

Chapter 2

Doing Feminist Research in Sport, Gender and Development: Navigating Relationships, Ethics and Sweaty Concepts

In this chapter, we provide a broad overview of feminist critiques of development work in order to inform our understandings of (how to pursue) feminist research in sport for development and peace (SDP). We discuss feminist methodological and epistemological considerations for those who have conducted, or plan to carry out, SDP research. In doing so, we do not claim to provide an exhaustive review of feminist research – or even feminist research in sport, gender and development. For, as many have noted, feminist research itself is multidimensional and informed by diverse frameworks and standpoints. As Cooky (2016, p. 76) suggests:

Feminist research is informed by larger political sensibilities of feminist movements and, as such, its goal is to explain and address the origins of women’s oppression and/or offer strategies for social change. Therefore, the diversity of feminist thought, theory, and social movements produces a range of responses to the question “What is feminist research”?

Taking this cue from Cooky (2016), the goal of our chapter is not to provide a simple response to “what is feminist SFD research”? Rather, we put forward a specific argument that some (but not all) feminist critiques of development work may be helpful for solidifying key feminist values that are central to the research process(es) invoked through any study focused on SDP. The values we suggest as crucial to this process straddle theory–method–praxis and include relationality/relationships, reciprocity, ethics of care, reflexivity, positionality and embodied engagements with the methods we impart, and the places and people we work with. Using examples from our own research and studies conducted by others in SDP, we suggest that feminist approaches to SDP – that interrogate power and

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relationships, and embrace discomfort, tension and work toward “staying with the trouble” (Haraway, 2016) – provide an opportunity for recasting and reworking the SDP field.

To augment these contentions, we discuss examples from our own research, broadly categorized under the following sections: (1) mapping embodied, digital and autoethnographic encounters within a framework of feminist (care) ethics; (2) postcolonial feminist participatory action research (PFPAR); (3) representation and control; and (4) ethical impasses and feminist ethics of care. We focus on these four areas in an effort to engage with the challenges that we continue to navigate in our explorations of SDP in relation to feminist research in a diverse range of contexts. We conclude the chapter with a “call” to other scholars and practitioners who currently take, or may be interested in pursuing, feminist approaches to SDP research. To begin the chapter, we briefly outline some of the feminist critiques of development work, including a discussion of the challenges of pursuing feminist research in development.

Pursuing Feminist Research in Gender and Development

Feminist development scholars have underlined the importance of relational, embodied and reflexive approaches as crucial for bringing our attention to the multiple ways that the geopolitical, social and economic elements of various entities involved in humanitarian and development aid are produced and grounded through engagements with others (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Mohanty, 2003). Theorists and researchers have taken up various strands of feminism to examine, resist and challenge hegemonic forms of knowledge and dominant discourses (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008). Feminist research in development has similarly played a major role in the (re)conceptualization of qualitative research methods – or the tools used to carry out such research. For many gender and development (GAD) scholars, feminist research provides an opportunity to promote mutual learning and to strengthen more place-based, authentic, ethical and trustworthy relationships with local and community-based researchers and to help build researcher capacity (Barnard, Cuervo-Cazurra, & Manning, 2017). And yet, for others, such as Mama (2009), “global feminist research” approaches to development tend to be quite detached from the realities of what transpires more locally, on the ground. As she contends, “we have a long way to go in developing intellectual solidarities that work against the global systemic political-economic inequalities that frame our work, regardless of intentions” (Mama, 2009, p. 64). Indeed, similar debates permeate SDP scholarship, which we outline later in this chapter.

While we do not delineate the vast landscape of feminist research in development here, we do briefly touch on some of the key method(ological) elements discussed in this literature and explain how some of these critiques may be addressed by five key feminist values: relationality, ethics of care, reflexivity, positionality and embodied engagements. Much of what we explore here parallels the various epochs of GAD studies over the last five decades as outlined in Chapter 1, but we hope it offers a timely “call” to SDP scholars to revisit some of

the assumptions and motivations underpinning their own work with local communities around the world.

Feminist Research and Critiques of Development

Over the past five decades, feminist research methods have evolved in relation to each of the dominant paradigms used to explore the key trends that correspond to feminist relationships to development. In turn, each framework tends to connect to particular research approaches taken to explore issues of GAD. This body of knowledge draws upon the work of key GAD scholars such as Jane Parpart, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Richa Nagar, Andrea Cornwall, Rosalind Eyben, Susie Jolly, Naila Kabeer and many others. In turn, it is helpful to examine the entanglements between shifts in development theory and feminist research in order to chronicle the methodologies used for studies on current gender issues (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007), especially those used in SDP.

There is often a combination of methods that are employed in development projects and humanitarian aid interventions that are notably distinct from those taken up in a “purely research setting” (Coles, Gray, & Momsen, 2015, p. 5). Traditionally, research in development tends to be somewhat reactive, especially in emergency situations (e.g., civil conflict, natural disasters) where more “objective,” quantitative approaches tend to dominate, with rapid responses required to key questions focused on numbers that provide immediate knowledge and quick solutions (Coles et al., 2015). Indeed, quantitative approaches are often perceived to “ensur[e] coverage and representativeness” (Coles et al., 2015, p. 65). Certainly, such approaches tended to be widely used during the “Women in Development” (WID) era in the 1970s. Most notably driven by Boserup’s critique that women were ignored in the development process (Momsen, 2004), (feminist) research in the WID era tended to position women and men as impacted by development processes in a monolithic way and focused on collecting sex-segregated data (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007). Studies during this time thus also turned more to functionalist, applied, and policy aspects that could, for example, “illuminate the situation of women at administrative and political levels,” while also focusing mostly on the silos of women’s studies and development work (Lund, 2015, p. 94). Thus, the main methodologies used for research on WID tended to derive from “critiques of particular sex, class, and race biases found in ‘traditional’ research methodologies as well as dominant perspectives of development” (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007, p. 199).

During the mid to late 1970s and 80s, as detailed in Chapter 1, a profound critique of the WID framework was put forth, particularly from women in the Global South (as well as women of color and minority women in the Global North), that it failed to account for the diverse, multilayered, intricate realities of women in the Global South, overlooking key concerns pertaining to voice and identity. In a partial response to these oversights, the “GAD” era emerged. As we explained in Chapter 1, one of the main goals of the GAD era was to avoid isolating gender discourses as separate and instead highlighted other

circumstances in determining women's oppression such as race, class, sexuality, and religion. Under the GAD approach, "empowerment" was supposedly "activated" by grassroots, localized approaches to women's development. Thus, the empowerment of women was understood as a prerequisite for their development. Empowerment was also suggested as something that emerged through using research approaches that were more "participatory" in orientation (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007). Simply put, feminist research in GAD tried to push for broader understandings of "gender relations" that could be produced through many levels and institutions (e.g., the household, etc.). The focus, then, was not only on women-only research and programs, but broadened beyond the collection of sex-segregated data by trying to 'get at' the nuances of gender relations (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007). During this era, GAD scholars used a variety of approaches including mixed methods, but with new appreciation for qualitative methodologies rooted in interpretivist and constructivist paradigms that shed more light on people's perspectives, norms and behaviors in relation to the intentions of a development project. During this period, methods such as open-ended interviews, life histories, participant observation and focus groups were increasingly utilized (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007; Coles et al., 2015). A concerted effort was put forth to pay more attention to knowledge, as well as different experiences, identities and institutions to unpack what it meant to be a "woman" in development.

During this time, indicators of change also became popularized in order to try to "objectively" measure, evaluate and represent "progress" and the achievement of key goals, such as gender equality (Merry, 2016). However, using GAD to produce indicators of change has been widely critiqued, as the "social aspect of indicators is typically ignored in the face of trust in numbers, cultural assumptions about the objectivity of numbers, and the value of technical rationality" (Merry, 2016, p. 5). Although GAD approaches lay claim to "the transformation of gender roles and identify gender as an integral part of development processes and social change" (Lund, 2015, p. 71), GAD failed to account for more intersectional research approaches (see Harcourt, 2018) that foregrounded "relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity, and social justice" (Collins, 2019, p. 45). Ultimately, GAD overlooked "women's oppression as a product of colonial and neocolonial power" (Larkin, Razack, & Moola, 2007, p. 96). This was a serious oversight to which intersectional and postcolonial feminist research approaches aim(ed) to address.

From 2000 to 2010, a "Women, Culture, and Development" (WCD) approach emerged. Bhavani explains this framework as one that "brings women's agency in the foreground (side by side with, and within, the cultural, social, political, and economic domains) as a means for understanding how inequalities are challenged and reproduced" (Bhavani, Foran, & Kurian, 2003, p. 8). This epoch resembled the broader "cultural turn" in the social sciences that aspired to challenge more established research orientations to development. In turn, the WCD era centered on "rights, social justice, the invisibility of reproduction, and women's political agency and situatedness" (Lund, 2015, p. 72). In turn, GAD scholars continue to debate the many manifestations of women's agency, with some suggesting that the

“search for agency has reached almost epidemic proportions” (Madhok, Phillips, Wilson, & Hemmings, 2013, p. 4).

Thus, during this era (which arguably still persists today), feminist research in development has been characterized by market-based explanations for women’s subordination that seems to “obscure domination, inequality, and subordination” by global patriarchal institutions (Wilson, 2013, p. 85). To further explore such issues, feminist research methods have been used to inform qualitative, locally informed systems of knowledge production (Merry, 2016), often in sharp contrast to more favored target-driven strategies. As Fukuda-Parr (2016, p. 49) implores, “quantification reduces complex and intangible visions – such as development that is inclusive – into concrete measurable objectives.” However, there is still great concern – and widespread discussion – of methodological issues that remain unchanged in the practices of “doing development” (Mitchell & Moletsane, 2018). There is thus great potential as we enter the fifth era/wave/epoch of the gender/development/research nexus to open up the research process to better reflect on the politics of knowledge production, the moral imperatives that tend to drive (sport) GAD research, the ethics of research and thinking more deeply about the identities one brings to the “field,” and how these are inextricably connected to “our investments in the broader geopolitical context of the neoliberal Northern academy” (McEwan, 2009, p. 265). Key works by GAD scholars have done just this, through the use of reflexive feminist research ethics (Shepherd, 2016); race and feminist care ethics (Raghuram, 2019); feminist methodolog(ies) of encounters (MacDonald, 2020; Nagar, 2014), and many other feminist approaches.

Thus, in the remainder of our chapter, we take up – and try to respond to – key questions about the importance of reflecting on the histories, *herstories*, everyday encounters and relations involved in pursuing feminist research in SDP – specifically in terms of research in which people from what is often termed the “Global North” study/conduct “fieldwork” in the “Global South.” Broadly, such questions include: (1) How are we (as researchers) positioned in power relations (historical and contemporary) between the North and South? (2) Why are we pursuing research “over there” (e.g., Africa, Latin America, South East Asia, etc.) rather than “here” (Europe, North America, etc.)? (3) Who (if anyone) benefits from our fieldwork? (4) What methodologies can be adopted to challenge “unequal exchange” (working with and for local peoples)? (5) How do we come to and produce our research questions? (McEwan, 2009, p. 296). To do this, we provide four different areas through which we further explore these questions more deeply: (1) mapping embodied, digital and autoethnographic encounters within a framework of feminist (care) ethics; (2) PFPAR; (3) representation and control; and (4) ethical impasses and feminist ethics of care.

Doing (Feminist) SDP Research: Tensions, Challenges and Opportunities

Recently, SDP scholars have noted the continued influx of Global North researchers pursuing fieldwork in Global South contexts and spaces (Schulenkorf,

Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). Specifically, and as the authors note, “though the majority of SFD projects are carried out in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 90% of SFD authors are based in North America, Europe, and Australia” (Schulenkorf et al., 2016, p. 1; also see Collison, Giulianotti, Howe, & Darnell, 2016; Whitley et al., 2018 – with some exceptions, see Hapeta, Stewart-Withers, & Palmer, 2019; Lindsey, Zakariah, Owusu-Ansah, Ndee, & Jeanes, 2015). Given our position as three SDP scholars who hail from Global North countries (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of our positionalities and how we arrived at this project), we recognize that our positionalities have the potential to further perpetuate these unequal research relations.

Along these lines, it seems both timely and imperative to think about the multiple ways that feminist approaches to “doing” SDP research might potentially disrupt and (re)position the dilemmas and opportunities for continuing to understand how SDP research and practice may be more relational and embodied. This relational component is particularly crucial for helping to (re)think the various (dis)connections among NGOs, corporate staff, government agencies, aid institutions, SDP participants, local community members, and the like. In turn, we outline the ways that feminist research in development – particularly embodied, (auto)ethnographic and reflexive approaches – has been somewhat overlooked in SDP research. We then explain why they remain crucial for grounding the gendered, lived experiences of development “beneficiaries,” practitioners and researchers alike (Thorpe & Chawansky, 2021). Throughout the chapter, we also contend that foregrounding “the body” and the “fleshy” and material (e.g., nonhuman) elements of sport and physical culture are valuable ways to “know with” – and through – feminist SDP research. Such approaches are essential to help highlight multiple SDP subjectivities and to better understand how gendered power relations come to the fore – and actually materialize – through our everyday research practices (Chawansky, 2015; Pavlidis & Olive, 2014).

Research Relations, Ethics and Discomfort as “Sweaty” Concepts in Feminist SDP Research

One ethical consideration that feminist SDP scholars would do well to consider is how their presence in Global South contexts impacts upon the program staff and participants they may be studying. There is a strong discourse in development and SDP research that a “real” researcher has spent extensive time “on the ground” living, feeling, smelling and tasting the “exotic” location, connecting with the “locals” in authentic ways, and critically and systematically observing the programs in action, all with the aim that the research somehow contributes to improvement in the lives of those involved in the local programs. Yet, such discourses of “authenticity” in SDP research are haunted by the highly problematic approaches of the early anthropologists (Handelman, 1994). Some SDP scholars have weighed up the potential risks and damages they may do through their work,

yet most continue to justify the “going” into the field by the promise of doing *some* good through their careful roles as highly reflexive, critical and culturally sensitive “middle walkers” (see Wilson, 2014).

While some feminist research highlights the benefits of immersing oneself in local fields of development (Cook, 2007) or combining interviews with short ethnographic visits (Partis-Jennings, 2019), feminist critiques of development should encourage us to ask ourselves the advantages and disadvantages not only for our own research in “going” to the field(s), but also the additional labor that it may require of those staff running the programs and/or the risks our presence may pose to others. Thus, below, we offer some reflections from Holly’s research on Sport for Youth (pseudonym), an action sports and education-focused SDP in Afghanistan, to highlight a feminist ethical impasse that she faced during the early stages of this particular project.

After winning a grant that would provide her with the opportunity to finally visit the Sport for Youth facilities in Afghanistan, Holly quickly set about working with the organizational leadership to discuss and organize her first fieldwork visit. During the time of these conversations, however, the Taliban was exerting growing force in Kabul and the NGO was in the process of withdrawing all international staff in an effort to limit any risks to the local staff and participants. As a further risk management strategy, they had also stopped all international press or visitors to the Kabul facilities. While the organizational leadership noted that they remained committed to her research and would continue to support the planned visit, these initial conversations and the rapidly changing situation gave her much to reflect upon. Furthermore, Holly’s university required an extensive process of applying to travel and do research in a high-risk country, with many legalities to consider, including high insurance costs.

Working closely with Sport for Youth and her University, Holly was eventually granted approval from her university’s leadership team to travel to Kabul for the research. However, by this time something was not sitting well with her. No longer filled with excitement to finally meet the local staff in person and to observe the programs in action (programs she had been studying from afar for a number of years already), she continued to ponder the discomfort that she was feeling and the multiplicities of risk involved. No longer young, carefree and embodying the “adventurous spirit” of “real” SDP researchers, she was starting to think differently about the impending fieldwork. With a baby at home, and thus new responsibilities as a mother and partner, she wondered if this was the feeling of dread that was building in the pit of her stomach. But, sitting with discomfort is an important feminist strategy (Shope, 2006), and it was through the act of turning her doubts over and over again, returning to them from different perspectives, that she came to the realization that it was the idea of putting the local staff and students at risk through her mere presence that was the most worrying. As a feminist scholar, putting program participants (Afghan children) and research participants (local staff) at risk because of her presence (as a very visibly

international white woman) was unconscionable (Wibben, 2016). This meant giving up seeing the programs “in action” and hearing the stories of the Afghan participants and possibly even the “credibility” of her research in a field that continues to prioritize physical presence. However, taking inspiration from Read (2018) and others who have critiqued similar assumptions underpinning development research more broadly, Holly pursued alternatives to access and understand the embodied experiences of local and international development workers rather than the program participants. With permission from the granting agency to revise the methodology, Holly then designed a digital methodology (Skype interviews and social media analysis) that – while perhaps not as academically adventurous – better aligned with her feminist consciousness.

Over a period of three years, she conducted Skype interviews with local and international staff who currently or had previously worked for the action sport-focused NGO in Afghanistan. In this way, new voices and perspectives not limited by time or geography were opened up, and a more longitudinal understanding of the organization and the lived and embodied experiences of local and international staff emerged (see Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8). Using digital methods such as Skype interviews required additional organization to set up meeting times that suited participants across time zones and patience in managing bad connections and dropped lines.

As with any project, there were strengths and limitations with the methodological choices and researcher positioning that Holly took, and this was particularly the case as she was trying to access experiences of embodiment (Dyvik, 2016; Read, 2018). While conducting interviews via Skype may seem to be a rather disembodied approach, Holly found herself becoming particularly attuned to the body language of the participants (Longhurst, 2018), the tone of their voices, their gaze, and the sights and sounds in the background. She also took great care to respect the culture of the local staff by wearing modest clothing and a head scarf during interviews. Her participants were incredibly generous with the time and detail in which they shared their experiences of working for Sport for Youth (their joys, fears and frustrations), and she often wondered as to their willingness to participate in the project and their consideration in what to share and what to hold back from the white woman on their screen. Some interviews with local staff included another staff member as a translator, which not only made for some challenges (see below) but also enabled new researcher relations and intimacies to emerge. For example, an interview with an older Afghan woman concluded with her asking (via a slightly nervous younger male Afghan translator) a series of questions about Holly’s age, marital status and number of children. She joked (via the translator) that Holly didn’t look her age, and the short conversation about their children evoked a surreal warmth through the screen:

- Interviewer As we come to the end, I wonder... Do you have anything else you want to tell me about your work at [Sport for Youth], what you do – is there anything I have not asked that you want to tell me?
- Interviewee (via translator) We have a really hard question. Where are you from, how many family members do you have, are you married or not?
- Interviewer Me? Yes, I am married. I have one son, a little boy. He is two and a half and he is very busy – always running around, climbing, climbing and falling over, very chatty, chatty, chatty. I work at the university and I am a teacher, so it is a busy life but I'm very honored to be working with [Sport for Youth]. It is a wonderful experience for me, and it's a big part of my work over the next three years.
- Interviewee (via translator) She also asked a hard question for females, how old are you?
- Interviewer How old am I? I am 35.
- Interviewee (via translator) She said it is very nice to meet you, and to be honest you're not looking 35.
- Interviewer It is very dark here, so you cannot see all the wrinkles.
- All Laughter

Through this dialogue, Holly recalls it was almost as if the translator disappeared (temporarily out of sight and not a focus for either of the women) as two mothers – researcher and participant – smiled and laughed at the joys and challenges of raising young children. Interestingly, it was the Afghan woman who reached out, across the screen, to connect in this highly personalized way. Conducted more than five years ago now, this surprisingly intimate digital exchange and the open conversation that followed remains vivid in Holly's embodied memories of this research. This is just one example of many that surprised Holly in the potential for personal connection and rich empirical insights shared through digital methods when travel is no longer the most ethical (i.e., environmentally, socially) or feasible (i.e., COVID, health, cost) option for SDP research.

In the broader project, the researcher-participant relations with the international staff, the majority of whom were women from the Global North, offered a different set of considerations. Holly suspects that the superficial similarities (highly educated, Western, white, women) between herself and some of the international women staff may have contributed to their initial willingness to participate and openness in sharing some of the embodied tensions, pleasures and discomforts of living and working in Afghanistan (de Jong, 2017; Enloe, 2016). However, it was their seeming similarities in combination with their differences and Holly's outsider positioning in the field (she is not a development worker and had not spent time in Afghanistan) that prompted their detailed descriptions of what it was like to be a Western woman working in this context.

With a feminist focus on strong reflexivity (Harding, 1996) and situated and situating knowledges (Haraway, 1988; Rose, 1997) at the fore, Holly acknowledges that her decision not to travel to Afghanistan may have prompted her curiosity in how the local and international staff made meaning of risk, and particularly the local and Western women's embodied experiences in this specific geography. It is very likely that the researcher's similarities and differences with the participants caused some comments from the early interviews to "glow" (MacLure, 2013), thus prompting further investigation on particular topics over others. As a white Western female feminist scholar, Holly continued to reflect on her (virtual) "presence" and positionality in the research, and her relations with participants, even when she was not "in the field" *per se*. Even when we do research from a distance, we remain firmly situated in the knowledge produced – the questions asked, the interpretive modes adopted, and the theoretical and representational styles chosen to present the voices of participants and communities (Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Thorpe & Chawansky, 2021).

Furthermore, as this example illustrates, it is also important to sit with feminist tensions as and when they arise, and we should be willing to divert (or even end) a project if it becomes apparent that the gains for the researcher far outweigh the risks and rewards for the local programs and participants. In theory, we should do our best to anticipate and avoid such problems before a project begins. But it is also important to acknowledge that ethical research practices should be responsive to the changing environment (i.e., increasing risk levels, changes within the organization) and throughout different stages of the research. There may be instances where such feminist tensions emerge in the middle or even late in a project, and these should not be ignored just because we are "too far in." Sometimes power imbalances and potential research injustices (and injuries) are felt in our bodies first, and feminist researchers working in SDP would do well to find practices that help us hone into (repeatedly return to) our lived, felt, embodied understandings of risk, relationships and ethics, alongside our more academic reading on the workings of power and research methods in critical and feminist development studies.

What's clear, then, is that feminist reflexivity in SDP is not simply a "tick-box exercise" we complete at the beginning of a project (Pillow, 2003). Rather, practicing feminist reflexivity in SDP requires the everyday work of acknowledging our own positionality, always in relation to our participants and broader global power inequalities. Feminist reflexivity is also a dynamic and fluid practice that we come back to again and again, before, during and after our research "in the field." As Adu-Ampong and Adams (2020) highlight in their fieldwork encounters in Ghana and Malawi, reflexivity in the fieldwork encounter is a "site of shifting, negotiated, and fluid positionalities for both full insiders and fully outsiders" (p. 583).

Making spaces within a project to sit with the tensions and discomfort, and being willing to respond to them (even if it challenges the expectations from our institutions, granting agencies, supervisors, etc.), is a feminist responsibility (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). As Chadwick (2021) writes, discomfort is a highly affective, embodied and "sweaty concept" that "opens space for transformativ praxis and the emergence of feminist forms of knowing, being and resisting" (p. 1). Weaving together the work of Clare Hemmings and Sara Ahmed, Chadwick (2021)

encourages postcolonial feminist scholars to (1) engage with “gut feelings” and (2) embrace interpretive hesitancy (p. 1). Continuing, she writes:

The politics of discomfort is, of course, racialized, classed and shaped by various modes of privilege. As a result, the politics of discomfort will materialise and resonate very differently for researchers and feminists across raced, classed, sexualized, gendered, ethnic and dis/able-bodied differences. For white feminists and others in privileged identity zones, feelings of discomfort can threaten wilful, lazy and easy forms of ignorance (Pohlhaus, 2012). As a result, starting, and staying, with discomfort potentially comes a form of radical praxis integral to recognising and countering the reproduction of harmful and systematic ignorances. ... As a form of feminist affective praxis, engaging the politics of discomfort is integral to the development of inclusive, emancipatory and alternative feminist knowledges.

(Chadwick, 2021, p. 9)

From our own lived experiences of trying to “stay with the trouble” (Haraway, 2016) in SDP research, we see the “epistemic and political salience of discomfort as affective intensity, ‘sweaty concept’ and potentially transformative interpretive resource” (Chadwick, 2021, p. 1) for feminist SDP researchers seeking to move toward more responsible, ethical, embodied and “affective methodologies” (Knudsen & Stage, 2015). In the next section, we examine autoethnography as a specific avenue for pursuing such approaches.

Using Autoethnography to Process Sweaty Encounters

After experiencing a number of troubling situations as both a practitioner and researcher in the SDP field, Megan made the case for engaging the method of autoethnography as a way to process and examine the complex ethical issues she encountered (Chawansky, 2015; Chawansky & Mitra, 2018). In her previous work, Megan offered autoethnographic vignettes on issues such as white privilege, sexual harassment, and everyday sexism (Chawansky, 2015). She also examined the complexities of “situated solidarities” with colleagues and peers in the SDP field, highlighting how “the possibilities of alliances are inseparable from a deep commitment to critique,” even – and perhaps especially when – the self is central to that critique (Nagar, 2014, p. 5). These concepts and experiences (of white privilege, sexual harassment and everyday sexism) are no doubt familiar to readers intellectually, but Megan’s use of autoethnography was an attempt to share an embodied and emotive experience of these concepts as she confronted them in particular SDP locations and moments. Writing about the embodied experiences of fear, embarrassment, and shame offered new ways of understanding and knowing about SDP work and further shows how the “personal is political” for women’s lives, especially when operating in spaces and places that may be less amenable to women.

Another unique dimension of autoethnography is that it offers opportunities for uncertainty, discomfort and ambivalence to be explored. That is, in her

previous research, Megan did not seek to utilize autoethnography to resolve any particular tensions or absolve herself (or others) from a particular transgression (Chawansky, 2015). Her feelings about some of the situations she describes in her writing still make her pause and wonder what is missing from her understanding or her “take” on the situation. In this way, she understands the writing itself to be a “method of inquiry” (Richardson, 1994). Writing about the difficult, sweaty moments of SDP work, fieldwork, and collaborations allowed her to practice “radical vulnerability,” something she continues to (try to) utilize in her work (Nagar, 2014, p. 5). Broadly speaking, this approach has been accessed by a number of SDP scholars (e.g., Forde, 2015; Hillyer, 2010; Van Luijk, Forde & Yoon, 2019; McSweeney, 2019) to explore a multitude of issues and themes.

Practicing the notion of radical vulnerability allowed her to work through the inevitable contradictions and tensions she experienced, and it also allowed her to reciprocate the openness and vulnerability displayed by her research participants and her SDP colleagues (Sherry, 2013). While she has frequently “conducted” interviews during which she asked people to share important and intimate details and moments of their lives, she only finds it fair to share her own, albeit to a different audience. Some critics see autoethnography as self-aggrandizing, but a focus on the lives of aid and development workers “is central to generating a literature on development that goes beyond accusation and blame ... [it] produces new avenues for reexamining the processes of development” and it can allow for new questions to emerge for leaders, practitioners and researchers in SDP (Fechter & Hindman, 2011, p. 3; also see Chapter 7).

Moreover, autoethnographies of aid/SDP workers can generate a body of literature that is often accessible to a variety of readers. These “stories bring worlds into being” and allow us to collectively engage in “the work of co-creating futures” within and outside of SDP (Dutta, 2018, p. 94). Since completing her 2015 publication on autoethnography, Megan has continued to utilize autoethnographic approaches to work through tensions that deal with issues of sexuality and heteronormativity in SDP, namely the limited attention given to queer bodies – including her own – in SDP spaces (Chawansky, 2021; Válková, 2021). This work is done, in part, to help co-create a future SDP wherein queer bodies are included, supported, and fully able to access sporting initiatives. While many readers will recognize that “intersectionality is intrinsically connected to activism against inequalities and for enacting change” and will agree that we are well served to include and consider all forms of diversity in SDP and sport, gender and development (SGD) work, a challenge persists for Megan when this call becomes personal (Bonifacio, 2019, p. 61). When this call moves to her and through her body, it implores her to “come out” as a queer SDP practitioner in spaces and moments that did not – and do not – feel safe. When this call comes to her, it makes her worry that talking about her partner will compromise research relationships or access. When this call finds her, it makes her self-conscious as she recounts how her fear made her avoid social events even if it meant bypassing opportunities for informal engagement with work colleagues. And when this call makes her break out into a sweat, she recalls her strategies for redirecting conversations about boyfriends and dating and husbands (Chawansky, 2021).

Writing her (queer) self through these calculations, difficult moments, and ethical impasses is a way for Megan to both document the tangible effects of heteronormativity and to imagine hopeful new futures for SDP spaces.

In the next section, and building on the work of Megan and Holly, Lyndsay explores how her use of PFPAR helped her to critically consider issues of mutuality, ethics, and representation in pursuing feminist SDP research with an NGO and young women program participants in Nicaragua.

Postcolonial Feminist Participatory Action Research and SDP

Those who have been most adversely affected by injustice must lead research collectives or be key decision makers.

(Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 435)

The words of Fine and Torre (2019) usefully anchor one of the key ingredients of PFPAR, particularly in its action research focus – one which is infused by “participatory process[es] concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4). Action research is historically rooted in the emancipatory goals of Latin American scholars (e.g., Freire, 2000) and is focused on promoting socially just approaches to scholarship that are driven to provide practical solutions to “liberate the human body, mind and spirit in search for a better, freer world” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4).

In the remainder of this section, we draw upon Lyndsay’s research experiences to highlight the benefits and challenges of taking up a postcolonial feminist orientation to participatory action research (PAR) approach. We also examine how PFPAR can be extended through grounding postcoloniality as an abstract concept by honing in on the materiality of inequalities (e.g., incomplete, insufficient and crumbling infrastructure, lack of affordable housing, racist policies, sexism) that many young women participating in SDP programming face on a daily basis. We further contend that visual and digital methods and embodied approaches point us toward crucial questions related to how personal accounts from “Northern” practitioners contribute to debates around evidence, impact, and the utility of SDP “work” (Chawansky, 2015; Hayhurst, 2017).

Such questions of power, embodied experience and local voice connect to PAR approaches. And yet, as Fine and Torre (2019, p. 435) warn, PAR research must be guided by “those who have been most adversely affected by injustice [...] and foreground those perspectives that are usually ignored and silenced from communities under siege.” Here, we build on Harding’s (1995) notion of “strong objectivity,” “for research teams of *differently positioned people* who work through and across their distinct standpoints and are therefore most likely to generate robust, counter-hegemonic evidence” (Fine & Torre, 2019, p. 435, italics added for emphasis). This, then, is where the utility of postcolonial feminist approaches to PAR become most apparent: for challenging, critiquing, and

dismantling the dominant discourses and taken-for-granted structures imbued in the SDP “movement.”

PAR centers on the idea that social inquiry projects should involve the active participation of traditionally marginalized groups, striving to root the research process in ethics and responsibility, with a goal of exposing and working alongside those groups who have suffered social injustice (Fine & Torre, 2019). PAR practices aim to upend “who constructs research questions, designs, methods, interpretations, and products, as well as who engages in surveillance” (Fine, Tuck, & Zeller-Berkman, 2008, p. 161). PAR approaches also ask research team members to probe more deeply into how they participate in a given research project by critically considering who is participating and who is not, what level of participation is involved (e.g., minimally or maximumly involved throughout the project), who represents the community in community-based PAR research – all of these questions – and more – are crucial to consider before, during and after PAR studies (see Wallerstein & Duran, 2006; McSweeney et al., under review).

In the realm of sport and international development studies, there are a number of examples of participatory and collaborative approaches that have been used, in particular, studies with research team members from a variety of positionalities, social locations and geographies. PAR approaches to these vast global, multisited projects are thought to redress unequal power relations between researchers and participants, striving to make research more locally driven, social justice-oriented and potentially transformative (e.g., Collison et al., 2016; Hayhurst, 2016; Sherry, Schulenkorf, Seal, Nicholson, & Hoye, 2017). In turn, many of the projects we as authors, project managers, and collaborators have pursued in SDP carry responsibility with and for the communities, particularly communities of color, LGBTQ2S+ and others experiencing systematic disenfranchisement – relating to broader issues of power and privilege and to “unequal geographies of knowledge and power” (Epstein, Fahey, & Kenway, 2013, p. 479). With few exceptions, the ethical dilemmas that have been brought to bear by feminists have been relatively underplayed in SDP scholarship and research (with some exceptions – see Chawansky, 2015), which is why we contend that *postcolonial feminist* and orientations to PAR – and to embodied research approaches – are of particular importance in SGD-related projects. In turn, visual and digital methods may in fact provide possibilities of (re)imagining the methods used in feminist approaches – a point we turn to in our conclusion of this chapter.

The links among various dimensions of feminist theory and PAR have been well-articulated and debated by Reid, Frisby and colleagues (see Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009; Reid & Frisby, 2008). Here, intersections of race, gender, class, and an acknowledgment of how multiple axes of power produce marginalization are at the center of PAR-focused inquiries (Anderson, Khan, & Reimer-Kirkham, 2011; Cammarota & Fine; Genat, 2009; Reid & Frisby, 2008). Along these lines, Indigenous scholars such as Jeremy Hapeta and colleagues have furthered such critiques, arguing specifically for Indigenous approaches to SDP that prioritize research from, with and for the community, with Indigenous principles guiding the entire research process (Hapeta, Stewart-Withers, & Palmer, 2019). A PFPAR approach holds the potential to endorse different SDP knowledges and practices

by striving to connect – and highlight – academic research on SDP with transformative actions (that may already be taking place) “on the ground” or with a clear focus on the everyday embodiment of SDP participants and the materiality of their experiences. For example, this might involve centralizing Indigenous knowledge and the dispossession of land, prioritizing land-based pedagogies and experiences and dismantling the concept of SDP altogether in favor of reinvigorating Indigenous alternatives. PFPAR research approaches hold the potential to draw more explicit attention to, for example, land-based models and to show how more culturally appropriate approaches and knowledge transmission is significantly undervalued in comparison to Western, white settler approaches and SDP models (see Henhawk & Norman, 2019). Ultimately, truly decolonizing SDP will require a significant shift in researcher-community relations, though we argue that postcolonial feminism may offer a valuable stepping stone in this direction.

Postcolonial feminism actively extends feminist PAR approaches by striving to challenge existing hierarchies and opposes institutionalized forms of oppressive power that are immersed within Eurocentric discourses (Raghuram & Madge, 2006). Postcolonial feminist theory recognizes that “participation” is intensely rooted in colonial and imperial projects of development in the Global South (Hayhurst, 2017; McEwan, 2009). A postcolonial feminist approach thus also builds on PAR studies by directly confronting the seduction of neocolonial “compassion” that tends to buttress “helping” and “making a difference” imperatives (see Unger, 2004). To this end, postcolonial feminist approaches to PAR amplify polyvocality, “speaking up and speaking back” (Mitchell & Moletsane, 2018, p. 14) to intentionally disrupt the colonial, heteropatriarchal legacies of SDP (research) that tend to position it as a unified, homogenous sector led by Global North practitioners and scholars (see Schulenkorf et al., 2016) (also see [Chapter 5](#) for a critical discussion of the embodied experiences of Global North women working in the sector). Thus, a priority in using PFPAR is to decenter particular ways of knowing and doing SDP and acknowledge the nuances, messiness, and complexities of Global North–South research collaborations and funding relations with the goal of producing new SDP scholars, practitioners and policymakers. In fact, a postcolonial feminist method is attentive to the intricate relations entangled in particular spaces, places, knowledges and histories.

To address these issues, PFPAR offers a way to reconceptualize postcolonial feminist approaches so that research extends beyond a postcolonial analysis (i.e., studies of coloniality or postcoloniality) to a more socially engaged, thoughtful, collaborative model that reworks the purposes of research and the epistemologies that inform it (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2007; Swadener & Kagendo, 2008). There is great potential here for a more materialist connection with postcoloniality that highlights the technologies of colonization (e.g., linguicide, the deployment of Western epistemologies, and the determination of “valid” research questions) so that alternative perspectives and voices are prioritized (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In doing so, there is an opportunity to respond to critics who argue that postcolonial feminist theory fails to actively go beyond “studying coloniality” (Reid & Frisby, 2008, p. 94). That is, and as McEwan (2009) asserts, postcolonial feminisms are potentially disconnected from material

concerns and realities of “subalterns.” And yet, research that is inspired by PFPAR approaches recognizes and works within the understanding that non-Western knowledge forms have for too long been excluded, silenced from, and/or marginalized within most research paradigms and development work. This relates to Spivak’s (1988) renowned question, “Can the subaltern speak?” and prioritizes issues of representation, as well as other concerns relating to research project initiation, benefits, legitimacy and accountability that guide PFPAR orientations.

The aforementioned theoretical tenets and key concepts may be further heightened by pairing PFPAR with visual research methods in SDP. We thus suggest bridging PFPAR with visual methods – such as photovoice (which involves giving cameras to research participants to take photos that shed light on their experiences – see Wang, 2006) and digital storytelling (a video and/or picture presentation that tells the “story” of an individual, community and/or group – see Mitchell, De Lang, & Moletsane, 2017) to facilitate new ways of uncovering how gender inequalities intersect with other categories of difference, particularly within the context of SDP practices and programs. Other scholars who have used PAR strategies with Indigenous communities have explained that cameras can function as “recorders and potential catalysts for social action and change in their communities” (Lavallée, 2009, p. 30). Furthermore, such methods are also particularly helpful for “getting at” the embodied experiences of those participating in SDP initiatives. As Coffey (2019) explains in her use of participatory visual methods with youth to understand their embodied and bodily experiences of health and self-image:

These methods explored affective dimensions of everyday embodiment through speech and verbal interactions and narratives as well as visual methods, including photographs to illustrate the importance of sensations in how body image is produced in the everyday and modulates over time. These methods provided the basis for a theoretically rich analysis of the ways gendered embodiment is produced through the sensory, affective, discursive, and material aspects of bodily practice.

(Coffey, 2019, p. 78)

Here, using visual research methods is one approach to *get at* a broader PFPAR methodology, one that may actually gain meaningful traction in amplifying the visual and affective perspectives of bodies, embodiment and the agency of both humans and nonhumans in SDP. Along these lines, feminist sport and physical cultural scholars are developing an array of methods to explore the various ways digital technologies cultures and spaces such as Twitter, Instagram and TikTok are also being taken up by women to resist dominant representations and to build communities of support more frequently in sporting and physical cultural communities (Ahmad & Thorpe, 2020; Toffoletti, Thorpe, Pavlidis, Olive, & Moran, 2021). Although few are working at this intersection (e.g., Smith, Danford, Darnell, Larrazabal, & Abdellatif, 2021), we see the potential in using PAR in tandem with innovative feminist research methods (including visual,

digital and object-oriented material methods) and postcolonial approaches to centralize the *embodied* and *material* dimensions of SDP, thus offering a useful tool for translating postcolonial imperatives into practice. Below, Lyndsay provides an example where she applied a PFPAR orientation to explore a SGD program in Nicaragua.

PFPAR and Visual Methods in Nicaragua

The research discussed below took place in January 2015 in a rural community located in Southern Nicaragua. Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western hemisphere with a population of 5.5 million inhabitants (Hunt, 2011). The country has been in a relatively constant state of emergency for nearly four decades (Hunt, 2011). Indeed, it was largely “ravaged” in the 1990s as it tried to recover from civil war, subjected to the implementation of structural adjustments – exacerbated by neocolonial global capitalism – which only exacerbated inequalities between the “elites” and the poor (Hunt, 2011).

The economy is primarily agriculturally driven, though in recent years it is largely based on tourism. The community is fairly remote – there is limited transportation and communication – thus resulting in the residents experiencing poverty and difficult living conditions. Legislation across Nicaragua has upheld the authority of men (Cobo del Arco, 2000). Indeed, influence of the state and patriarchal family values – combined with the culture of machismo – is reflected in literature exploring the attitudes of Nicaraguan citizens concerning rights and violence. In fact, machismo has largely driven gender-based, domestic and sexual violence – leading to institutional and political paternalism (Sternberg, 2000).

In response to some of these issues, Nicaraguan NGO (NNGO, the pseudonym used to refer to the organization involved in this research) was founded in 1994. The main objective of NNGO is to empower young women residing throughout the remote communities where it operates through various initiatives in sport, health and education. In 1999, NNGO started a fútbol program – originally for both young women and men – when they realized the need to focus on the development of young women through sport. Thus, in 2002, NNGO began working to support the sexual and reproductive health rights of these young women and to reduce and prevent gender-based violence through fútbol tournaments and curriculum as tools to connect with young women.

Hayhurst and del Socorro Centeno Cruz (2019) found that using a post-colonial feminist political ecology PAR research framework, paired with visual methods, was helpful for critically interrogating the embodied experiences of young Nicaraguan women and the nonhuman elements involved in their day-to-day lives (e.g., rocks, landslides, environmental degradation). As will be discussed in detail in [Chapter 6](#), postcolonial feminist political ecology approaches consider how relations of race, gender, colonialism, and sexuality emerge out of practices related to the physical environment and natural resources by specifically drawing attention to the ways that “multiple forms of power and positionings shape

natural resource struggles” (Mollett, 2017, p. 146). In turn, the authors found that the postcolonial feminist political ecology lens was imperative for heightening the policy issues (e.g., domestic violence prevention and its connection to violence to the land) that were ultimately rooted in the ways that colonialism intersected with racialized and gendered power. For example, a participant – Julissa – in the NNGOs program revealed:

Julissa: I took this photo (see Fig. 1). I was on my way to the football field, to the sports field. About this topic, we have received workshops from [NNGO] related to deforestation, the preservation of the forest. However, there are people that are not interested, and they do this. They chop the trees, so you have deforestation that is huge. They cut down the trees.

LH: So [NNGO] has workshops on this topic?

Julissa: Oh, yes. How to recycle, how is it that we can help to reforest, build up the forest in a place that has been desolated (Hayhurst & del Socorro Cruz Centeno, 2019, p. 18).

And yet, a number of young women explained how cement barriers they created to prevent landslides from occurring during heavy rains impacted their



Fig. 1. Photograph by Julissa. Untitled.

ability to function as a community. As Hayhurst and del Socorro Centeno Cruz (2019) write, the concrete barriers could not “replace the trees in battling an increasing rainy season, seldom being able to protect the trees and prevent the landslides that would consistently erode, block, and destroy any roads or pathways the participants hoped to use to attend the [N]NGO’s SGD program and flee the violence they often experienced in their homes” (Hayhurst & del Socorro Centeno Cruz, 2019, p. 18; see also [Chapter 6](#)).

The issues highlighted by Julissa above may have otherwise been overlooked if not for a postcolonial feminist orientation to political ecology that opened ways of thinking about “matter” and the nonhuman elements in SDP as in fact agentic and exacerbating inequalities and power relations. In this example, the use of photos offered a possibility for reimagining the ways that the environment and related matter play active roles in – for the case discussed above in Nicaragua – demonstrating how the “prevention of violence to the land and physical environment is deeply enmeshed with preventing violence against young women’s bodies, and to broader decolonization efforts – issues that must move to the vanguard of SGD and SDP studies” (Hayhurst & del Socorro Centeno Cruz, 2019).

A PFPAR approach thus holds the potential to endorse different SDP knowledges and practices by striving to connect – and highlight – academic research on SDP with transformative actions (that may already be taking place) “on the ground” or with a focus on the everyday embodiment of SDP participants and materiality of their experiences. In the case above, this might involve centralizing Indigenous knowledge and the dispossession of land, prioritizing land-based pedagogies and experiences, and dismantling the concept of SDP altogether in favor of reinvigorating Indigenous alternatives. PFPAR approaches hold the potential to draw more explicit attention to how land-based models, culturally appropriate approaches, and knowledge transmission might be undervalued in many Western, white settler approaches and SDP models (see Essa, Arellano, Stuart, & Sheps, 2021).

Using a PFPAR approach means that researcher-participant relations need to be constantly challenged, questioned and discussed. One of the central pillars of this approach is to safeguard the rights and information of those who create, participate and (purportedly) benefit from SDP programs. The goal, then, is to ensure that the entire process is meaningful to them. In this vein, the hope is that participants maintain, and regain, full autonomy and power *with* all aspects of their lives and institutions. Along these lines, Ponc, Reid, and Frisby (2010) discern that “power with” is the ideal approach to working with communities and participants involved in (P)FPAR projects. Such an approach is in contrast to “expert” knowledge approaches that often directly oppose shared control over the research process. Condescending and paternalistic approaches to research end up usurping the possibilities of shared control (Reid et al., 2011). Unfortunately, this might be due to the rules and regulations of funding agencies, thesis supervisors, or institutional mandates that uphold the power and control “over” approach.

The Politics of “Gendered Cultural Translations” in Feminist SDP Research

Using visual methods to examine SDP further complicates the notion of “control.” For example, while the aspirations of the PFPAR research that Hayhurst conducted in Nicaragua were to focus on local identities, practices and agendas and to initiate political action through a critical discussion of images taken by young women, challenges pertaining to language, translation, participation and representation arose. The creation of a digital story in the case of NNGO that Hayhurst partnered with presents a key example through which to magnify these issues.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Lyndsay’s study involved a partnership with an NNGO based in a remote community in Southern Nicaragua. From the outset, a translator was used – Hayhurst and team were not able to converse in Spanish, especially in the specific dialect used in this remote community. The translator – with whom Lyndsay has worked with for six years – identified as a middle-class, US educated woman who was born in Colombia but who had resided in Nicaragua for the past 30 years. The translator had previously worked with NNGO’s key regional partner organization (which is how Lyndsay was introduced to her). Of course, the translator’s social position impacted her perceptions of the ways that the young Nicaraguan NNGO program participants interpreted their photos. During the photovoice activities with young women, while they spoke Spanish, the translator simultaneously interpreted in English, which was then digitally recorded and then transcribed (in English).

This research involved semi-structured interviews, photovoice, photocollaging, and digital story sessions with young women who participated in NNGO’s SDP programming. A digital story was then developed collaboratively by Lyndsay and the NNGO staff members (see [Chapter 6](#) for further details). The digital story used the visual elements of the research (photos, photocollages, and video footage). The translator had to review the English quotes (which she developed) that corresponded to the themes emerging from the collaborative photoanalysis and photovoice interviews. One of the central themes that emerged from this activity was “child care” – a barrier that the young women wanted to highlight as a significant hindrance to their participation in the NNGO’s SGD program. An image used to capture this theme was a container of baby powder ([Fig. 2](#)), along with the following quote by Petrilla:

We have people – girls – that are underage that become pregnant so the children become a problem because then the girls, they cannot go out.

Upon reviewing the digital story, the translator made a number of suggestions and edits, noting that some of the quotes were perhaps misinterpreted. In particular, upon reflecting on the quote above by Petrilla, the translator countered to Lyndsay that she recalled “the tone of the conversations around this topic” and submitted a revised statement in relation to the baby powder photo:



Fig. 2. Photograph by Petrilla. Untitled.

There are some girls, they are underage and became pregnant, so it's a problem. Now they have to take care of the children and cannot go out.

A key challenge, and point of concern, in this translation process was that it was difficult for Lyndsay to discern the extent to which the translator may have imposed her own assumptions onto the voices of the young women. A number of scholars contend that translation does not have to be perceived as a limitation or a barrier to conducting socially charged, ethical, cross-cultural research (Kim, 2013; Maclean, 2007; Palmary, 2011). Taken a step further – in a PFPAR study such as the example herein – it is crucial that, as Fine et al. (2008) remind us, such issues remind us of “the slippery surface of language, the seductive pull of solidarity, and the terrific sloppiness with which we make names and claims under imperialism” (p. 159). Feminist researchers must be critically aware of the appeal of solidarity, of (cl)aiming to do work with the oppressed, “engage in the too common practice of taking on the charged, contextualized, experienced words of brilliant communities

and stretching them to fit inside their own mouths and own communities” (Fine et al., 2008, p. 159). And yet, the difficulty in the example above is complex: if Lyndsay was fluent in the Nicaraguan Spanish dialect spoken in this particular community, perhaps she may have been able to better understand and “get at” the issues Petrilla was highlighting through this photo and the underlying structural inequalities and gender norms, roles and gendered divisions of labor that contributed to the high rates of pregnancy and lack of childcare experienced by these young women in the first place.

Arguably – and as scholars such as Palmary (2011) contend – thinking more holistically about research as “gendered cultural translation” may provide an opportunity to actually promote and facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and understanding with research participants, but only if the translator’s deliberations and decisions are made clear. For example, for Lyndsay’s research, also interviewing the translator for the Ugandan study meant she was able to obtain a sound understanding of the translator’s perspectives on particular issues relative to the SDP programs. There were a number of opportunities to build strong rapport with both Ugandan and Nicaraguan translators and to continually discuss the word choices used throughout translation. Admittedly, there are still limitations involved in this process – particularly in terms of challenges related to power. As Canella and Manuelito (2008, p. 55) suggest:

Researchers can no longer be individuals who decide to interview others as if power were not an issue, fool themselves into thinking they are collaborating, or legitimate obtaining research funds from dominant sources with the false pretence that the money can also be used subversively (to counter dominant power).

Indeed, some cross-cultural scholars contend that all research is a form of translation (e.g., Palmary, 2011) and assert that the word choices and decisions made by translators in social science research must be transparent and clearly justified (Creese, Huang, Frisby, & Kambere, 2011; Maclean, 2007). Still, the aforementioned example from Lyndsay’s research remains unsettling. The power seemed to reside with the translator – and Lyndsay – as to language use, interpretation, and the ways that this particular image and quote would be represented to the “outside world” – though the young women and NGO staff would decide who would see the image and would verify the accuracy of the quote (Hayhurst, 2017). Much is lost in the power of translation. PFPAR is supposed to be about the power of contestation and helping to unearth the relations that sustain the inequities, imperial relations, and hypercapitalist patriarchy that often folds all too easily into global-local research (see Fine et al., 2008). Herein lies the challenge in using a PFPAR approach, especially when ethical dilemmas arise in terms of language. For how can feminist scholars doing SDP research across multiple sites ensure mutual control over translation as we seek to produce participatory cross-site work that fosters a “‘space’ open for difference and rely on local knowledge to fill in” (Fine et al., 2008, p. 165)? We suggest, then, that researchers using translation with the goal of facilitating political action and

knowledge mobilization to a broader (global audience) critically consider how decisions should be made by those inside and outside of the community pertaining to the translated language (i.e., Spanish to English).

Another key consideration for PFPAR should be to clearly establish if the goal of the research is to amplify local aspirations and priorities. And if this is the goal, is translation even necessary in the first place? How might it be possible to continue pursuing research that is participatory while also not (re)colonizing through linguistic? We must be cautious about the often “treacherous slide toward homogenization, in the name of solidarity” (Fine et al., 2008, p. 172). Put differently, if using English is an effort to try to tether much of the local SGD work to global political activism, improving young women’s sexual and reproductive health rights on a global scale, what is then risked in losing sight of local demands and accountability to the contextual threads of place? In the next section, we further explore ethical conundrums and challenges in pursuing feminist research in and through SDP.

Unequal Power Relations and Feminist Ethical Impasses

Feminist ethics [...] enjoins researchers to constantly interrogate themselves regarding how power in their relationships with others may influence the relationship. Of special concern is the power that researchers hold because of professional status, race, class, or dominant group status. These attributes do not disappear when a researcher engages in collaborative work and must be openly acknowledged as privileges that inevitably produce power inequities.

(Shartrand & Brabeck, 2004, p. 151)

In this section, we build upon the previous discussions to explore concerns pertaining to compensation and power relations in carrying out SDP research on Global North/South aid relations and highlight how the ethical dilemmas that have been brought to bear by feminists and anthropologists have been severely underplayed in SDP scholarship. In short, the concern here is with the ways that the researcher’s movements from one site to another (particularly from the Global North to South) relate to broader issues of power and privilege and to “unequal geographies of knowledge and power” (Epstein et al., 2013, p. 479). Swartz (2011) notes that few scholars discern the financial cost of research. Indeed, cost is an ethical issue that must be grappled with, and Swartz highlights that it is crucial to reveal such expenses when carrying out studies in Global South countries, particularly with young people. For Lyndsay, importantly, these “costs” (i.e., a scholarship, grants) contributed to her ability to complete a PhD, publications, awards, recognition, and ultimately a tenure-track position: but those collaborating with her on such studies did not receive comparable rewards or benefits.

A postcolonial feminist reflexive analysis should bring such questions and power relations to bear on any study that (cl)aims to be working within this global-local fulcrum. This is especially important in order to prioritize transparency, accountability, while recognizing the relational subjectivities of researchers, practitioners and “beneficiaries.” In short, a postcolonial ethic to feminist research is essential for confronting imperialism and colonialism as the “present history” (cf., Roy, 2006) of SDP and its broader embedment in global imperialist legacy. Such concerns tie to Ananya Roy’s focus on the discipline of planning and its role in liberal benevolence to move instead toward an “ethics of postcoloniality.” In the section that follows, we draw on Hayhurst’s research with UNGO in an effort to unpack methodological encounters, where a risk of being an “academic who perpetuated oppressive practices” was tangible and of particular concern (Chrisp, 2004, p. 88).

The vision of UNGO is to create an environment where Ugandan women and children are free from violence and oppression and where everyone has the opportunity to realize their full potential. UNGO has multiple programming areas and departments and employs over 100 staff members both directly and indirectly. Staff positions range from “monitoring and evaluation officer” to “child rights officer.” UNGO also provides access to various social services in the region of Winita (a pseudonym used to protect the identity of this community). UNGO’s SDP initiative is a program that commenced in early 2009, and its funding is shared between INGO and an international aid agency. The goal of the SDP program is to use martial arts training alongside “gender education” sessions, which aim to assist girls’ skill development in the realms of conflict management, sexual relations and domestic violence (Hayhurst, 2016). The program also addresses the marginalization of adolescent young women (ages 10–18) in Uganda through karate and taekwondo to improve their status, increase their education and augment gender relations in the communities in which they live. The young women interviewed for this research were of the ages 16–18 and volunteered for UNGO staff through their work as martial arts trainers throughout their communities and during after-school programming. Thus far, the initiative has reached over 2,000 girls and young women who benefit directly through education provided through sport, GAD programming. A goal of the program is to train some of the participants as leaders in their communities, particularly in the areas of gender and sport. The martial arts program is not formally part of the school curriculum, but takes place after school hours on school grounds.

Using a PFPAR approach means that relations between the “researcher” and the “re-searched” need to be consistently questioned, challenged and discussed. Here, the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) – who infamously stated “re-search is a dirty word” – ring loud and clear. Tuhiwai Smith’s hyphenation of “research” into “re-search” problematizes and underlines how “re-searching” is not merely about harmlessly pursuing knowledge. Conducting re-search is deeply tied to relations between the imperial and colonial project and holds (un)intended consequences for those who are the researched. Much of these relations are shaped by unequal power over the research process – in all phases of research – from the research question design to study implementation, analysis, and dissemination of findings (Metzler et al., 2003). Arguably, PAR is supposed to

adhere to such principles: the goal is to facilitate shared, collective and reciprocal research. And yet, some counter that by using a PAR approach, researchers are creating “false illusions of equity or beliefs that the local is countering the global” (Canella & Manuelito, 2008, p. 55).

There are some PAR studies – particularly in the realm of SDP – that attempt to heighten “the local,” despite being part of vast and broader global multisited approaches (Collison et al., 2016; Hayhurst, 2016; Sherry, Schulenkorf, Seal, Nicholson, & Hoye, 2017). Along these lines, there have been a number of “local” (often Global South) community-based researchers working with translators and Global South community-based research teams partnering with Global North scholars. In the realm of SDP – which is often characterized by cross-cultural, multisited approaches and relations – scholars have often highlighted the tenuous and multifaceted relations that necessitate heightened reflexivity, decolonizing approaches and researcher responsibility (Chawansky, 2015; Darnell, Giulianotti, Howe, & Collison, 2018; Forde, 2015; McSweeney, 2019). Key concerns highlighted through these multisited PAR approaches include: (1) a false separation between collecting data with communities under an elusive premise of equity or a “belie[f] that the local is countering the global” (Canella & Manuelito, 2008, p. 55); and (2) a lack of shared control over the full research process, including challenges pertaining to the view that “the marginalized have a moral right to own and control knowledge produced about them” (Swartz, 2011, p. 48). Although PAR studies are supposed to include collaborative steps meant to flatten power relations – including co-designing the decision-making processes, defining principles of collaboration, and setting shared priorities (Westhues et al., 2008) – such benefits are often fraught with complications related to what Ponc et al. (2010) refer to as “power with” as opposed to “power over” others involved in feminist PAR approaches. Inevitably, FPAR scholars point to the ways that centralized, hyperpatriarchal “expert knowledge” approaches often directly undermine more collaborative aspirations for sharing decision-making and control over the entire research process.

The aforementioned issues seem particularly crucial to grapple with as Lyndsay struggled to navigate the ultimately “transactional processes” involved in conducting research. For example, the following costs are examples of items that were research expenses while Hayhurst was in Eastern Uganda: (1) fuel for UNGO’s vehicle from Junita to the Entebbe airport; (2) driver’s two days allowance; (3) driver’s night allowance; (4) airport fee; (5) fuel to attend martial arts training sessions; (6) wear and tear of UNGO’s vehicle; and (7) food and water for/shared with UNGO staff while traveling in remote places.¹ Throughout the fieldwork, Hayhurst ended up obtaining transportation to and from the airport with UNGO because it was difficult to find reliable public transportation from the airport to Winita – the rural community where the research took place. Second, UNGO senior staff insisted that they were already picking up UNGO’s

¹Junita is a fictional name of the region where UNGO worked used to protect the identity of NGO/participants.

co-founder the same day that Hayhurst arrived, so they would not be making the extra trip. Still, Hayhurst thought it was important to pay for the exorbitant fuel costs involved, as well as vehicle maintenance fees, given the distance traveled (230km one way from the airport to Junita, for a total round trip of 460km). This was the same case with small field trips throughout the broader Junita community to connect with the young martial arts trainers as they practiced karate and taekwondo. Lyndsay felt it was imperative to pay for fuel and use of UNGO's vehicle, particularly when transportation was such a privilege for UNGO, and it was extremely difficult for them to obtain funding for transport purposes: a clear example of the white privilege Hayhurst acknowledged held. Indeed, the role of feminist ethics is to lay bare such uncomfortable power inequities.

During travels to the more remote areas of Junita, Lyndsay recalls that – if they stopped to purchase food and water from one of the local markets – she would often buy enough for the UNGO staff she was with at that particular time so it could be shared. But do these modest research expenses support Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) contentions that those conducting research cross-culturally should try to contribute skills and resources to the community in which one works, while also being generous where possible to address power imbalances? Paying for food while doing research with community members seems like a weak attempt to try to facilitate reciprocity, especially because in many respects, being "generous" (if this is even what the act may be characterized by) simply (re)affirmed Lyndsay's place as white, middle-class, Western researcher. Indeed, this act in itself could be construed as an example of neocolonialism.

Nonetheless, the concern lies in ways that spending money on research participants is different from paying people for their participation, which may be problematic (Archer, 2009; Swartz, 2011). To this end, Archer (2009, p. 157) discussed "opportunities for reciprocity" and "reciprocal relationships," through which she maintains it as important for researchers to "truly level out the inherent power differential." As she noted, these opportunities include "the collaborative nature of the relationship, a base of empathy and mutual respect, and the researcher's explicit acknowledgment that both people have skills and knowledge to contribute, with the participants' knowledge of research questions being greater" (Archer, 2009, p. 157). Lyndsay shared stories, food, conversation, and long, sweaty car rides with staff from UNGO. During her stay in Winita, Lyndsay attended birthday celebrations, breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and events in which UNGO participated. Reciprocal gift giving also occurred in one instance, as Lyndsay brought a gift of Canadian maple syrup to a research participant's (referred to using the pseudonym "Liz") birthday celebration. Liz cooked a large meal that she shared with Lyndsay and kindly gave her a bottle of soda and some sweets following their meal. The daylong celebration ended by sitting in a circle and sharing the things that we were most grateful for and why having Liz as part of our lives was important to each of us (Field Notes, November 25, 2009). Lyndsay felt extremely honored to have been invited to this celebration – yet also uncomfortable – as the 15 other attendees were family members and close friends from the community.

Nevertheless, following this event, Lyndsay found herself questioning its meaning in terms of her position as a researcher, particularly from the lens of feminist ethics in PFPAR. For ethical reasons, Lyndsay was clear to Liz and the others in attendance during this celebration that she was still wearing her “researcher’s hat” by openly discussing the study at hand, though Lyndsay did not take any formal field notes during the event. To be sure, Lyndsay was unsure as to how she could truly “remove” her identity from these occasions outside the study context. Indeed, removing this label (white, middle-class, Canadian researcher) would be impossible. Undoubtedly, Lyndsay has, and will continue to, benefit more from this research than the UNGO staff who participated in this study, through publications (such as this very book!), conference presentations and other outputs: a power imbalance that seems challenging to rectify. In these ways, Lyndsay’s subjectivity in relation to her choices of field sites was paramount in relation to her access to the field and choices in collecting data (Epstein et al., 2013). It seems, then, that such experiences were not aligned with a feminist ethic, one that requires individuals to “walk the difficult line between sharing knowledge and expertise without asserting superiority or unreflexively using power against anyone who is subordinate because of status, gender, race, individual differences and so forth” (Shartrand & Brabeck, 2004, p. 140). Shartrand and Brabeck (2004, p. 141) continue to suggest that a feminist ethic is supposed to ensure the researcher “act[s] in ways that proactively create just social structures that ensure that people receive attentive and just care.” Much of the aforementioned examples connect to embodied encounters and feminist (care) ethics in SDP – an issue to which we now turn.

Feminist Research, Reflexivity and Ethics of Care

In this final section, we critically consider the ways that we, as researchers, academics and feminists, are (re-)constituted through our research practices in relation to the choices we make, particularly when embarking on certain research practices. Focusing on such issues not only extends the various concerns pertaining to relationships, reflexivity and embodiment outlined above but also underlines the utility of feminist ethics of care (Raghuram, 2019). It is essential here to account for how one is implicated in, and produced through, research practices – and more still, why our SDP research is feminist. As Shepherd writes (2016, p. 7):

Is it enough that I espouse, overtly and publicly, a feminist politics? Is it enough that I am attentive to the dynamics of gendered power? That I am always looking to understand better how gendered power operates in any given discursive terrain, including the terrains in/through which I am produced as a subject: the academy, the research encounter, the journal article, the meandering discussions over dinner with friends?

These questions of self-reflection are central to helping us engage in a critical examination of all the cumulative strands that create our individual and community identity and experiences. Thinking through how various elements of identity (e.g., gender, race, class, educational attainment, sexual orientation, disability status, age, nationality, etc.) influence and shape our experiences – especially in relation to power and privilege – is critical for anchoring the ways hierarchies (both external and internal to our research settings) ultimately play a role in knowledge production. Nonetheless, it seems that performatively rehearsing one’s social position and romanticizing reflexivity as a cure-all (Pringle & Thorpe, 2017), or a “green light,” for continuing to pursue fieldwork “over there” (in this case, in the Global South) presents challenges. Is being “hyper-self-reflexive,” as Kapoor suggests, helpful when Global North researchers carry out studies in Global South contexts? Does such an approach result in Global North researchers being better able to “contextualize our claims, reduc[e] the risk of personal arrogance or geoinstitutional imperialism, and mov[e] one toward a non-hierarchical encounter with the Third World/subaltern” (Kapoor, 2004, p. 641)?

Nagar (2014) extends this idea by contemplating the possibilities of “radical vulnerability” (to which Megan alluded to earlier in this chapter) and “situated solidarities” (p. 12). Continuing, Nagar explains that “a commitment to cultivate radical vulnerability through situated solidarities demands that we grapple with the material and symbolic politics of our locations and imagine how researchers might play a role in evolving ethics and methodologies in order to seek to build dialogues across borders” (Nagar, 2014, p. 12). And yet, scholars such as Haraway (1998, p. 584) caution researchers that “there is a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions.” These issues of power, privilege and position must actively be grappled with in studies that (cl)aim to use a feminist ethic of care in approaching research on SDP.

Indeed, as feminist Global North researchers conducting fieldwork in Global South contexts, it seems that, though we are encouraged to be reflexive in order to “acknowledg[e] social location and its impact on knowledge creation ... [in order to] generate more equitable collaborations with communities” (Creese & Frisby, 2011 p. 236), we are less encouraged to untangle the complex and messy realities of the “between space.” This “between space” is one that operates at the intersection of the self-other nexus (Fine, 1994; MacDonald, 2020). This space is one that we encourage feminist SDP researchers to explore – in all its multiplicities, messiness and discomfort – in order to reveal the nuances, tensions and challenges involved in pursuing feminist research.

Using postcolonial feminist theory provides the opportunity for opening up a space for social transformation and justice that is rooted in ethics and responsibility, recognizing that multisited SDP research must be situated and not become “yet another act of colonization” (Fine et al., 2008, p. 174). The hope for feminist SDP studies is that the consequences of systematic structural and symbolic violence will not only be “known,” but ultimately minimized through the research process. Indeed, and as Milne (2012) contends, it is dangerous to suggest that “the people who participate in [participatory research approaches] are socially

excluded, powerless, and vulnerable, and that through their participation they will somehow become empowered and find their voice” (p. 257). At the same time, and as Shepherd (2016) points out, many SDP scholars benefit from being “an academic” proficient in the “languages of evaluation,” who is produced by research, then is further (re)produced by peer-reviewed publications, which then helps in securing competitive funding to then reproduce the next grant application, article, or book (the book at hand presents an almost ironic example).

Although we have found it difficult to fully address such power inequities during our various research processes, some efforts have included co-authoring with community-based collaborators (see Chapters 3 and 6); co-presenting conference papers with Global South scholars and practitioners (see Hayhurst, Otte, McSweeney, & Wilson, 2019); and ensuring the research questions driving grants are collaborative and community-driven. At the end of the day, however, we acknowledge ongoing and unaddressed power inequities (i.e., we are often PI on grants, and we continue to benefit from secure employment) that have yet to be adequately navigated and explicitly addressed during the research process. Here, local knowledge also risks being romanticized through participatory approaches and further solidifies unequal power relations (Reid & Frisby, 2008). Further challenges arise when there are a number of stakeholders involved in such projects that – despite striving to be informed by PFPAR approaches – may be overtly challenged in attempting to truly uphold the conception of “co-researchers.” This is especially apparent when participants are distant from the decision-making process (e.g., when the grant funding agency is located in the Global North, with research being carried out in the Global South). In an attempt to reconcile these challenges, some PAR project scholars suggest:

While we cannot always expect participants to see themselves as action researchers, we can make clear that we are engaging them in a mutual investigation and learning process. The framework of learning is the core concept that will enable participants to confront political realities, consider redirecting power, and recognize the value of multiple interests.

(Martin, 2008, p. 396)

The language of “mutuality” – propped up by terms such as “shared,” “collaborative” and “partnership” – is often found scattered throughout feminist-guided PAR studies and deserves to be critically unpacked and revisited throughout the research process.

Final Thoughts and Future Trajectories

There is not one specific method or combination of methods that necessarily makes research “feminist,” but rather that the research comes from an approach that is considerate of the multifaceted nature of gender.

(Beetham & Demetriades, 2007, p. 199)

The words of Beetham and Demetriades still ring true: having done research in SGD/SDP collectively for almost 15 years, we concur that there is no monolithic way to “do” feminist research or to translate and apply these principles to our work. Being aware of the significant critiques of development work have given us the tools to reconcile uncomfortable truths about the choices we have made in our research. We continue to grapple, sweat through and ponder the directions of our research journeys. We continue to question how and why we contribute to these lines of inquiry and reflect on the decisions and critical junctures we have navigated along the way. And yet, we want to embrace cautious optimism as we forge ahead: guided by our feminist principles; embracing the meaningful yet complex relationships we have developed; and upholding the reciprocity, radical, and vulnerable reflexivity and feminist ethics of care we openly embrace as we stumble along the way.

For each of us, building trusting, mutual and reciprocal relationships has been instrumental in steering us through challenging and uncomfortable discussions, fieldwork and uncharted research waters. Whether it is working with our community partners, staff, practitioners and leaders of SGDs, NGOs, governmental organizations, policymakers or our students, it remains imperative to approach such collaborations with a careful and delicate balance between our feminist values and our understanding of the need for working together to build toward social change. Navigating our roles and responsibilities as feminist scholars means that we must work to identify, examine and support process of change when we observe (intentionally or unintentionally) inequities and injustices in SGD, whether this be in board meetings, examining policy documents, or in the field. But as Olive and Thorpe (2011) have explained, navigating our feminist selves within male-dominated sporting or organizational cultures can be very difficult. Not everyone wants to hear our concerns or to be faced with uncomfortable truths. Yet, we have found that building trusting relationships with our research partners (across all levels of the field), speaking out and disseminating our research beyond (the relatively safe spaces of) academic journals and books, and educating our undergraduate and postgraduate students are all ways that we can practice our feminist ethics in the work that we do.

What we are arguing for, in conjunction with Abu-Lughod (2002, p. 789), is using critical feminist research ethics and values in and through SGD in order to build transnational, mutual solidarity, in respecting difference and using a more “egalitarian language of alliances, coalitions, and solidarity, instead of salvation.” Mutuality also means recognizing that those carrying out research on SGD need to be reflexive, humble and radically vulnerable (Nagar, 2014). Vulnerable and humble reflexivity should begin with the researcher and situating one’s social location and position historically in relation to project “beneficiaries” (Rankin, 2010). We contend that there is always an opportunity to do more of this through our research in SGD. We suggest, then, that it is crucial to carefully consider the importance of a postcolonial, embodied research ethic that acknowledges and openly engages with the geopolitical, material, and historical divides between SGD programmers, “targeted beneficiaries” and critics, while also trying to locate

common ground and shared mutuality. By foregrounding these issues, particularly through decolonizing, embodied, autoethnographic, and/or participatory action-driven research, perhaps the journey of ethically charged, responsible SGD research will endure. As Gibson-Graham (2006, p. 6) motions:

Focused on the glass half empty rather than half full, [an] angry and sceptical political sensibility is seldom if ever satisfied... If we are to make the shift from victimhood to potency, from judgment to enactment, from protest to positive projects, we also need to work on the moralistic stance that clings to a singular conception of power and blocks experimentation with power in its many forms.

And so, ultimately, we are admitting that feminist research in sport for development is challenging, and we find ourselves constantly navigating between hope and optimism (“glass half full”) and despair (“glass half empty”). Such ongoing tensions are part of the process of “staying with the trouble” (Haraway, 2016). For the most part, in this chapter, we have tried not to offer easy answers and predictable pathways, but rather to put forth some of the key contradictions and tensions uncovered through our work. Feminist approaches to sport, gender and development cannot only be about criticism. There needs to be room for hope, for igniting political imagination, and for recognizing the limits to hegemonic power. Individually and collectively, we may be able to accomplish this by committing to more ethical, relational, and responsible SGD practices in our research, teaching, advocacy, politics and praxis.