Is It All in the Eye of the Beholder?
The Role of the Ethnographer' Emotions in Entrepreneurial Context

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Abstract

Despite that researching the researcher is a much-needed new area of investigation and that entrepreneurship involves the process of identifying and understanding the behavior of the 'outliers' in the community, very little empirical work focusing directly on the emotions of researchers has been undertaken to date.

Mainstream research would have it that emotions have no place in research. Researchers have been enjoined not to feel but to think. Yet, by listening, seeing, touching, and feeling the entrepreneurial individuals we study for ourselves can we come to understand them deeply enough to be able to make sense of their experience. Conducting qualitative research can pose many challenges and dilemmas for researchers.

In this essay, my main objective is not to present the results of an ethnography study, but to share a 'confessional tale of the field' reflexively. By sharing my experience of a researcher engaged in exploring a sensitive topic, I seek to promote the power of *self and emotions* as one interesting mean for me as an ethnographer to get more out from our field-studies and capture the 'untold stories'.

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1. Introduction

The study of entrepreneurship involves the process of identifying and understanding the behavior of the 'outliers' in the community (Gartner and Birley, 2002). While most empirical research in entrepreneurship adopts positivistic methods, those using qualitative methods tend to focus on the technical aspects of collecting qualitative data (usually interviews) and how to analyze them (Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte, 2015). Yet, qualitative researchers such as ethnographers believe that valuable knowledge is derived from proximity with the phenomena studied. There are several advantages associated with ethnography in organizational research generally and entrepreneurship field specifically. Qualitative data are concrete and vivid, which helps activate cognitive processes that foster the development of ideas (Paivio et al., 1988). They are often rich and nuanced (Weick, 2007) and 'capture details and mechanisms that are easily overlooked in quantitative data' (Graebner et al., 2012, p. 277). These approaches involve watching, listening and asking questions about people's daily lives and experiences, and the meaning they attach to these lived experiences.

As Langley and Klag (2017) state: "only by becoming, at least to some degree, involved in the situations studied, by listening to those who live with them every day, and by seeing, touching, and feeling them for ourselves can we come to understand them deeply enough to be able to make sense of their experience (Anteby, 2013; Bate, 1997; Evered & Louis, 1981; Van Maanen, 2011). And yet, at the same time, involvement can be perceived as problematic" (p.1). Conducting research that brings the researcher closely in contact with individuals in the field, can be an intensely personal experience and also one that can have important methodological implications (Maanen, 1979, 2006; Lofland and Lofland, 1995; Irwin, 2006). Given this sustained contact and the particular closeness that is developed between researchers and participants, ethnographic research is an inherently subjective and emotionally charged method of inquiry (Kisfalvi, 2006).

Subjectivity acceptance means that ethnographers are not external observers who measure what they observe. They adopt a posture of interaction with the actors they studied to identify a 'useful knowledge practically-adequate to the world', called the practical relevance (Hoy, 1997; Miles et al., 2014; Silverman, 2013). However, many advocates of qualitative research tend to focus on studying and explaining the implementation of these techniques in order to guarantee scientific rigor and provide insightful conclusions while subjectivity deserves more explanation. Subjectivity and emotions can be transformed into valuable sources of insight as long as they are acknowledged and examined (Kouamé and Liu, 2021; Kisfalvi, 2006). For example, Devereux (1967, p100) links subjectivity and emotions and the importance of recognizing and taking them into account and in order to attain greater objectivity: «Objectivity results from the creative control of consciously recognized irrational reactions, without loss of affect». However, mainstream research would have it that feelings and emotions have no place in research, and that as researchers we should be very wary of our emotional reactions (Kisfalvi, 2006). Such advice can easily incite us to suppress our emotional reactions to our research subjects entirely which may not make us more objective.

Recently, the theme of emotions has attracted increasing interest in the literature, but that raises methodological challenges (Walsh and Bartunek, 2011). In ethnographic studies, «to throw one's self into the field, body and soul, is now not only a valid stance, but marks investigatory excellence" (Irwin, 2006, p . 157). Devereux (1967) attributes the source of subjectivity in part to cultural and sociological factors, but also in part to the researcher's personality and the past experiences that it reflects.

To advance the ongoing conversation about qualitative inquiry in entrepreneurship (Chlosta, 2016; Frank and Landstrom, 2016), this essay tries to argue for the need to unravel and to understand the subjectivity and emotions experienced by ethnographers involved in the actual process of gathering and treating the relevant data (Kouamé and Liu, 2021; Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Kisfalvi, 2006). By acknowledging our emotions, we gain objectivity and a deeper understanding of the subjects, the field and ourselves as researchers. In fact, a close and regular engagement with participants should go beyond technical matters; merely watching and/or 'looking closely' does not lead to an insight in entrepreneurship research. What is currently missing from our ethnography research in entrepreneurship is to recognize this cognitive and emotional "data" that empirical contexts include, if we are "tuned" to it. To gain insights about the lived experiences of individuals engaging in entrepreneurial activities, we should start developing and using our other senses, in addition to listening and observing.

Besides, while there is a growing recognition that undertaking qualitative research can pose many challenges for researchers, there have been few articles in which the emphasis is placed on exploring the lived experience of researchers (Kouamé and Liu, 2021; Dickson-Swift et al., 2007; Kisfalvi, 2006). This essay seeks to promote emotions as an important element of engaging in qualitative research and ethnography. Drawing on my own recent empirical data collection in an entrepreneurial context in a reflexive way, I conceptually argue and empirically demonstrate how my own emotions help to build trustworthy coherence between what individuals under study 'say', 'do', and 'feel'.

2. Ethnographer' Emotions in Entrepreneurship

There is growing consensus that qualitative research contributes positively to the diversity of academic inquiry in entrepreneurship, advancing rich and novel insights about entrepreneurial phenomena (Javadian et al., 2020). Ethnography research endeavors to seek an in-depth understanding of 'how things work in particular contexts' allowing for the building of new theories (Kopf, Hsu, Shows, and Albinsson, 2016) and discovering new explanations (Miles et al., 2014). In entrepreneurship, ethnography involves observing, listening and asking questions about people's daily lives and experiences around their entrepreneurial journeys, and the meaning they attach to these lived experiences.

The study of entrepreneurship involves the process of identifying and understanding the behavior of the 'outliers' in the community (Gartner and Birley, 2002). A common construct of ethnographic research is subjectivity acceptance. Where subjectivity is rejected in the traditional positivistic research, it is accepted in critical realism and is central in constructivist and interpretivist approaches (Blundel, 2007; Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte, 2015; Patton, 2002). Subjectivity acceptance means that qualitative researchers are not external observers who measure what they observe. At the same time, for an ethnographer, merely watching and 'looking closely' do not automatically lead to new and better insights into the lived experiences of entrepreneurial people. In fact, "if we undertake to study human lives, we have to be ready to face human feelings" (Ely et al., 1991, p.49). What is currently less well developed in entrepreneurship research, and qualitative research in general, is to recognize the cognitive and emotional 'data' available in every field-study site, if only scholars were 'tuned' to them.

To be 'tuned', researchers' posture and their interaction with people they study comes to forefront. "In qualitative inquiry, the researchers' selves are involved, their experiences become a resource" (Hollaway and Biley, 2011, p.968). Being involved as an ethnographer means acknowledging both one's own emotions and those of the people under the study. As Langley and Klay state "qualitative researchers believe that valuable knowledge is derived from proximity with the phenomena studied. Only by becoming, at least to some degree, involved in the situations studied, by listening to those who live with them every day, and by seeing, touching, and feeling them for ourselves can we come to understand them deeply enough to be able to make sense of their experience (Anteby, 2013; Bate, 1997; Evered and Louis, 1981; Van Maanen, 2011). And yet, at the same time, involvement can be perceived as problematic." (Langley and Klag, 2017, p.1).

Conducting ethnography research requires a significant degree of flexibility and engagement. The researcher needs to be fully engaged in what the participant is sharing with him/her. Thus, he/she needs to be open to new experiences, to work on assumptions and biases about the phenomenon under study, and to cope with unexpected incidents (Garafanki, 1996). However, how to tackle this unexpectedness is rarely taught or easily found in research or teaching manuals especially when it comes to studying the 'outliers' in the community (Gartner and Birley, 2002).

Indeed, little importance has been attributed to the self and emotions felt by entrepreneurship ethnographers in our studies comparing to qualitative health research. Researchers from the field of health research, such as Gilbert (2000) or Watts (2008) argue that, within ethnography, observation and participation, the ability to focus on emotion, besides reason, can contribute positively to high quality results. For example, Riess (2017) states that care and treatment without emotional empathy result in dissatisfied patients. They are then much less likely to follow treatment recommendations, resulting in poorer health outcomes and loss of trust in health care providers. Empathy with oneself and others leads to rebuilding and renewal of a capacity (Gair, 2012, p. 141). Feeling ourselves into the 'patients' (or more generally subjects) studied (Gair, 2012; Hankammer, Snyder, and Hankammer, 2006; Titchener, 1924) and trying to understand their representations and emotions is at the very heart of qualitative research generally and ethnography particularly. In the field of health ethnography, empathy is important and defined as feeling what another person feels without necessarily having gone through the same situation (Gair, 2012; Gilbert, 2000; Hankammer et al., 2006; Riess, 2017; Watts, 2008). The researchers who have not always suffered from the same illnesses as their patients recognize the usefulness of empathy in obtaining insights for their theory and practice.

In the other hand, emotions are conceptualized as 'internal feelings' of individuals related to a discrete and intense experience of short-term duration in reaction to a stimulus (Elfenbein, 2007; Koamé and Liu, 2021). It refers to the ability "to hear, feel, understand, and value the stories of others and to convey that felt empathy and understanding back to the client/storyteller/participant" (Gair, 2012, p. 134). The emotions of the researcher seem appropriate for exploring 'under-researched topic' (Hollaway and Biley, 2011) and 'uncharted waters' (Stern, 1980). Health researchers (i.e. Gair, 2012; Hankammer, Snyder, and Hankammer, 2006; Titchener, 1924) argue that their affective and their emotion is particularly important when they study 'vulnerable subjects' such as cancer patients, abused children or generally sensitive research. This standpoint is largely shared by feminist approaches[1] that acknowledge emotions, 'outlaw emotions' (Jaggar, 1989) and embodied knowledge.

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[1] « It was feminist methodology that made the role of researcher's emotion explicit to the research process » (Hubbard et al., 2001, p. 124).

In the field of entrepreneurship, relatively little importance has been attributed to the emotions felt by ethnographers compared to qualitative research done in the field of health. However, feeling ourselves into the people we study and trying to understand their representations and emotions should be at the very heart of any qualitative research designed to gain deeper insights about the lived experiences of people engaged in entrepreneurship.

Despite that 'researching the researcher is a much-needed new area of investigation' (Campbell, 2002: 9), very little empirical work focusing directly on the emotions of researchers has been undertaken to date (Kouamé and Liu, 2021). Campbell (2002) justify that "because the traditions of science, that adopt the dispassionate language of researcher neutrality and objectivity, have dominated the early development of sociological research, researchers have been enjoined not to feel but to think" (p. 16). However, the intensive research interviews, observations, memos etc. encouraged reflexivity and self-exploration. Besides, 'a self-examination' helps the ethnographer to keep his passion and commitment when the process become tiring, draining and even boring (i.e., during the transcription of the interviews) (Garafanki, 1996).

As the challenge is to find the balance between the 'self' of the researcher and the perspectives of the people under the study (Langley and Klag, 2017), it is important to ask: 'it is all in the eye of the beholder'? Given that some of the stories are untold in interviews and unseen directly, the ethnographer's emotions help him/her to understand/feel the emotions of people under the study.

In this essay, my main objective is to share a 'confessional tale of the field' (Van Maanen, 1988, 2010)[2] reflexively. By sharing my involvement in exploring a sensitive topic (trauma and extreme poverty in entrepreneurial research), I raised the power of self and emotions as one interesting mean to capture the 'untold stories' and to deal with the participants' (in)congruence.

3. The Context of the Study

The accounts shared here are based on my experience of conducting an ethnography study that is set in a rural area in Southeast Asia. The main objective of this study is to explore and understand the entrepreneurial behavior in a context of extreme poverty. The data collection took place with members and beneficiaries of a humanitarian organization in Southeast Asia and France during three years. This organization hosts 100 youngsters from the world's poorest populations living on less than 1.90 USD a day (World Bank, 2020) on average 18 years old, (ii) 40 French and American volunteers, and (iii) 10 employees from the country's middle and rich classes.

This organization is involved in a range of development and community building activities such as housing, natural disaster relief, livelihood development, education, sports, feeding programs and entrepreneurship training. We conducted narrative interviews, one focus-group, diachronic in-situ observations in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and field notes about our feeling evoked at various points during the research process. The fieldwork was carried out by two researchers. A third researcher-outsider joined the team in 2020 to help conceptualize the empirical observations and experiences.

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[2] See also see for examples Kisfalvi-Mana (2006) and the special issue of Organizational Research Methods (Volume 13, Number 12, 2010).

The confessional tale of the field

<u>Discovering the sensitive data and feeling struck by the stories.</u>

I retrieved the data collected by my co-fieldworker during his first stay in the study site for eight days. He/she conducted 20 narrative interviews, three interviews with people in charge and observation field notes. He attended all the local events, restaurant and same living spaces. He/she mainly asked the youngsters to talk about themselves, their entrepreneurial intentions and motivations, and the local context in which they found themselves in the school. I processed the qualitative data (2000 minutes of interviews) manually and with assistive software. We then confronted my analyses with his/her observations and further coding and processing steps were followed.

I was touched by the stories of the interviewees. I felt struck by the ease at which the youngsters shared deeply traumatic experiences of hunger, deprivation, criminality and abuse by their parents. As the organization is deeply rooted in a Christian charismatic movement, my co-fieldworker and I were not overly surprised by the religious rhetoric but noticed the recurrent mention of the founder's role who was no longer part of this organization at the time of the interviews.

<u>Initiating a rapport building with others and becoming sensitized</u>

My first contact with the participants was when we organized a focus group with (i) the organization leaders (member of the management committee, the executive director and the operational manager), (ii) a French leader based in France whose role is to broker donations and collaborations with the major business schools in France, (iii) a youngster graduated from the second batch (2015), and (iv) a French social entrepreneur involved in the NGO.

The focus group interview lasted 95 minutes with an informal lunch (90 minutes) before the interview. The interview data were also digitally recorded. The themes were non-structured but dealt with the ecosystem around the organization and the interactions between its components, the interaction with the people in charge of the beneficiaries, and what is the outcome of entrepreneurial initiatives of the beneficiaries.

During the focus group, members responded perfectly to all questions, even the most intimate questions (e.g., religious motivation). All of them were engaged in a "poor youth movement in the country". They all seemed to share a big admiration, almost adulation, for the charismatic founder of the organization. The participants of the focus group did not lack sympathy and showed enthusiasm for sharing their stories and opinions. However, I felt a sense of discomfort, an odd feeling that I could not explain but which had grown rather than went away during the focus group interview.

When sharing my feelings with my co-fieldworker, he/she interpreted them as an expression of cultural misunderstanding of the context in which the organization operated and not keeping an 'open mind' to the vastly differing context of extreme poverty and its effects on individuals.

<u>Listening to untold stories</u>

Two months after, my co-fieldworker and I went in immersion in the organization for two weeks. We accompanied/shadowed the poor youngsters from the moment they got up in the morning until the dinner they prepared in the evening.

My feelings of doubt, discomfort that grown up when interviewing the participants was incomprehensible to me and my co-fieldworker. In fact, the atmosphere of the organization is friendly, people declare to have positive feelings like the joy of being part of the organization, that volunteering in this organization has given a meaning to their life, the positive and

reciprocal learning between two different worlds (rich/poor; developed countries, developing countries etc.,). Sharing my feelings with co-fieldworker was not an easy discussion, because he/she was skeptical about what I was saying about my suspicions that I feel but cannot explain. He/she asked me once again to be open-minded as the cultural and religious context of the study site was different from our European context.

I decided to focus on the foreign volunteers when I observed that one of them was very active and very sad. We call this volunteer 'R'. My questions to all volunteers were aimed at understanding their involvement in the youngsters' lives. Besides the recordings, I spent time with the volunteers and informally asked if they would like to have the same thing in France, if they thought the youngsters and employees were really happy, and if the volunteers had any information about the graduate youngsters and their entrepreneurial projects. Some volunteers seemed to be sad, disappointed, and almost depressed. Other volunteers were more enthusiastic.

I tried to build a connection with the volunteers that are American or European especially with 'R'. He/she accompanies ten graduate students of first three batches in the marketing strategies and commercialization of their products. Volunteer 'R' answered all my questions. Some issues related mainly to the selection of these three batches and the values she was looking for in humanitarian work and his/her experience with the NGO (question asked at the end of the interviews to all the volunteers) evoked non tangible emotions. My questions prompted facial reactions and a change in his/her eyes that he/she was trying to control. When I asked him/her what was wrong, he/she denied it. He/she replied that he/she intends to leave before the end of his/her mission and his/her planned stay. I stopped the recording and asked him/her to trust me as I would always respect his/her anonymity as a researcher.

At the evening, the volunteer 'R' called me back to declare that "he/she's actually leaving the next day, that I disturbed him/her and made him/her feel guilty and felt that he/she had to admit: 1) A suicide attempt by a youngster because the founder of the organization had a sexual relationship with him and later abandoned him; 2) Former youngsters are aware of the abuse, which makes his/her actions of accompanying them hard to accomplish".

Feeling vulnerable and redirecting the interviews

That evening, I shared the information with my co-fieldworker who was also horrified. We decided this information had to be cross-checked before any further action was to be undertaken. We didn't formulate a specific interview guide but decided to ask questions about the youngster who had attempted suicide without mentioning the incident. The questions focused mainly on the outcome of his entrepreneurial project, his network and the keys to his success given the number of the products that he had sold.

The next day, my interview with Volunteer 'J' was even more intense. Volunteer 'J' admits to feeling perplexed about my questions and bursts into tears to show me an e-mail of exchange with the founder. Volunteer 'J' reproaches him for the facts and the founder justifies himself without apologizing. As I left the interview room, I met my colleague who had just finished his/her interview, also with a serious look on his/her face.

In fact, my co-fieldworker continued interviewing the mentors. During an interview with one of them, which took place at the same time as my interview with Volunteer 'J', this mentor broke out in tears for no apparent reason when asked about how he/she interacted and supported the students. At this moment, my co-fieldworker started to realize something deeper was going on. At this stage, he also started having doubts and a premonition about what I shared with him shortly afterwards. Deeply distressed about what was uncovered, we left the organization.

Before leaving the country, a last interview seemed indispensable to both of us with an important figure of the NGO and who was volunteer since the launch of the organization. He

confirmed that senior management of the organization covered up the allegations as the founder (which had been removed from the organization) is a prominent figure in the country and to protect the youngsters.

Trying to desensitize

The analysis of the data began when we were able to reflect on this unexpected story. The third researcher-outsider asked us for reflexive feedback, first orally and then in writing, on the research process and our feelings (a reflexive validity, Stiles, 1993). It was not an easy task for a researcher and a fieldworker to make clear the role boundaries as a neutral-investigator rather than a human, especially when highly emotionally-charged material is shared (Garafanki, 1996, Hutchinson and Wilson, 1994).

The analysis consists of conducting research on myself and my feelings during this experience. This process lasts for 7 months and involves 1) self-analysis and analysis of one's own field notes, 2) discussion with the third outsider researcher, 3) discussion with the co-fieldworker, 4) discussion among the three of us.

The analysis process helps me (and my co-fieldworker) to partially detach from the field study, to feel less stuck by the stories, to feel guilty and excited by the data we gathered. Lofland and Lofland (1995: 28) refer to this feeling as an 'ethical hangover' - 'a feeling of persistent guilt or unease over what is viewed as a betrayal of the people under study'- for how much you are receive and how little you are giving in return.

4. Discussion

Goodall (2000) state that there are four tasks involved in becoming an ethnographer (Goodall, 2000, p. 7): learning how to do fieldwork, learning how to write, figuring out who you are as a person/fieldworker/writer, and knowing how, where, and when these all connect. The thread running through all four tasks, is reflexivity—understanding and unsettling the constructed, fictional, and ideological nature of selves, 'realities' and texts (Cunliffe, 2003). One form of tale that can cross realist, impressionist, and critical tales is the confessional tale (Cunliffe, 2010, Van Maanen, 1988).

In this study, I offer an empirical confessional tale for exploring the relationship between self-other where the 'other' is research participants, the ethnographic site, texts, readers and the issue under study by drawing on my experience, body, and emotions as a form of cultural critique (see Cunliffe, 2010; Cunliffe, 2008). This process led (me and my colleagues) to further exploration and eventually to 'unexpected' results for the main study.

The original study was conducted using the common qualitative techniques: individual interviews, group interviews, document analysis, and field observations. All stages of the research project were carried out as rigorously as possible based on the ten years of experience of both co-fieldworkers in carrying out such research. The data were analyzed by two of us (the co-fieldworks) and a third researcher who is outsider. The main outcome of the lived experiences of the researchers during this ethnography is that it was only when we embraced our subjectivity and were empathically "tuned" that it was possible to gain an insight into what was going on in the lives of 'other', which was not visible through rigorous analysis of interview verbatims/data. Based on this study and experiences during it, I make several important claims to which qualitative and ethnographic scholars should pay attention.

First, the accounts shared here reiterates the importance of congruence - the consistency between what the interviewee thinks and/or feels and what he presents to the researcher verbally and/or non-verbally- to deeply understand the participants under study. Most previous research on congruence had examined frequency of behaviors in relation to outcome, rather than

examining the meaningfulness of that behavior within an interaction (Garafanki, 1996). Much of the qualitative research had employed particular measurement instruments which provide useful information about validity and levels of congruence during a research process but do not give access to the processes and feelings occurring during moments of congruence (or incongruence), based on the researcher's narrative accounts of sensitive topic.

Research questions on sensitive topics have the potential to traumatize the participants, especially if they are related to unresolved or painful issues that the participants are not naturally open to discuss. As qualitative researchers, we need to be receptive to participants' discomfort with the topic discussed and to monitor the amount of pressure put on them to respond. At these times, ethical dilemmas could raise. Reflecting on my experience of conducting this experience, I found that qualities such as 'sensitivity' offered me support and helped me to preserve my integrity not only as a professional but as an individual. My experience in the project taught me how to be more flexible and able to cope with changes in a more productive way. Dealing with the untold stories encouraged self-reflexivity, and increased my awareness of my assumptions and biases. This feedback reduced my tendency to seek unnecessary structure and control over the research process. Having access to their overt and covert internal experiences helped me to become more sensitive to their feelings and more congruent and open myself at both a conceptual and an emotional level. I also learned how to handle better my moments of incongruence.

Ethical decision-making is not an easy task for ethnographers, and there are not always clear-cut answers because of the intimate nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the highly emotionally-charged material shared and the unresolved issues (Garafanki, 1996; Hutchinson and Wilson, 1994). Participants may be less than open in providing intimate informations, especially if it is perceived as highly sensitive, without having a sense of trust and knowledge that their vulnerability is of concern to the researcher, and a feeling that they are respected as individuals. The researcher's degree of sensitivity and respect towards the research participants affects the depth and the quality of the interview and the material shared (Miles et al., 2014). In several instances during my interviews, I realized that my ability to maintain a non-judgmental attitude and a sensitivity towards the interviewees were a key factor in eliciting information. Many times, I felt that the participants were carefully watching me and my reactions to what they had shared.

This is one of the ethical dilemma decisions that I faced; self-disclosure and making boundaries. While I choose to not disclose my doubts, I showed the participants a sensitive care about what they are living and saying. Sensitivity is one of the skills that we don't claim in our studies but which proved key in revealing the most sensitive data. According to Parton (1990), the researcher needs to adopt a stance of 'empathic neutrality'- that is, "empathic engagement with the stones the participants share, but neutrality regarding the content of the material generated".

Second, I claim that increasing subjectivity, in the form of researcher's use of empathy, can increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative data we gather. That is, accepting subjectivity and embracing empathy does not contradict trustworthiness in ethnography research, but requires reflexivity and logical reasoning ability, or 'cognitive empathy' (Hogan, 1969), and the ability to see others and one's behavior, or 'affective empathy' (Hoffman, 1987). Indeed, empathy refers to two related human abilities: mental perspective taking (cognitive empathy) and the vicarious sharing of emotion (emotional empathy) (Smith, 2006). In a sense, using empathy relates to ensuring the quality criteria in qualitative research through triangulation (emotions included) . In this empirical study, it was important to confront the feelings I had with those of the actors in the field, including my co-fieldworker. There could have been mistakes and misunderstandings about premonitions, but discussions with colleagues and the

confrontation of data (observations) and feelings helped us to get a better understanding of the research subject, in short, gain an insight. Because qualitative research depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning and understanding, it helps a researcher to form a perception ("us in the place of the other") and doubts or vulnerability (as example of emotions) by the inevitable confounding of self and other in this type of research (Devereux, 1967). As «emotions do not necessarily emerge only out of 'self' or even out of self in interaction with other (intersubjectivity); they may also emerge out of the structures that surreptitiously shape these intersubjective interactions » (Davies, 2010, p. 6), it seems to me important to become increasingly aware of the full picture of the sometimes-complex reality.

Third, I claim that it is not enough to be an observer and listener, but it is important to be pay attention to our own feelings and those of the interlocutors when we do good ethnography research. We believe technical rigor is necessary but not sufficient for gaining an insight. A common criticism of qualitative research and ethnography is it may remain at the level of a collection of anecdotes and personal impressions (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Yet, researchers from the field of health research, such as Gilbert (2000) or Watts (2008) argue that, within ethnography, observation and participation, the ability to focus on emotion, besides reason, can contribute positively to high quality results. It is only "because the traditions of science, that adopt the dispassionate language of researcher neutrality and objectivity (…), researchers have been enjoined not to feel but to think" (Campbell, 2002, p. 16).

Because qualitative research depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning and understanding (Angen, 2000), it helps me (us) to form a perception and empathy ("us in the place of the other"). Our posture as researcher, who ask questions, influences the interviewee's answers (Kvale, 2007). If we were to soften the weight of our diligently prepared interview questions in data collection and also try to understand the person in front of us in a sensitive, and humane way, this could help the person in front of us to go beyond the interview themes and share what the person had not expected to share when the interaction with a researcher started. In this approach, from my experience, it seems to be critical to give importance to five points: what we hear as researchers, what we see, our worries besides what the interviewees say, what they do, and what their worries and preoccupations are. In this way, our emotions-internal feelings- could well form an interesting way of how we make sense of interactions with our interlocutors and gain an insight. Feeling and thinking, and thinking about feeling, are subjective but help a researcher to get an insight to the lived experiences of the study objects. For example, I think that what Volunteer 'R' and I were feeling was a sort of mirror-sensitivity (Kisfalvi, 2006; Devereux, 1967) or what psychoanalytic researchers called "counter-transference reactions"[3] (Heimann, 1950).

5. Conclusion

As "fieldwork practices are also biographically and situationally varied" (Van Maanen, 2010), the general purpose of this essay is to contribute to the improvement of our ethnographic qualitative research methods by proposing to integrate researcher's emotions to our empirical inquiries of the lived experiences of entrepreneurial individuals. I do this by shedding light on how my emotions helped me to gain an insight in the context of our recent academic study that would not have been attainable with standard qualitative research methods, such as interviews and observations.

Theorizing one's own emotions is a challenge to illustrate and argue. Hoffmann (2007) has shown that qualitative research is an emotional challenge that seeks to fill a methodological gap

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[3] Counter-transference points to the researcher's difficulty in clearly distinguishing material that comes from outside (the subject, the field) and from inside (his/her own emotional reactions).

arising from the fact that there is no space to talk about feelings in the field. In fact, traditional research would have it that feelings and emotions have no place in research, and that as researchers we should be very wary of our emotional reactions lest they make us stray from the path of objectivity. Such advice can easily incite us to suppress our emotional reactions to our research subjects (i.e. my co-fieldworker). This essay claims and empirically shows that it is not enough to be an observer and listener, but it is important to pay attention to his/her own feelings, trait and those of the interlocutors when we, ethnographers, are rigorous and do good qualitative ethnographic research.

Methodological rigor means in this case a commitment on our part of researchers to fully account for how this partial truth has been arrived at, and to communicate the process to the scientific community (Kisfalvi, 2006). The 'royal road' to such rigor might be our reflexivity on the subjective and emotional aspects of our fieldwork. Such reflexivity can also keep ethnographic researchers honest by helping them avoid confounding the boundary that separates their experience from 'others' (Irwin, 2006). The researcher is therefore concerned about how to access felt emotions and to measure internal feeling states (Kouamé and Liu, 2021). These challenges have implications for how to collect data and analyze emotions. *Real time* studies through ethnographic investigation and direct observation seem to be acknowledged as the appropriate approach for studying emotions from this perspective (Zietsma et al., 2019).

Finally, the experience that I reported here raises also the debate about the ability of a solo-ethnographic researcher to describe the world objectively and to reflect seriously on its methodological approach. Wherever possible, I believe, such ethnographic research, especially in unusual contexts (all qualitative researchers seek this kind of extreme context), should involve several personalities and points of view (for example, highly sensitive persons who feels both positive and negative emotions more intensely than less sensitive persons).

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