interviews
- Social network interviews



Sample SNI Questions

1. Do you remember how you responded when I told you that I was going to be a father?
2. What advice did you give me at the time?
3. How do you think I should have behaved differently since hearing I was going to become a father?
4. What kind of father do you think I have been since the time my baby was born?
5. In what way do you think our culture has helped/stopped me to be a good father?
6. What role do you think a young father should play in the life of their children if they are not married to the mother... should this role change over time?
7. What advice do you have for me about being a young father for the future?

Corrective Messages

“As your closest friend, uh, because I’ve been spending a lot of time with you – [I can see that] you don’t take care of your baby. You’re very – Sometimes you become irresponsible – you’re [with your new girlfriend] instead of doing what you must do to keep contact with your baby.”
(Close male friend)

Rebuilding Links and Empathetic Relationships

“The culture forced us to stand for you at the beginning when the family had to tell you that you make their child [pregnant]. So they could not talk with you because of your age. That’s how the culture made you a good father. But it also made you a bad father because of excluding you in many things.” (Grandfather)

SNI - Achievements

1. Rich data about men's lives
2. Collaborative learning process
3. Corrective messages that can be heard
4. Building empathetic relationships
5. Returning power to make autonomous choices

SNI - Limitations

1. Unpredictable
2. Ethical issues of confidentiality, consent and protection
 - Among interviewees and wider community
 - Among research participants and wider community
 - Not essential because SNI aims to build dialogue and social links.
3. Unsupervised therefore challenge of reliability
4. Some issues not appropriate for SNI
5. Unmeasured intervention result

SNI - Strengths

1. Likely to uncover data not easily obtained by a researcher; supplements researcher obtained data.
2. Helps youth reflect – what can and cannot be done by them
3. Differentiate internal and external agency
4. Identifies assets necessary for youth to thrive
5. Establishes social connections
6. Becomes part of the solution
7. An intervention in prototype

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