The Interpretive Zone in International Qualitative Research

LIORA BRESLER

A zona interpretativa na pesquisa qualitativa internacioal

Abstract

This article is about the concept of interpretative zone in the international research, definig as when the researcher had been encultrurated in a different country then the one where the research was conducted. . The bases of this concept in hermeneutics and in Antropology, among other theories, are revised. The basic tension between emic and ethics of the qualitative research are lightned, through a methological analyses on the relationship between the researcher's self and "others". The interpretative zone concept is exemplified through the analyses of the author's cultural informed perspective on the meaning constructing processes of three research experiences. Those researches were focused on school art education, arts and music, developed in the United the States, when the author was raised in Israel, and in Israel, after the author had been a resident of US for many years.

Key-words: Qualitative research, international contexts, subjectivity.

Resumo:

Este artigo trata do conceito de zona interpretativa na pesquisa em contextos internacionais, definidos como as situações onde um pesquisador realiza projetos de pesquisa em um país diferente do que fui enculturado. Revisando as bases desse conceito na hermenêutica e na Antropologia entre outras teorias, a tensão básica entre êmico e ético da pesquisa qualitativa é realçada, em uma reflexão metodológica sobre a relação do "self" do pesquisador com os diversos encontros com o "outro". O conceito de zona interpretativa é exemplificado através da análise do papel da perspectiva da autora, culturalmente informada, no processo da construção dos significados. em três experiências de pesquisas. Estas são focalizadas nas artes, plásticas e música, em contextos escolares nos Estados Unidos, enquanto uma pessoa enculturada em Israel, e de volta à Israel, como residente dos Estados Unidos por muitos anos.

Palavras chave: Pesquisa qualitativa, contextos internacionais, subjetividade.

PART I: Insider And Outsider Perspectives In Creating An Interpretive Zone

This chapter focuses on methodological issues in the conduct of qualitative research in international settings. To grasp adequately the demands of interpretive international work, we need to adopt fresh ways of thinking about encounters with the "other". The concept of the *interpretive zone* is particularly useful because it defines a space where the knowledge, experiences, and beliefs of outsiders and insiders interact to create new understandings. Drawing on my own research as an Israeli studying American schools and later returning to study Israeli settings, I explore how research in international settings intensifies the process of interpretation, focusing on the possibilities and pitfalls inherent in international research.

In the first part of the chapter, I introduce the notion of the interpretive zone, situating it within the larger context of interpretation and hermeneutics, and relating

it to the conceptual identity, as well as to the sensory experiencing self of the researcher. A central part of the interpretive zone is shaped by the relationship between "insider and outsider," with their distinct contextual manifestations (such as cultural, professional, ethnic sensitivities and identities). I touch on these relationships in the disciplines of anthropology, teacher research, and critical race theories in reflecting on international research, the mission of the researcher can be regarded as a pilgrimage of sort, providing a contrast to meaning making in various types of international *non–research* activities. This contrast can be traced to the assumptions, structures and goals of international research.

The second part of this chapter is based on my own positioning as a researcher in three research projects. Examining the different roles I had in each of these studies, I portray different types of interpretive zones; e.g., those formed with participants as well as with co–researchers; those characterized by amicable, as well as conflictual, and neutral interactions. I explore various methodological issues, including the presentation of self, exposure to multiple perspectives on contents, pedagogies and values, and the process of making sense of cultural differences. I conclude by reflecting on the uses of international research in a world acknowledged to be increasingly complex in its interlaying of local and global perspectives.

I refer to qualitative International Research when (i) it involves the study of a country and culture different from the ones in which the researcher was enculturated; (ii) interpretation is based on cooperation between the researcher— typically an outsider, and insiders to the culture. Cooperation is essential to the emic/etic productive tension that is at the basis of all qualitative research.

This notion of knowledge as transaction and the role of the community in providing the contexts for knowing is addressed by John Dewey and his discussions of inquiry as a form of experience (Dewey, 1938). It is these aspects of community and inquiry that foreground the notion of the interpretive zone.

The Interpretive Zone

In an earlier work (Wasser & Bresler, 1996), Judy Davidson Wasser and I proposed the concept of the "interpretive zone" as the intellectual realm in which researchers work collaboratively. In the interpretive zone, researchers bring together their various areas of knowledge, experience, and beliefs to forge new meanings through the process of the joint inquiry in which they are engaged. In our conception of the interpretive zone we combined two important and closely linked hermeneutical traditions, the philosophical, as represented by such thinkers as Dewey, Dilthey, Ricoeur, and Rorty, and that which stems from interpretive anthropology and the work of Geertz, Turner, and Myerhoff.

The concept of zone assumes more than one party—at least two if not more—competing, negotiating, and interacting from different perspectives. Thus, the term zone, (more than the term interpretation), moves us away from the traditional image of the researcher as a lone isolated figure, working independently on a problem, to that of a socially embedded researcher, grounded in social interactions.

In our reference to "zone" we drew upon diverse scholarly uses of the term as well as non–academic uses. Among these we noted Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" (1986), Bakhtin's "character zones" (1986), Pratt's linguistic "contact zones" (1992), and Giroux's (1992) "border zones." Non–academic uses include "speeding zone" "demilitarized zone," and "intertidal zone." What is similar about these notions of zones is that they refer to unsettled locations, areas of overlap or contestation. It is in a zone that unexpected forces meet, new challenges arise, and solutions have to be devised with the resources at hand. The notion of zone implies dynamic processes–exchange, transaction, transformation, and intensity. The characterization of zones differs according to the context and the aspects of the collaborative interactions that are emphasized. Zones range from the neutral (scaffolding), through the conflictual (borders, struggles, wars) to the amicable (negotiation, alliances, overlap). Like Bakhtin (1986), we recognized the interpretive zone to be socially and historically situated, that is, an imaginary location in which multiple voices converge and diverge through the tensions imposed by centripetal and centrifugal forces in action.

Interpretation and the Context of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, "to let what seems to be far and alienated speak again" (Gadamer, 1975), is concerned with the investigation of the process of interpretation. Initially hermeneutics focused on the communication of meaning through a text, and later expanded to non–textual phenomena including social processes and human existence. As Collini has pointed out, puzzles and disputes about how to characterize interpretation have a long history in Western thought, originating in the enormously consequential context of establishing the meaning of the Word of God (1992, 3–4). The modern phase of this history dates from the heightened self–consciousness about the problem of textual meaning introduced by the biblical hermeneutics associated with Schleiermacher at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Later in the 19th century, Dilthey highlighted the centrality of interpretation to understanding all the creations of the human spirit.

Following Dilthey, Heidegger proposed that hermeneutics be concerned with *all types of interpretation*, pointing out that interpretation is a universal feature of human experience. Heidegger understood hermeneutics to be the existential, phenomenological analysis of human existence insofar as "understanding" is an existential–ontological characteristic of human being (Gallagher, 1992). Gadamer developed hermeneutics as a theory which illuminates *the conditions of possibility of understanding* (Gallagher, 1992).

Gadamer claims that genuine understanding is possible only when we recognize this existential state, when we risk our fore conceptions, and truly let the "other" speak to us. Being an interpreter demands an openness to experience, a genuine willingness to risk one's prejudices, and a commitment to enter into a dialogue with the other and with one's own tradition (Schwandt, 2001, private communication). The Gadamerian emphasis on the recognition that our efforts to understand do not originate in our "individual reflective consciousness" but in the recognition of our linguisticality and historicality is central to the interpretive zone.

The scrutiny of the concept of interpretation involves a deconstruction of the concept of one, objective truth. In a "goldilocks" form[1], Umberto Eco (1992) presents two extremes positions: the intention of the author versus the intention

of the interpreter, then offers a middle ground—the intention of the text. In this discussion, Eco blurs the distinction between *literary* and *everyday texts*, as well as the distinction between texts as *images of the world* and the perception of *the natural world as a Great Text* to be deciphered (Eco, 1992, 25).

The notion of multiple perspectives, the basis of a post–modern thinking, and the deconstruction of logic as the categorical criteria, can be traced to second century Hermetism which looked for an unknown truth. This description of Hermetism resonates with the quest for understanding culture, one's own, through remote others, in the quest of making the familiar strange:

> In this [Hermetic] syncretistic dimension, one of the principles of Greek rationalist models, that of the excluded middle, enters a crisis. It is possible for many things to be true at the same time, even if they contradict each other. But if books tell the truth, even when they contradict each other, then their each and every word must be an allusion, an allegory. They are saying something other than what they appear to be saying. Each one of them contains a message that none of them will ever be able to reveal alone... Thus truth becomes identified with what is not said or what is said obscurely and must be understood beyond or beneath the surface of a text (1992, 30).

Eco's notion of deep knowledge, is reminiscent of Gadamer's notion of "far and alienated." Only what is lying under the surface can remain unknown for long. Thus truth becomes identified with what is *not* said or what is said obscurely and must be understood beyond or beneath the surface of a text. Eco highlights the relevance of the exotic in a quest for "a different truth" problematizing classical Greek rationalism.

> ... if the search for a different truth is born of a mistrust of the classical Greek heritage, then any true knowledge will have to be more archaic. It lies among the remains of civilizations that the fathers of Greek rationalism had ignored. Truth is something we have been living with from the beginning of time, except that we have forgotten it. If we have forgotten it, then someone must have saved it for us and it must be someone whose words we are no longer capable of understanding. So this knowledge may be exotic. Jung has explained how it is that once any divine image has become too familiar to us and has lost its mystery, we then need to turn to images of other civilizations because only exotic symbols are capable of maintaining an aura of sacredness. Now, turning things around, it is the supposed stuttering of the foreigner that becomes the sacred language, full of promises and silent revelations. Whereas for Greek rationalism a thing was true if it could be explained, a true thing was now mainly something that could not be explained. (Eco, 1992, 31).

Questioning the ability to understand a far and alienated culture, Gadamer and Ricoeur, contend that *no* method can guarantee an absolutely objective interpretation of an author's work because, as readers, we are conditioned by prejudice of our own historical existence (Gallagher, 1992). These prejudices, however, are not simply a matter of time and place; they are embedded in language. As interpreters we never achieve a complete or objective interpretation since we, limited by our own historical circumstance and by our own language, are inextricably involved in the interpretive conversation (Gallagher, 1992). Gadamer holds that interpretations are always constrained by the prejudices of the interpreter. He recommends that the interpreter needs to "raise to awareness those prejudices that guide and condition the process of understanding", neutralize those that "are of a particularistic nature", and preserve those which enable understanding (Gallagher, 1992, p. 106). The task is to base interpretation on the productive prejudices and to eliminate the nonproductive.

Gadamer identifies effective–historical consciousness as the *fusing of horizons* (1975). Following Nietzsche and Husserl, he defines the concept of horizon, as the "range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1975, 269). 19th century historians argued that in order to comprehend past events one must understand them in terms of the historical horizon of those events. What these writers did not understand, however, is that another's historical horizon cannot be understood by abandoning one's own, that is, by adopting an Archimedean point of objectivity (Gallagher, 1992, 104). Gadamer argues that not only is such a point of objectivity impossible to achieve but it entails a self–alienation that is the antithesis of understanding. We must already have a horizon in order to understand another's (Gadamer, 1975, 271). We can only regain the concepts of the historical past by comprehending them through our own concepts (Gadamer, 1975, 337). Thus, the historians failed to realize that the projecting of an historical horizon is only the first phase in the process of understanding. The second, equally necessary stage of understanding is achieved through an appreciation, recognition and examination of one's own historical horizon. The fusing of the two horizons results in the successful completion of an act of understanding. (Gallagher, 1992, 105). Effective–historical consciousness is the conscious act of this fusion (Gallagher, 1992). I contend that this fusion of horizons, is facilitated when we work collaboratively in the interpretive zone.

As Schwandt (2000) points out, reaching an understanding is not a matter of setting aside, escaping, managing, or tracking one's own standpoint, prejudgments, biases, or prejudices. Rather, understanding requires the engagement of one's biases. Engagement means risking one's stance and acknowledging the ongoing liminal experience of living between familiarity and strangeness (Schwandt, 2000, 207). Although preconceptions, prejudices, or prejudgments suggest the initial conceptions that an interpreter brings to the interpretation of an object or another person, the interpreter risks those prejudices in the encounter with what is to be interpreted. Schwandt points out that only in a dialogical encounter with what is not understood, with what is alien, with what makes a claim upon us, can we open ourselves to risking and testing our preconceptions. "Understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic. It is always bound up with language." (Schwandt, 2000, 195). I believe that it is that linguistic aspect that renders the product of research—the written document—as central to and facilitative of understanding[2].

The Sensory, Experiencing, Interacting Self: The Aural as a Basis for the Textual

Interpretation occurs in the interplay between lived experience and the production of text, where the researcher's experiences are central. Dewey, Langer, and Eisner, among others, have pointed out that we perceive the world with all our senses. It is curious that in spite of its primacy in, for example, interviewing, the aural sense has been neglected in the literature. In this next section, I touch on the aural sense and its role in the interpretive process.

David Burrows' discussion on sonorously experiencing the world (Burrows, 1990; also in Bowman, 1998) points out that in human experience, the living body is the center to which everything else in the world relates as periphery, as "other". Burrows proposes a distinction between three fields of experience. Field 1 is physical space, the material world in which the body resides, a field of action perceived primarily through the senses—vision chief among those. This is the world of the "here and now". Field 2 is meta–sensory, a mental space. Although this field of action is rooted in the body, mind takes the concrete immediacy of

the here–and–now and opens it out "to include past, future, elsewhere". The entities at play in Field 2, then, are not sense data but images and concepts: the synthetic, immaterial stuff of which memories, plans and expectations are made. This mental field of action is free from the concrete, material matters of physical space. It's boundaries and limitations are not physical, but consensual ones: negotiated standards of logic, coherence, and clarity that are mutually endorsed. Field 3 is the field of spirit, understood as the scene of self as diffused through the full range of awareness, an unbounded space in which center is everywhere.

Burrows contends that what historically made humans' distinctive mental and spiritual life possible is the way they experience *sound* (Burrows, 1990). Sound's phenomenal characteristics make speech the ideal vehicle for formulating human mental life. Thought may be inspired by the ideal of permanence and fixity, of the control, clarity, and stability characteristic of visual experience; but thinking is fundamentally a kind of movement. Sound's capacity to detach itself from the world of stationary objects and things, its fundamentally dynamic, procedural character, is what enabled human entry into the distinctively human field of mental life (Burrows, 1990, in Bowman, 1998, 283).

The experience of sound seldom has the "out there–ness" so familiar in visual experience. "In contrast to the eye's promise of clarity and distinctness, the ear's world offers us ambiguity and mystery" (Burrows, 1990, in Bowman, 1998, 285). This ambiguity is due at least in part to the profoundly procedural nature of sound. "Where sight gives us physical entities, the heard world is phenomenally evanescent, relentlessly moving, ever changing. We see the world as a noun and hear it as a verb." (Burrows, 1990, in Bowman, 1998, 285). The experience of humanly generated sound transforms the dualistic threshold between individual self and an outside world into "a new front of shared concerns", establishing in essence an interpretive zone.[3]

I believe that the aim of qualitative research to provide the reader with a *vicarious experience* renders the production of text (so different, for example, from a list of facts on foreign countries) such a complex endeavor. The dynamic interaction between the self and the other, an insider and outsider, enables interpretation that expands beyond the initial mental make–up of the interpreter. In my own experience as a researcher the fusion of *historical* horizons is limited by the "live," reciprocal dialogue with historical documents[4]. In contrast, the multi sensoral

limited interaction with people from other cultures can heighten a dialogue within a dynamic interpretive zone.

Studying Strange Culture: Anthropological Roots

The interpretation of a setting foreign to the researcher has an important intellectual tradition in the discipline of anthropology, which was based on the model of the outsider who gains knowledge about a culture through interaction with insiders (cf. for "classic" ethnographies see Malinowski, 1922; Spindler & Spindler, 2000; for more contemporary works, see Barley, 1983; Gottlieb & Graham, 1993). The framework for the researcher as an outsider connotes not only the traditional association with *objectivity* (impossible by definition within a post–positivist paradigm), but highlights the *ignorance* of the researcher. Ignorance is the propelling force behind anthropological endeavor. The researcher aims to get immersed in the "local" culture, learning the basics—the language, the skills of getting by, the local meanings and the underlying values which they represent. It is those outsider lenses which keep researchers noticing, wondering, questioning. Anthropologists remind us frequently of the opposite danger of not having sufficient "prolonged engagement" in the setting: that of "going native," where the researcher loses the motivation to report to the scholarly commitment.

The relationship between insider–outsider involve issues of access and power (cf. Clandinin and Conneley, 2000). The sociologist Robert Merton (1972, 11) notes that within the context of social change, "we come upon the contemporary relevance of a long–standing problem in the sociology of knowledge: the problem of patterned differentials among social groups and strata in access to certain types of knowledge." In its strong form, the claim is put forward as a matter of epistemological principle that particular groups in each moment of history have *monopolistic access* to particular kinds of knowledge. In the weaker, more empirical form, the claim holds that some groups have *privileged access*, with other groups also being able to acquire that knowledge for themselves but at greater risk and cost. In the case of unequal power relationship, the final claim to truth is not only a matter of theoretical understanding but carries political

implications. The awareness of the political implications of research has been intensified in a post–colonial world. Critical race theorists heighten the problematics of outsiders studying a culture that is foreign to them, especially when they operate from a position of arrogance along with a criticism of "colonial" outside research. There is an increasing demand that outsiders stop researching developing countries (cf. Said, 1989, in Tobin, 1999).

The *Identity* of the Research Self

Merton's discussion of the relationship between knowledge construction and group affiliations (1972), points out that individuals have not one but multiple social statuses and group affiliations that interact to influence their behavior and perspectives. He acknowledges race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, occupation, and religion. The situation and social context determines which social status affiliation assumes primacy.

Indeed, in a constructivist world view, examining the self interacting with the "data" is essential to interpretations (cf. Banks, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Peshkin, 1988). Interpretive research begins with the biography and the self of the researcher (Denzin, 1989). The types of knowledge, values and identifications that researchers possess are acknowledged as key in shaping interpretations and understanding. The interactional text is present whenever an individual is located in a social situation. All researchers, notes Denzin (1989), are partisans for one point of view or another. All scholars are caught in the circle of interpretation; they can never be free of the hermeneutical interpretations of the phenomenon being investigated.

Subjectivity, "the quality of an investigator that affects the results of observational investigation" (Webster, 1993) is an umbrella term, referring to allegiances, professional and personal commitments, values, and passions of the self. Similarly to Merton, Peshkin (1988) described subjectivity as an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one's class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one's object of investigation. These persuasions vary in time and in intensity. Subjectivity operates during the entire

research process (Peshkin, 1982): it unfolds in the process of conducting the research as well as in analyzing and in writing.

Following Dewey, qualitative researchers assume that knowing is a transactional process in which the researcher, with his/her subjectivity, commitments and values, interacts with the setting, people, and environment, and that this experience forms the basis of interpretation. If multiple researchers are involved, multiple interpretations may arise and the interactions of these researchers with each other will be an important force in shaping the way the "findings" are viewed (cf. Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

In traditional ethnography, anthropologists started out "here" and then went "there" to study "them," returning to write about "them" in descriptive studies (Geertz, 1988). Classically, these studies were shaped into narratives that provided little information about the authors and the ways that they're understanding and interpretation were shaped by the experience of fieldwork. Interpretive ethnography takes a more reflexive stance, with its critical examination of the anthropologist's presence and actions, and its interest in the ways that self and others are mutually shaped in the process of fieldwork.

A self–reflexive anthropology challenges ethnographic authority on multiple levels. For instance, as producers and/or consumers of ethnographic accounts, we now want to know more, in more depth and from a more self–reflexive standpoint, about the author's subjectivity, the ways the ethnographer entered, stayed, and left the fieldwork site, about the ethical dilemmas the researcher faced in the course of this work, and how these were handled (Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

Multiple Relations of Insider/Outsider: Within and Across

Banks (1998) points out that the cultural communities in which individuals are socialized are also epistemological communities that have shared beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge. It is not their experiences *per se* that cause individuals to acquire specific values and knowledge during their socialization within their ethnic or cultural communities; rather, it is their *interpretations* of their

experiences. How individuals interpret their cultural experiences is mediated by the interaction of a complex set of status variables, such as gender, social class, age, political affiliation, religion, and region. An individual's scholarly or ideological commitments and knowledge claims cannot be predicted by his or her ethnic socialization because of the complex factors that influence knowledge production: individuals socialized within cultural communities may endorse or oppose knowledge within their indigenous communities for a number of reasons (Banks, 1998).

Highlighting the complex relationship between ethnicity and ideological commitment, Banks presents a typology of cross–cultural researchers consisting of four types of knowers: the indigenous–insider; the indigenous–outsider; the external–insider; and the external–outsider. The indigenous–insider endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member who speaks with authority about it. The indigenous–outsider was socialized within his or her indigenous community however, has experienced high levels of cultural assimilation into an outsider or oppositional culture. Their values, beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge are identical to those of the outside community. They were socialized within another culture and acquired its beliefs, values, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge, but because of their unique experiences, they reject many of these values and knowledge claims and endorse those of the studied community. The external–outsider is socialized within a community that is different from the one in which he or she is doing research. The external–outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community (Banks, 1998).

What happens when members of low–status and marginalized groups become university–sanctioned "native" ethnographers of their own communities? Focusing on the complexity of such endeavors, Banks presents the case of strong advocates to and from the Afro–American community. Cross–cultural researchers, writes Banks, will be criticized no matter how cultural sensitive they are or how well they do their jobs. Such criticism is an essential part of the discourse within an academic community. It is one of the consequences of researchers doing

their work, especially in cross–cultural settings (Banks, 1998, 15). Researchers indigenous to a marginalized community also face important challenges. When they become professionally trained at research universities, they are likely to face at least two important risks: (a) they may become distanced from their communities during their professional training and thus become indigenous–outsiders; (b) They may be perceived by many members of their indigenous communities as having "sold out" to the main–stream community and thus can no longer speak for the community of have an authentic voice (Banks, 1998, 15).

These issues are increasingly discussed as an integral part of scholarly work. Sophia Villenas (1996), for example, reflects on how she was positioned as a native ethnographer vis–a–vis her own community, the majority culture, the research setting, and the academy. Villenas discusses how her different identities, as an insider and outsider to the society she studied, came into play in the process of conducting research with an emerging Latino community in the US South. She describes her experience of being caught in the midst of oppressive discourses of "mothering" during her work as a Chicana ethnographer in a rural North Carolina Latino community. She writes:

> The native ethnographer must deal with her own marginalization experiences and identities in relation to dominant society. This "native" ethnographer is potentially both the colonizer, in her university cloak, and the colonized, as a member of the very community that is made "other" in her research (Villenas, 712).

While Villenas was focusing on how to reform her relationship with her Latino community as a "privileged" ethnographer, she missed the process by which she was being co–opted by the dominant English–speaking community to legitimize their discourse of Latino family education and child–rearing practices as "problem." By engaging in this discourse, she found herself complicit in the manipulation of her own identities and participating in her own colonization and marginalization. Through her story, Villenas recontextualizes theories about the multiplicity of her researcher identities. She problematizes the "we" in the literature of qualitative researchers who analyze their race, class, and gender privileges. Villenas challenges dominant–culture education ethnographers to move beyond the "researcher as colonizer" position and to call upon their own histories of complicity and marginalization in order to move toward new identities and

discourses. Similarly, she calls upon ethnographers from marginaliazed cultures to recognize their position as border crossers and to realize that they are their own voices of activism

Banks' typology and Villenas' reflections emerged in the context of critical race studies addressing issues of power and inequity. While the issue of power is always present in research, I suggest that Banks categories' juxtapose elements that are not necessarily one entity. For the external–outsider, for example, ignorance of the culture does not have to assume negative attitude and little appreciation. The field of anthropological research provides many examples. Myerhoff's powerful and moving study of an aging Jewish community (1977) exemplifies a deep commitment to the interpretion of an "emic" perspective in a population that in many ways is different from her. Myerhoff, acknowledging her outsiderness, lacks knowledge of the participants' language, their traditions and commitments, and has been viewed with suspicion by the Jewish participants of the study.

In fact, Myerhoff is both insider (in her Jewishness) and outsider (generationally, as well as the basic skills of knowledge she is lacking about the Jewish tradition) to the culture she studies. Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham's studying the Beng tribe in Africa (1994) are outsiders throughout. Though Gottlieb and Graham did not disown their own values, their study problematizes and complexifiers these values (Gottlieb & Graham, 2000, Personal Communication).

Insider/Outsider in Teacher Research and Practice

Obviously, the relationships between insiders and outsiders exist not only in the national and ethnic levels, but in a host of other areas. A central area to educational research is the professional. The productive or painful tension between insiders (i.e. teachers) and outsiders (i.e. researchers) is central in the field of teacher research (cf. Cochran–Smith & Lytle, 1993). Erickson (1993) & Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) point out that studies of teacher knowledge show that insiders' knowledge does not develop in isolation but needs a discourse community. That community includes other teachers (cf. Miller, 1995); conceptual or empirical research literature (cf. Treacher, 1989); oral inquiry with groups

consisting of teachers and researchers (cf. Bresler, 1993); and workshops with people who inspire and guide reflection (Cochran–Smith & Lytle, 1993). Those who do research on teaching thus draw on the views of others as they develop their own views. Language is central in these interactions (e.g., discussions, writing together). Indeed, language has been found to facilitate learning and to be a major instrument of success of teacher education programs, mediating the formation of teachers' "professional" identity, by framing issues for reflection, improvement, and dialog (cf. Lee, 2001).

"Neither the outsider nor the insider," writes Erickson, "is granted immaculate perception. In objectivist moment we may think of this as a curse, but it can also be seen as a great blessing" (Erickson, 1993, 4–5). Thus, "outsider" and "insider" are not related simply as opposites but as voices that engage one another in dialogue (Erickson, 1993). In discovering their own voices, teacher researchers take in the views of various outsiders and, in a Vygotskyan sense, the voices of others become integrated as their own. Appropriating outsider perspectives within a dialogue that becomes increasingly internal, cautions Erickson, is not done without any inner or outer conflict. There are unsettling discourses as those voices engage and combine, discrepancies between the stance of outsider and insider, of participant observer and observant participant.

Culture as Shaping Teacher Identity and Educational Practice

The meaning of education, too is shagged by culture. The overlay of local and global meanings is central to contemporary discourse and is manifested in the different meanings associated, for example, with teaching in various countries (e.g., U.S., Germany, France). Popkewitz (2001) points to the German association with teaching in the concept of *Bildung* (with its forming association), as compared with the concept of *expert–knowledge* in Anglo–American situations. Today's image of the professional teacher, writes Popkewitz, is of one who is expected to collaborate, reflect, and "construct knowledge" in a decentralized system of education. Likewise the "new" teacher is an "empowered" problem solving indi-vidual capable of responding flexibly to problems that have no clear set of boundaries or singular answers (Popkewitz, 2001). At the same time, particular

narratives about individuality, action and participation circulate globally. Examples of local/global interactions in this age of fast communication abound. They range from the broadly varied of interpretation of pedagogical values such as "child–centeredness" that are spreading to many countries (cf. Lee, 2001), through specific methods like Suzuki and Kodaly to educational programs such as the Reggio Emilia schools (cf. Rabitti, 1994). At the same time, the local meaning of pedagogies and programs are shaped by the historical and ideological as well as the structural/institutional context in which they are embedded.

Popkewitz's (2001) uses the concept of the indigenous foreigner[5] to pursue the relation of knowledge and power strategy in comparative studies. It is common, writes Popkewitz, in national policy and research for the "heroes of progress" to be foreigners who are immortalized in the reform efforts (referring to the examples of Vygotsky's and Dewey's influence in many countries. Examples of Dewey's influence on other countries are in Di, 2001; Englund, 2001; Fuhr & Lehmann–Rommel, 2001; Mietinnen, 2001; Stone, 2001). Popkewitz claims that when the narrative of the indigenous foreigner is examined closely, it is found to be a narrative without specific historical references and practices, a discourse that is empty of history. Popkewitz deploys the concept of the indigenous foreigner to recognize how the local and the global overlay each other in the production of power. The concept of hybridity, he claims, rejects both universalism and particularism. The importance of the indigenous foreigner, then, is not in the individuality of the person who is made the hero or heroine, *per se*, but in the *hybridity of discourses* that orders the memory about progress and that separates remembering from forgetting.

Multiple Emphases Of Insiders And Outsiders

Clearly, the notion of an outsider's multi–layered self carries different meanings and emphases. Teacher research typically highlights the amicable and neutral aspects of interpretive zones. Critical race theories center on the conflictual aspects of insider/outsider interpretive zones. Popkewitz's notion of the indigenous outsider points to other, historical-culture relationship in audience's interpretation.

The anthropological assumption of researcher's ignorance coupled with the ability to notice in a fresh way can be associated with the innocence of young children. However, children's so called interpretive naïvity always occurs within specific interpretive contexts and frameworks. For the post–modern researcher, the aimed freshness of seeing is coupled with a stance of expertise, with knowledge of the relevant scholarly literature and the looming task of communication to a scholarly community.

A careful reading of research studies reveals that the boundaries between insiders and outsiders are not always clearcut (cf. Myerhoff, 1977). As I reflected on my own identity in my studies, I questioned whether a researcher who has been raised and enculturated in one country of origin, but has been living in another country for ten, or twenty years, is considered an insider or outsider in the new country? Clearly, an insider/outsider can be conceptualized as a continuum with gradations and nuances rather than a dichotomy. The Greeks' Chronos/Kairos distinction between chronological and experienced time reminds us that not all "time" is equal: the first ten or twenty years are formative in ways that the next ten, twenty years of one's life are not. The *quality and the lived experience of immersion* in the culture is highly relevant to the internalization of values and commitments.

A similar issue is evident in the "flip" situation: what happens when a researcher conducts studies in his/her country of origin, which he/she had left years ago. The returning researcher now possesses a "historical' identity rather than contemporary one. As I discuss in the second part of the paper, this issue has important implications for the types of fieldwork researchers choose, the kinds of knowledge they seek, the relationships they form with the participants, the meanings, ways of understanding and interpretations they secure in the conduct of research, and the production of their research texts. Drawing on the sensory and conceptual identity of the interpreter, the issue of researcher identity has ramifications not only for the experience of the *researcher* in international research, but also for *non–research* experiences. In the next section, I reflect on how interpretation in research in international settings is different from *non–research* in international settings.

Meaning Making In International Settings: A Non–Research Context

> "The tourist travels just as far, sometimes with great zeal and courage, gathering up acquisitions (a string of adventures, a wondrous tale or two), and returns the same person as the one who departed... The pilgrim is different. The pilgrim resolves that the one who returns will not be the same person as the one who set out" (Schelling, in Smith, 1997).

How is interpretation within a research context different from other international experiences: professional (sabbaticals, invited visits) and non–professional living in an international setting, and short–term types of traveling? Being a tourist, to take a common international activity, is a very different learning experience from doing research. Non academics may sum up the distinction as "play" or "fun" for the tourist and "work" for the researcher or lecturer. But I believe that for academics this distinction is blurred, certainly not a simple one.[6]

The differences among these experiences have to do with *time* (duration, rhythm, pacing of intensity) and with the types of *spaces* that we occupy in our activities. They have to do with the types of *social interactions* in which we are engaged in the international process. In addition, they have to do with the *purpose* as well as the *intended product* of our experience and the audience of this product (photographs may be a story to one's friends for the tourists; a paper, dissertation, or book for the researcher).[7]

Time. International qualitative research typically aims at immersion in the setting to enable us to learn something beyond surface observations. In contrast, tourism in guided tours, for example, is typically characterized by a more "self–centered" orientation. If our engagement in international research often aims at immersion in "everyday life," tour groups are often about "highlights" of cultures or the participation in events artificially created for our consumption (cf. Bruner, 1991).

Social interactions. The social milieu, the community in which we are operating, is central to the experience and to the frame of reference. Tourists in tour groups are typically surrounded by outsiders, other tourists who share outsider values and reinforce outsider's perceptions. In contrast, fieldworkers aiming to observe insiders' daily life as they occur naturally, sometimes participating in it, are typically surrounded by locals.

Purposes. Our purposes shape not only what we attend to but how we attend. As group tourists, while relishing for the newness of landscape and food, revitalized by the exotic "feel" of the place, the goal is often "having fun," amassing memories to nurture us back in our everyday life. The research task, a constant endeavor to make sense, aims in the hermetic stance of "looking for a truth we don't know" not only to gain knowledge, but also to expand cognitive and emotional understanding of experiences and concepts that may be fundamentally different from the ones currently possessed. If the thrust of research is an interactive interpretation, and the production of scholarly writing an end result, tourism can be seen as a multi–sensory "exposure" to other cultures, where the "product"—photographs and videos—serve as reminders of these exposures. Burrow's distinctions between the visual and the aural are relevant here. These "products" of our encounters shape our lived experience.

In summary, while the process of meaning making within a "strange" setting is common to all international activities, their different goals and structures create different experiences. The experiences shape the creation of interpretive zones, the kinds of knowledge we gain and the mode of communication and presentation.

Part II: The Insider/Outsider Self In Creating Interpretive Zones

Self–Study

Following C. Wright Mills, Bullough and Pinneagar (2001) claim that for public theory to influence educational practice it must be translated through the personal. Only when a theory can be seen to have efficacy in a practical arena will that theory have life (Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001, 15). However, as Mills (1959, in Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001), warns, articulation of a personal issue never really becomes research until it is connected through evidence and analysis to the issues and troubles of a time and place. Bullough and Pinneagar maintain that biography and history must be joined not only in social science but also in self–study research. When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos

of a time, then self–study moves to research. It is the balance between the way in which private experience can provide insight and solution for public issues and troubles and the way in which public theory can provide insight and solution for private trial that forms the nexus of self–study and simultaneously presents the central challenge to those who would work in this emerging area (Bullugh & Pinneagar, 2001, 16).

Whereas Bullough and Pinneagar focus on self–study in the context of teaching, there is an increasing body of self–study in research (cf., Bruner, 1996, 1993; Peshkin, 1988; Villenas, 1996). While self–study researchers acknowledge the role of the self in the research project, echoing Mooney (1957 in Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001), their studies do not focus on the self per se but on the *space* between self and the practice engaged in (Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001). There is always a tension between those two elements, *self* and the *arena of practice*, between self in relation to practice and the others who share the practice setting.

Each self–study researcher, suggest Bullough and Pinnegar, must negotiate that balance, but it must be a balance

> tipping too far toward the self side produces solipsism or a confessional, and tipping too far the other way turns self–study into traditional research. The balance can be struck at many times during the self–study process, but when a study is reported, the balance must be in evidence not only in what data have been gathered (from self and others) and presented, but also in how they have been analyzed, in how they have been brought together in conversation. For the researcher, the issue is what end of the scale a study will occupy, what sort of study, from confessional to traditional research, will be most fruitful for moving scholarship on and practice in teacher education forward and not merely assisting one's own practice (Bullough & Pinneagar, 2001, 15).

The issues of genre and usefulness discussed earlier in the paper are equally important in self study. The first half of this paper aimed to establish the central role of the interpretive zone created by insiders and outsiders in the interpretive process. In the second part of the paper, I discuss the negotiation of inside and outside perspectives in my own research. I describe these negotiations in three projects where I had different roles and relations to participants and co–researchers, then reflect on the interpretive zones in each of these studies, and how they facilitated interpretations. The processes of making meaning and creating interpretive zones were shaped by the structures of the activity—the spaces occupied, the time (chronos) allocated to it, and the rhythm (kairos) of the activities.

Issues in Conducting International Research: A Personal Journey

Let me start by illustrating how acts of research heightened my "inside" and "outside"sensitivities. My initial exposure to and subsequent experience in conducting qualitative research relates to what I experienced and describe as intensified meaning making. In the swift transition from my professional role of a music director in an Israeli concert hall, to conducting educational research in elementary schools at the Stanford area in my first year of graduate school, I realized that research heightened my sensitivities in ways that few activities did. Fieldwork kept expanding my perceptions. I found that as soon as I had a note book in hand and an anticipated report in mind, I saw, heard, smelled, puzzled and reflected more intensely. This intensification is in stark contrast to my "non–research" life, with a rushing body and mind. Research made me aware of the world around me.

If reading good qualitative works functions like going to museums, where the framing of pictures intensifies looking and seeing, fieldwork, analysis, and writing can be compared to the *creation* of art. Gombrich's famous saying: "The painter does not paint what he sees. He sees what he can paint" applies to the relationship between writing, observing and interpreting. The strong commitment to the expressive, deeper level of text and aurality rather than to the mere visual, embodying the surface, mimetic level of photographs propels a way of seeing, a way of being.

The stage of analysis and writing involves framing of issues. In that process of constantly striving to create frames for making meaning, the intensification is more active and lasts longer—weeks, months, or years. The conduct of research is a highly active endeavor, propelling curiosity and inquiry. In the hermetic gesture that Eco (1992) invoked, research pushes us toward what we don't know.

Prelude to Research: The Presentation of Self

The first stage in establishing an interactive interpretive zone with participants (and co–researchers) involves the presentation of self. In an international setting, it is easier to be ignorant of what and how we communicate. Having an insider who can point to us what we do and how we come across can be invaluable. Lucky for me in my first year in the mid-west at the University of Illinois, I met Terry Denny, renowned for his expertise and teaching on interviewing. Realizing I had never taken a course on interviewing and could use good feedback, I asked him to observe me and share his observation. Terry watched as I interviewed a colleague. Amongst the many insightful things he said I remember his caution about my eye contact: "You stare at people. It can come across as aggressive. Here in the mid west we have a less intense eye contact, somewhere between the nose and the chin". He also commented about my questioning style: "You use too many "Whys". It sounds confrontational. Better say things like "How interesting... Tell me more about it". [enunciated in a softer, diminuendo tone.]

Listening to Terry, I was thinking about the interview I carried out the previous week. The participant, a music teacher, seemed ill at ease as we started to talk. The more intensely I looked at her (aiming within my cultural framework, to reassure her that I was listening well, that I was "with her"), the more she seemed to withdraw. It was only later that week, in her car, when she offered me a ride that we were able to converse comfortably, possibly because I was staring at the road (always a second driver), instead of at her.

The presentation of self as an outsider invites different interactions from those of an insider. It was years later, when I conducted a study in Israel that I realized that my presentation of self (through accent and body language), indeed, my enculturation to research as an outsider became part of my "research style", enabling me to create particular kinds of interpretive zones. Whereas in the U.S. my thick Israeli accent in English has enabled me to ask all sort of naive questions about basic American phenomena and values, Israelis recognized me immediately as one of them. Accordingly, they assumed that I shared with them the same fundamental knowledge that I was hoping they would address. Even though I

was, in effect, an outsider, because I had been away for such a long time, I lacked outsider credibility. The horizons were not acknowledged and hence were never fused.

Learning about Midwestern Custom and Cherishing

This study of the arts in American elementary schools, a three–year project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, started soon after I completed my Ph.D., and moved from Stanford, California to the University of Illinois. With Bob Stake as a principal investigator and Linda Mabry as a fellow researcher, we set out to explore the learning opportunities provided in American elementary schools in the arts. We used a qualitative, case–study methodology, to examine art curricula, explore implicit and explicit values communicated through the choice of content, teaching styles and evaluation practices. My own research settings were in Illinois, the rest of the sites were in five other states (California, Washington, Texas, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania). In contrast to earlier studies in which I was involved as a research assistant to Elliot Eisner in exemplary schools as well as inner city schools, these were ordinary schools, selected to touch a variety of demographics. One of my schools was a K–8 elementary in North Chicago, the two others in the small, blue–collar town of Danville. At poverty level, 62% in the Danville school, and 50% in the Chicago school were entitled to free or reduced price lunches. Minority students comprised 42% of the Danville school population and 74% of the Chicago population, with African–Americans most populous, followed by Hispanics, and Asians.

A mosaic with many different pieces, the interpretive zone in which I found myself featured intense encounters with participants through observations of and interviews with teachers, artists in residence, students, principals, and parents. In Danville, for example, I observed 22 classrooms (one to four times for each classroom) and conducted interviews with 39 classroom teachers, including the 22 teachers I had observed, as well as two artists in residence.

Exposures to Multiple Perspectives: On Penguins and Easter Bunnies

In observations of art instruction, one of the things that I found glaring was the prevalence of "Child Craft" activities in elementary school arts instruction. The following vignette portrayed my perceptions of one such class and an implicit judgment.

> On a freezing winter day, Michelle Little's fourth graders are cutting paper penguins and colorful scarves, hats, pants and boots. Little gives detailed instructions on cutting. "If you keep your eyes on me, you can cut this." Four children help distribute materials: paper, crayons and glue. With classroom arrangement in the usual rows, Little assures that everybody is on task. She lingers a bit with the less accomplished pupils. Some of the scissors are in bad shape. David's are barely functional. Little asks David why he did not get a new pair of scissors. David, sullen, mutters that his mother did not have time to buy them. As we walk on, Little explains to me that his mother is separated from his father, busy with work, and scarcely spends time with her children.

> There is a range in accuracy of cut. The pace of working too, is different from child to child. Some are already gluing boots, others still struggle with the outline. As children are working, Ms. Little takes her shoes off and steps on the table to hang the "exemplary penguins" she had prepared on the window. Down again, she notices that Mary uses a different color from the prespecified ones for a scarf and redirects her.

> What they don't finish now they will finish on Monday, she reassures them. With five minutes before the end of the lesson, some children are already finished and are sitting quietly, math books open. Most of the penguins, though, remain at least partly unclothed when the math lesson starts. But by the following Monday all penguins are lined up on the window, entitling their creators to a prize of five dollars, for the "best classroom in the fourth grader's pod (Bresler, 1991, 76).

The situatedness of readers shapes their reactions to this vignettes. When I share this vignette with College of Education students, many Americans are disturbed by Little's harsh tone to David, as well as by what is perceived as the rigid expectations for uniform color and shape in an *art* lesson, a discipline that is often associated with self–expression and creativity. In contrast to classroom teachers, American *arts* education students criticize just as I did, the "mindless", craft activity, an assignment that does not involve heightened focus, expression

and interpretation. Clearly, the perspectives of professional affiliations (classroom versus arts specialists) shape perceptions, interpretation and evaluations.

Beyond the easily perceived contents and pedagogies, there are deeply held values and cultural expectations. *Equality* is one such value. In this classroom, as in many others, each child gets to have his penguin up there, regardless of production skill. In fact, classroom teachers often explained their choice in contents—*child craft* rather than *child art*—as motivated by wanting everybody to feel successful.[8] Assignments that call for children's interpretation and skill may bring out differences among the children which some teachers may want to avoid. Teacher's approval is given at least in the discipline of elementary school visual art for everybody who *tries*. The issue of equality evoked a discrepancy of values. In my Israeli experience, we tended to put up "excellent" work, which means that not everybody's work was represented (mine never was!). In general, in my experience we did not have such a thing as a "good try": it is either "good work" or not.

When I wrote my Penguins vignette, I was not aware of these layers of values, just as I did not fully recognize my own subjectivity and values. Triggered in the process of fieldwork and manifested in my writing, I became aware of them only in retrospect. Even at the level of contents (the focus of the study) I did not perceive the "outsider" sensitivities in my prejudices viewing the holiday craft of the Penguins, Easter Bunnies, and Thanksgiving turkeys as stereotyped, rote activities.

My awareness of my values and how they were influencing what I chose to notice and how I interpreted events occurred in the unexpected juxtaposition of another context with powerfully conflicting values, a clashing zone. It was December, a few months after the publication of a paper essentially condemning the craft orientation (Bresler, 1992). In a Hanukah party at my house for the Israeli children of Urbana–Champaign, a friend (who happened to be a teacher in Israel) taught the children how to make Menorahs. I felt a surge of exhilaration as I saw my own seven–year old children cutting and pasting, thus being enculturated to the familiar Jewish symbols. A split second later I acknowledged the activity for what it was: the "rote," child craft activity that I had condemned in the schools. Clearly, my dramatically different (and highly affective) attitude at home was triggered by my "personal role" of a mother versus my "professional,"

role as a researcher. It was also triggered by my position as an insider to the Jewish symbols, empathizing (without being conscious of it) with the transmission of this particular cultural heritage. Taking my heritage for granted, I never had to acknowledge these values because they were an integral part of the Israeli culture in which I grew up. It was only in Urbana, far away from these familiar traditions, and in my role as a mother, that I realized the preciousness of the menorahs. As I was reconsidering, in light of this episode, the respective values of "child art" and "child craft," I came to see them, instead of "bad" and "good," as distinct school styles, each with their own traditions, raison d'etre and merits.

Making sense of Cultural Difference

Lack of Understanding. Another example of my interpretations of school contents that reflect my deeply held values as an outsider is the lyrics and expressivity of school music. Listening to American schools songs I was struck by what I perceived as their cheerfulness. In Israel, never a cheerful society, many school songs (which are prevalent outside as well as inside of school) are about loss, pain, war, expressive of intense emotional topics. In my outsider observations of American school singing, I longed for the intensity, the resonance with deep of emotion. As I write, I am keenly aware that I still do not understand the emotional and educational values of American school music.

Lack of Sensitivities. As an outsider, there were important issues in American culture that I did not notice, such as ethnicity and minority issues which were central in the case–studies of my colleague, Linda Mabry, (1991). It was through reading Linda's case–studies issue that I began to be sensitized to these issues.

Outsider Need for Contexts. The zone of dim awareness, of sensing vaguely that there is something going on that I do not know is a central one, an ever–present intellectual space in my experience of international research. Being in the Zone of Dim Awareness has a different quality from the sharply focused question, or the exhilarated "Aha" when a puzzlement falls into place (as in the Menorahs episode). As an outsider, there were contexts that I was aware that I needed to learn about—the culture of the community; participants' personal

contexts with which I could not assume familiarity. I needed to become familiarized with these contexts in ways that my American colleagues did not.

Thus, in an earlier study when I was working as a research assistant to Elliot Eisner in the *Stanford In The School Project,* I was expected to "shadow" an Afro–American adolescent girl in her inner city high school (Bresler, 1984). I realized that I could not begin to make sense of how she experienced school unless I get a glimpse of her home context. Luckily, Tina was a warm and generous person. She invited me to her house, where I dined and talked with her mother, and her older brothers. It was over a lively conversation that I got a sense of the larger context of Tina's life, a glimpse that helped me identify what I did not know. Likewise, in the *Custom and Cherishing Arts Study*, I accompanied teachers to their out of school activities to observe rehearsals of "Sweet Adelines" and church choirs. These experiences helped me to gain sense of teachers' activities in settings that were foreign to me; Thus I was able to contextualize their personal beliefs about art.

*Technical Requirements: Getting the "Facts" Right .*There are technical, and methodological requirements that are fore grounded when I conduct international research. One such requirement is the necessity to importance of quoting people verbatim rather than summarize what they say, so I don't do the double translation in language from English to Hebrew and back to English. In the same spirit of not drawing inferences too early without the ability to get back as close to "what happened." I am conscious of the need to take careful detailed notes, to render as closely as possible the physical context and expression of the event, instead of aiming for a high level interpretation which, as my 'eye contact episode' taught me, can be grossly misinterpreted.

In Summary. My "first studies" especially, my immersion in vastly different cultural settings created a potentially clashing zone. These experiences facilitated the fusion of horizons that expands my understanding. The "newness" of small things: ways that people walk, talk, and communicate, is sensitizing. In retrospect, I would have created a research diary just for these small discrepancies windows for greater questions. As a teacher of qualitative methodology in international settings, I now focus on areas of ignorance with the same intensity that I used to focus on gaining knowledge.

The Outsider In The Role Of A Project Director

The *positioning* of the researcher in the research group is central to meaning making. In a three-year project, funded by the Bureau of Educational Research, I served as a project director with eight research assistants. We focused on arts education taught by arts specialists in elementary school settings, including public and private/parochial schools, diverse student populations and different communities. The multi–sited and multi–disciplinary aspects of the project were expected to highlight the uniqueness of local contexts and values, expose the manifold of ways in which the arts are being interpreted and practiced, and reveal the constraints and possibilities that the local setting places on arts specialists.

Here, too, data sources included observations of arts instruction, school productions and meetings of art teachers; semi–structured interviews with teachers and principals; and analyses of texts and artworks. However, my role was different. Although I have conducted some observations and interviews, most of the fieldwork was conducted by my research assistants who were also involved in the data analysis (Bresler, Wasser, Hertzog & Lemons, 1996). My role included conceptualizing of the study, writing grants, organizing, and eliciting multiple interpretations, taking an active (but not exclusive) role in interviews and only a minor role in observations.

Research assistants participating in different stages of the three–year study consisted of seven Americans (six women and one man)[9] and one Taiwanese (woman)[10]. In choosing this team, I aimed to have a variety of disciplinary lenses (e.g., music, visual art, dance) as well as of practice–based perspectives (e.g., an art specialist in the public schools, an art specialist in a parochial school, a classroom teacher, an expert in early childhood settings). These various backgrounds, perspectives, skills, and sensitivities added richness and complexity to the collection and interpretation of data.

The interpretive zone created in-group discussions focusing on data analysis was central to our interpretation. In the second year, for example, we logged at least 100 hours together, to discuss the field notes, and our interpretation of them. The meeting times and other team–focused activities were critical variables in our interpretive process. The field notes represented a single perspective, where

the designated researcher for the week served as the "broker" for the team, supplying the group with needed clarification or additional information. Individually compiled fieldwork texts became the basis for collective reflection and collectively organized and informed texts. Our debates were, in part, a negotiation of values and boundaries, which invoked the multiple allegiances within the group (Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

What shapes members' contributions in-group conversations? Some of it is discipline specific knowledge and expertise, and the familiarity that comes out of an involvement in a project over time. Communication style impacted the articulation and the sharing of our personal interpretations. In our group conversations, listening was important. Equally important was being willing to voice disagreement, present alternative interpretations, and elaborate on our views, aiming toward multiplicity of perspectives.

Cultural and personal inclinations shaping our interactions included the ease of speaking in public (even if it is a "small" public) as well as cultural and personal conventions of timing, pace, style and rhythm of conversations, including "thinking time," and interrupting others talking (prevalent in Israeli culture, rare in Asian culture). As part of my Israeli tradition, I aimed at a strong sense of community, manifested, for example, in the Jewish tradition of bringing food. Other ethnic/ national characteristics included intensity where directness to the point of bluntness was encouraged (easier to do as project director than when I was a member).[11]

Our awareness of the intellectual importance of group dynamics was based on Judy Davidson Wasser's detailed memos which recreated our group discussions as "data" to reflect upon. In this process of shared analysis, the diverse professional, ethnic and international make–up facilitated group members' reflection on the meaning of common phenomena. For example, in our research settings, the children were always expected to be quiet. There was no sound in the classrooms, hallways or performances (before, during and after performance). Coming from a much noisier culture, inside and outside of schools, I was struck by these different sets of expectations. We pondered the meaning of noise and silence, questioned the ways that silence/talk take form in school culture, and discussed their different meanings e.g. silence as attentiveness, as reverence, as submission. Obviously, the context shaped the presentation of silence. In the

Christian schools, for example, silence was presented as equal to God ("how we'll be like Jesus"), whereas in the public school it was associated with obedience to teachers and principals. Even when an individual researcher kept a journal (as we all did), the "inner" dialogue in that journal was more limited in complexity, as was our own repertoire of ideas and behaviors. Having a team of researchers that were both insiders and outsiders culturally and professionally, facilitated conversation that would have been impossible otherwise.

The sharing of interpretations at this early stage of preliminary analysis, exposed my own explicit and implicit methodological assumptions about the presentation of self—researchers' presence and notions of professional behavior. Most important were those personal and cultural beliefs about the topic of School art which surfaced in my own analysis and were subject to other team members', (and consequently my own) scrutiny. Sometimes, my bewilderment over what "belongs" to "School art" and what does not evoked discussions that exposed us to the relativity of our contexts. The heterogeneity of the group in terms of disciplinary backgrounds and sites of work brought to the fore members' multiple allegiances. These discrepancies of values are always there. But they were exacerbated by our various enculturation as well as my culturally–induced focus on discrepancies and disagreements.[12]

At times, team members provided useful cultural knowledge. In the context of discussing the poem "Casey at the Bat," Judy Davidson Wasser and Nancy Hertzog discussed baseball and what it means in American life, articulating knowledge that they held implicitly (Bresler, Wasser & Hertzog, 1997).

At other times, though, areas of ignorance were more general. Our enculturations interacted with our professional identities and our personal values, areas laden with abundant allegiances. These allegiances often provided useful lenses for interpretation. For example, team member Nelson Ferdig had experience teaching in a Catholic elementary school. She understood as an "insider" those underlying values within a parochial setting (e.g., praise for God, utilization of God–given talents), and could share them with others. Her identification with these values prompted me to reflect more deeply on religious setting meanings imparted than I would have done otherwise.

Team member Nancy Hertzog demonstrated an allegiance to the values of non–Christians living in the U.S. when, during a group discussion about a public

elementary school gospel choir, she brought up points in relation to the ongoing debate of church and state. The choir of around 130 students met after school once per week in the gymnasium, and was directed by the general music teacher. Nancy questioned the legality and ethics of having this choir in a public school setting. This was an issue that I, raised in a country where religious parties exercise power in state affairs, was something that I had not noted. Nancy's articulation of her personal values helped me appreciate the complexity of this issue in American public school arts education. Thanks to her, I was able to perceive not only the presence and impact of the choir, but also its impact on different, (including the "silent") populations within the school.

These varied lenses helped underscore the power that schools' institutional presence and operation can have in shaping the experience of school members, and the compatibility of this genre with schools' purpose, conduct and form (Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

Throughout fieldwork and the analysis stages, we sought to identify what we care about and what we believe, entering into a dialogue with ourselves and the values of those whose experience we were trying to interpret. Because our research pertained to the arts in schools, it was crucial that we locate ourselves and our personal histories in relation to these arenas, both individually and collectively. Throughout our discussions, our individual customs and cherishings were central in shaping our understanding of the data from the sites. Because we brought these customs with us to our analysis, the more awareness we cultivated, the more we could discern their effects. The extent to which our subjectivities and values were shared affected the development of group ways of seeing and interpreting as compared to more individual pieces (Wasser & Bresler, 1996).

A team member monitoring one's subjectivity in the process of group analysis and interpretation is necessary so that the group can function with some degree of harmony. These monitoring shaped the quality of the zone, whether amicable or conflictual. Individual needs for space, dominance, and acknowledgment also shape group processes. In our group discussions, we each reflected on when we feel threatened and why? When do we feel the need to be right? We found it important to discuss these issues in order to understand our collective subjectivity, identifying points of tension, negotiating differences, and resolving conflicts. Our

discussions were not always harmonious. Because our interpretations often led us to examine values, our professional and personal commitments involved emotional responses, and tension. We debated public education vs. private, religious education; the role of excellence vs. general education; and integration of arts disciplines with the general curriculum. Not all issues were resolved, nor did we feel they could or should be. While we were able, through discussion, to reach a deeper understanding of our diverse positions, in many cases we continued to hold divergent views. Here, consensus was not a goal. Instead, we aimed at understandings of arts instruction that were more complex toward a portrayal of multiple perspectives.

Creating and working in interpretive zone is an arduous process. In this project, I found the inclusion of insiders as co–researchers enabling to probe their emic perspectives at different stages of the study, more deeply than I would otherwise. I found my interpretations and understanding to be both broadened and deepened, and was conscious of the "fusion of horizons" as it happened.

The Experience Of Being Both Insider And Outsider In My "Home" Culture

Thirteen years after I have left Israel to pursue a doctoral degree, and during this time, changing fields from music to education, having children, becoming a faculty and getting tenure, I came back for a sabbatical year in Israel to study national and cultural values in school performances. Collaborating with an Israeli colleague, Shifra Schonmann, we were funded by a grant from Haifa University that supported three Israeli graduate students to study school performances.

In retrospect, I can see that my choice of focus on school ceremonies and performance was made because these performances had a quality that I cherished, a quality prevalent in the country I grew up in, and instrumental to the formation of my identity, a quality that I did not find in most of the U.S. schools I have studied. This quality is not unique to Israel. The use of ceremonies for educational purposes (in the broadest sense of the term) is well–established in various cultures, particularly in their formative stages. Historically, ceremonies

were intimately related to religion and spirituality, to nationalism and patriotic values. Ceremonies help to create a cohesive community, inculcate important communal narrative themes, and are sometimes associated with propaganda. Ceremonies celebrating the victory of modern national states were utilized as educational tools to inculcate the basic principles of the national doctrine.

To learn about ceremonies and school performances in various sub–cultures of the Israeli society, we looked at settings that included religious, kibbutzim (rural) and secular (urban) elementary schools. We observed performances in two secular schools with different student population in terms of SES; two religious schools, one urban and orthodox, the other rural and liberal; and two Kibbutzim schools in different regions, one in the center of the country, the other in a "war zone" in the northern part of Israel.

A key question of the study concerned how and to what extent ideological aspects are manifested in ceremonies. A related question concerned the use of aesthetic and dramatic elements to create an affective experience, in relatively informal settings, to convey messages and values. We analyzed ceremonies and school performances in terms of the explicit and implicit values and messages they reflected, to analyze the creation of emotional effects via aesthetic and artistic elements, to compare these effects with the formal curriculum of academic and arts disciplines, and to compare the contents, structures and aesthetic elements of school performances across the three types of settings.

Each school system had unique emphases and values. The religious schools manifested a strong focus on God and notions of "holiness" —holiness of God, of the Sabbath, of the city of Jerusalem, of the Torah, the Bible and other sacred books. I found the emphasis on prayer and on holy scriptures to be unfamiliar. In my own elementary and high school education, I studied the bible but without the sacred overtones. In fact, sacredness was anti–thetical to the value system in which grew up. In contrast to my ambivalent emotional responses to values in the religious settings, I resonated with the Kibbutzim's emphasis on the "total community," its—informality, and work ethics. Although I grew up in an urban setting, my parents were enculturated in a Kibbutz oriented ideology and shared many of its values. As a child, I often visited Kibbutzim and occasionally participated in holiday celebrations there.

But it was not only the past that shaped my values and stance. A week before

we started the study, Itzchak Rabin, Israel's prime minister, was assassinated for ideological reasons by a member of a right wing religious party who was opposed to the peace process in which Rabin was engaged. While I was genuinely interested in learning about the religious schools, my "insider" commitment to the peace processes, and my grief and shock about what I saw as a horrible fanatic act, colored my lenses. I did not just look at the educational practice of the religious school with the wondering mind that was an important part of my fieldwork experience in the U.S.. Rather, I was afraid of their potential to induce the fanaticism that led to the assassination. For example, I found the notion conveyed in some ceremonies, that Land was holy holier than Human Life, deeply disturbing. These stances that overrode the "curious outsider" lenses that ought to seek empathy and understanding of "them," presented a threat to my vision for "my" Israel. Because my religious participants were often kind, gentle and helpful, they facilitated an interpretive zone that was amicable and conducive to learning. Still, in my complex role as an insider, I realized that my data were "too thin," my understanding was too limited to produce a meaningful "product."

In this process of conducting research, I connected my insider's lived experiences and enculturation to a conceptualization typically constructed by outsiders. My schooling experiences included, like all Israeli children, school performances with their intense range of affective symbols and modes of representation. As an Israeli, the value of the collective and the concern with survival, physical and ethnic, were prevalent. As a researcher, I noted the dynamics by which these and other values were transmitted through the structures of gathering the whole community; the narration of a communal text: the choice of highly intense and affective contents, themes and ambience (for example, for the Holocaust Ceremony and Memorial Ceremony); the drawing on songs that are part of the "folk" culture, where the larger culture resonates with the values and transmitted by the schools.[13]

Aspects of this image emphasized good citizenship in the service of the collective, productive work as mission and acts of courage helping one's peers. I realized that these images were alive and operating in me even in the remote academic setting in which I found myself 20–30 years later, e.g., in teaching where I "took on" the "officer" identity to protect my students, or in emphasizing academic aspects of "usefulness."

My resonance with the songs and poems on which ceremonies and school performances across settings drew extensively was different from my emotional responses to American school music practices. I love the familiar minor modes and modulations in the songs. The songs about young, brave, poetic youth who died in wars, evoke sad memories of my classmates and favorite teachers who died.

One of the things I realized in this study was the depth and intensity of my insider commitments. I also realized that I was "an outsider" to large segments of the Israeli society. As a researcher, I was confronted with my own oceans of ignorance in a culture where I expected to "know it all."

Coda: Uses And Strengths Of Qualitative International Research

The creation of interpretive zone in international research highlighted methodological issues. In my case, I learned not only to ask the right questions and to listen well, but also to *communicate* to participants that I listened, in *their* own conventions, and to probe in ways that they would be willing to respond. In this process, I learned to look at American participants between the nose and the chin, moderated my tone of voice, tamed my eager "whys," and in the process of adopting these behaviors internalized in part its values.

Going back to Banks' typology, in the role of the outsider, I found myself with strong attachment to my "culture of origin," but also with a commitment to understanding the American culture, where I now live and operate. The dual set of values in facilitating understanding may be easier as compared to the dichotomy of skin color where one is supposed to be either white or non–white. A post–modern world facilitates the reflection on complex identifications recognizing and celebrating complexities and inconsistencies.

Following Gadamer, international researchers are increasingly aware of those prejudices that guide and condition the processes of understanding. Jung's notion of other civilizations as sensitizing us to our own truths, the "steering of the foreigner" that helps us to understand our own setting, is parallel to the "making

the familiar strange." It is that sensitization that makes international research powerful, increasing of our awareness about what we don't know. International research provides us with intellectual space where during the process of fieldwork, analysis and writing, the motivation behind our actions is primarily a quest for understanding. In this luxurious space, we can adopt a hermetic stance, looking for a truth we don't know. In that process of creating, our senses of sound and sight are heightened, from sensory experiences to textual interpretations.

Within the field of education, the uses of international research raises the issue of *criteria* for understanding. The usefulness of distinction between *interpreting* texts vs. *using* texts with its pros (Eco, 1992) and cons (Rorty, 1992) concerns the framing of international research as *basic* or *applied*, an extension of anthropological works for the former, and pedagogical tools for the latter. Rorty takes the position that: "Interpreting something, knowing it, penetrating to its essence, and so on are all just various ways of describing some process of putting it to work." (1992, p. 93). These uses can highlight empowerment and social justice (cf. Banks, 1998; Noffke, 1999). Other uses involve the mundane aspects of learning how to "order a beer" in a foreign bar, as my colleague Daniel Walsh advocates (Walsh, 2001, private communication). In my own research, I find myself going back to Clifford Geertz's (1973) goals of research, hoping to be able to expand conversations, to fuse horizons, to perceive multiplicity. Living in the foreign culture that I am studying, I realize that though my competency in ordering beer is increasing, I am firmly attached to maintaining outsiderness, to my identity as an Israeli.

The distinction between the different goals of educational research shapes the identity of the researcher. Where social justice is central, critical race theories aim to empower marginalized communities, embracing democratic values (cf. Banks, 1998; Fine, 1994; Noffke, 1999; Weis, 1995), the question of who should speak for whom; and whose voice is legitimate are central. Can the outsider ever understand the cultures and experiences of insiders or speak with moral authority about them? (Banks, 1998, 6; also Villenas, 1996; Merton, 1972). Insiders, writes Merton (1972), claim that only a member of their ethnic or cultural group can really understand and accurately describe the group's culture, because socialization within it give them unique insights into it in a paradigm that deconstructed the notion of objectivity. The traditional outsider's claim that outsiders can more accurately describe a culture because group loyalties prevent

individuals from viewing their culture objectively is clearly invalid in a post–modern age. The issue of legitimation of voice and who can speak for who was addressed by Said's (1989, in Tobin, 1999) demanding that outside researchers stop their research in colonized countries.

With Merton, I hold that both insider and outsider perspectives can be of use in the process of truth seeking, as long as each acknowledges their limitation, areas of "blind spots." To invoke the Fish and the Water metaphor, that tension between "insider–outsider" is the one that makes noticing possible. One way to "make the familiar strange," to facilitate perception, is through a cross–cultural perspective (cf. Spindler, 1982, 2000; Tobin, Davidson & Wu, 1989. For an elaborate discussion of this genre, see Ardichvili, this volume). Cross–cultural research has generated new methods and techniques, like polyvocal methods and the use of video taping, to gain insiders' and outsiders' perspectives, that can be applied across or within one culture.

To come back to Dewey's insightful framing of inquiry (and of a similar framing of aesthetics that he suggested), just as inquiry and aesthetic experience are on a continuum with everyday reflections and experiences, making meaning in international research is on a continuum with other types of research and of international involvement. Like art and inquiry, international research, too, is intensified in its focus on "non–utilitarian" (i.e. removed from the typical concerns of daily life) interpretation as a central thrust, its "disinterestedness (which is a different kind of interestness)." International research is increasingly prevalent in a world where the local and global are more than ever interwoven, connecting the auditory, kinesthetic, visual, aural, and conceptual aspects of lived experience, with the highly task–oriented goal of producing a text that communicates multiple meanings and insights.

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Notes

1 "too hard", "too soft", and "just right".

2 I elaborate on the role of the visual and the aural as texts elsewhere. (Bresler, 2002).

3 That experience may not be true of all researchers, though I have found it to be true for me. The issue of the types of interpretive zones created in Internet–based virtual communication is beyond the scope of this paper, though has been touched in an earlier work (Bresler, 1990, 1991).

4 This is a highly personal statement, based on my own experience of an historical/ musicological thesis. Though the analysis of historical materials involved me in an intense interaction and emotional engagement, it did not facilitate "emergent issues" to the extent that interviews with people did. My colleague Sasha Ardichvili reminds me of Kant's ability to imagine remote places so vividly based on book descriptions, that he could describe them better than the people who lived there could. Sasha argues that Kant also had a stronger emotional experience associated with those places, than some of the people who have lived there, but were emotionally dull and non–receptive.

5 Popkewitz uses this concept to direct attention to a particular type of hero and heroic discourses of change into a relation with the construction of national imaginaries.

6 As pointed out by my colleagues Joan Russell and Sasha Ardichvili and as my menorah in the second part event illustrates, researchers may not ever take off our lenses, personal front or not. Russell's paraphrases Geertz saying: "I drop into a setting and the issues find me."

7 Structures and social community, of course, are interrelated, but it is easier to talk about them in separation.

8 Clearly, there were other factors involved in this choice. One important factor was teachers' lack of expertise in art and lack of certainty about criteria.

9 Judy Davidson Wasser, Nancy Hertzog, Mary Lemons Nelson Fertig, Deb Cegnowski, Rodney Loren, Mary Zander.

10 Hseuh–yin Ting.

11 This vision of the group functioning also drew on an earlier model from my performing background, that of a musical ensemble. Teamwork, then, consisted then of individual "parts," each with its own timbres and characteristics, yet all interacting, sometimes producing dissonance to create a composition. Indeed, the intensity of our conversations, the conflicts and their resolutions (resolutions interpreted as acknowledgment of others' points of view, rather than agreements) were framed by us as embodying aesthetic quality. That quality emerged as a part of a focused, attentive listening and sharing, targeted toward common goals and endeavors, yet integrating a variety of perspectives. In addition to those pre–defined aspects and structures of our research goals (assignment of data collection in the schools, data analysis in meetings), it was the emerging, improvisatory aspects that gave our group discussions its flavor: developing and presenting a topic to the group, cultivating a particular way of listening, of probing, of interacting, reflecting on previous memos.

12 Focus that my role as a principal investigator allowed me to probe my hearts' contents.

13 I chose to focus on these themes in my M.A. thesis in Musiology where I investigated the creation of an Israeli musical style as part of history and politics (Bresler, 1982. 1985).

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