

Editorial

‘In the half shadows’: Research with hard to reach populations. Part II

Gloria Kirwan

A call for submissions related to research with hard to reach or hidden populations received a strong response from researchers based in many regions of the world. The first set of articles related to this call was published in this journal in Volume 19 Issue 3 in 2017. Such was the volume of material submitted in response to the original call that in the interim since that first publication, work has continued on more of the submitted articles. In fact, due to the level of interest in the call from the wider research community, it has been possible to compile a further two issues from the tranche of initial articles.

Keeping to the approach taken in the first issue, all of the articles selected for publication in the following two special issues aim to shed light on research which gives voice to groups rarely heard or listened to by the wider society. Some of the articles have concentrated on highlighting methodological issues related to research with groups in society that are rarely heard or which concern important under-researched topics.

In the collection presented in this issue, the first article by Colin Cameron, Michele Moore and Ann Nutt sets out the benefits uniquely achievable through research conducted by experts by experience. Their article, ‘Improving understanding of service user involvement and identity: disabled people bringing ourselves out of the half-shadows’, captures the intrinsic strengths of peer research and its uniquely valuable qualities.

In ‘Reflections on research with self-harm peer-led groups’, Melanie Boyce and Carol Munn-Giddings provide a detailed insight into research involving participant-members of peer-led groups. Their article highlights the benefits which can flow from working *with* participants as opposed to doing research *on* participants.

Maeve Foreman and Muireann Ní Raghallaigh report on their research which studied the experiences of people trying to move out of the asylum-seekers accommodation system after they were granted leave to remain in Ireland. Their study combined the skills of peer and academic researchers and in ‘Transitioning out of the asylum system in Ireland: Challenges and opportunities’, they highlight how access to the target research population was achieved mainly because the study was conducted in collaboration between academic researchers and peer researchers. They also demonstrate how this type of collaboration contributed to all aspects of the study and, in particular, how it played a key role in the dissemination of the study findings

Roni Berger’s article, ‘Using technology for studying populations off the social mainstream’, is focused on how the digitalization of society offers researchers with the

means to know and understand our world in new ways.

Sofia B. Fernandez, Eric F. Wagner, Michelle Hospital, Melissa Howard and Staci Leon Morris's article, 'Social media based strategies to reach Hispanic young adults with tailored sexual health information', provides a useful example of the integration of technology into a research study and they reveal the ways in which new electronic media can help researchers gain insights which traditionally are difficult to access.

In 'Twice hidden and ignored: Older sexual and gender minorities in New Zealand', David Betts, Jane Maidment and Nikki Evans bring a spotlight on an almost invisible group within society and their research findings break new ground in highlighting the lived realities of members of this group.

The final article in this issue, from Áine de Róiste, Aoife Killeen and Moira Jenkins, 'More of a hurdle race than a sprint! Social care research in the field of disabilities – Methodological considerations and challenges' lays out the many factors which must be considered, planned and managed in research with groups who are often the subjects of research but not given a voice in that research. This article emphasises the importance of adhering to high standards in conducting research while at the same time finding solutions to the obstacles that researchers often encounter in this research field.

We conclude with a book review by Gloria Kirwan and Breda O'Driscoll on two relevant books authored or co-edited by Pranee Liamputtong, whose work has been a useful point of reference to researchers interested in breaking free from limiting ideas concerning who can or cannot be included and heard in social research.

I would like to thank all the authors featured in this special issue for submitting their articles to this journal and for working with me to get their work ready for this publication. I have been fortunate to work with so many cutting edge thinkers and am confident that the articles presented here will be of interest to many readers worldwide.

Gloria Kirwan