The background of the book cover is a photograph of a doorway. A white lace curtain with a small floral pattern hangs in the doorway, partially obscuring the view. The walls on either side of the doorway are made of rough, textured material, possibly mud-brick or plaster, in shades of brown and tan. The lighting is soft, coming from the doorway, creating a sense of depth and focus on the curtain.

Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa

The Story Behind
the Findings

Edited by
Susan Thomson,
An Ansoms
and Jude Murison



Emotional and Ethical Challenges for Field Research in Africa

The Story Behind the Findings

Edited by

Susan Thomson

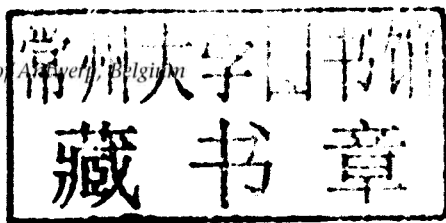
Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies, Colgate University, USA

An Ansoms

Assistant Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium

Jude Murison

Senior Research Fellow, University of Antwerp, Belgium



palgrave
macmillan



Editorial matter, selection and conclusion © Susan Thomson, An Ansoms and Jude Murison 2013

All remaining chapters © respective authors 2013

Foreword © Villia Jefremovas 2013

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2013 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries

ISBN 978-1-137-26374-2

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

Foreword

Most fieldworkers face their first foray into the field, whether on home ground or in a new and alien world, with a combination of fear and elation. Fieldwork is a life-transforming experience that dictates our work and shapes our careers. Given its importance in our lives, it is ironic that the fieldwork experience is one that we researchers do not easily reveal to the public gaze. When we do discuss fieldwork it is often in introductions or as footnotes to our findings, and, less often, in volumes such as this one. Thanks to the post-modern rediscovery of cultural relativism and its handmaidens, positionality and reflexivity, researchers are making this experience more accessible to a larger gaze. However, many of the post-modern texts are saturated in an unwitting hubris, imputing a power to the researcher that belies the realities of fieldwork, the realities of power and, in this internet-connected world, the limitations of appropriation of voice. This is not to say that fieldworkers should not be aware of these concerns. Good fieldwork should be informed by the valuable insights embodied in the post-modern critique of fieldwork, but these critiques only tell part of the story. This is the particular strength of this volume, it tells us the other stories, too.

Fieldwork is an experience that shows the researcher his or her limits and stretches his or her capacities. It also shows the nature of, the shape of and the limits of privilege. The researcher is often overwhelmed by the daily lives of those with whom he or she works. He or she often works in a place where the simplest informant understands the nuances and power structures much better than he or she ever will. In places like the Great Lakes Region, life is often lived much closer to the edge than most university trained researchers have experienced. The logistics of research are slow, interactions with local authorities, licit and illicit, are often frustrating and sometimes terrifying, local people take a long time to trust the researcher or development worker in an area burdened with danger and Machiavellian politics. Time crawls and also flies by. The courage and joy with which the local people navigate this world make for a heady ride, filled with highs and lows.

As the editors of this volume tell us, 'research is a series of positive and negative emotions – delight, frustration, anxiety, joy, anger, relief,

panic and sadness, to name but a few – that will be experienced daily’. Not only is the process of entering the field and doing fieldwork multifaceted, but leaving behind informants who face a difficult world is often painfully difficult. We do not just collect data, we discover people’s lives, because ‘collecting “data” *per se* is not difficult. The more challenging aspect of research is to collect “good” data’. Because people let us into their lives, we must make sure that our ‘data’ is true to the people with whom the researcher has been working. Finally, fieldwork requires that the researcher be nimble and flexible; as this collection emphasises, managing uncertainty is a critical part of the job, whether in a war zone or on the front lines of another society, culture or way of life.

The stories of fieldwork told in this book have remarkable resonance for those of us who worked in the Great Lakes Region of Africa whether in the 1960s, 1980, 1990s or in the new millennium; they also have the power to illuminate fieldwork in other areas of the world and other circumstances. The authors in this book present the dilemmas and delights of fieldwork in this complex region, honestly and in a fascinating manner, but without romanticising the experience. There are many lessons to be learned from the experiences of others, both by students and also by veteran researchers. As this book points out most powerfully, fieldwork is a ‘reality check’. Maybe the reason that fieldwork experience is not discussed more openly and more often is that it is an experience that humbles the researcher. Most of us do not stride into this new world, we bumble through. Our informants are also our guides. Learning a new culture is a daunting and exhilarating experience, filled with errors, victories and discoveries and, as I have said, it is profoundly humbling. Being humbled, coupled with the discoveries about self and others, can turn you into a fieldwork junkie. So beware, the chapters in this collection could get you hooked.

Villia Jefremovas
Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Notes on the Contributors

An Ansoms is Assistant Professor of Development Studies at the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). She holds a PhD in economics and is involved in research on poverty and inequality in the Great Lakes Region. She pays particular attention to the challenges of rural development and pro-poor growth in land-scarce (post-)conflict environments. She is also interested in the problems related to large-scale land acquisitions and in the causes and consequences of the recent food crises. An has recently published in *Food Policy*, *European Journal of Development Research*, *African Affairs*, *African Studies Review*, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, and *Review of African Political Economy*. She co-edited a book, titled *Natural Resources and Local Livelihoods in the Great Lakes Region: A Political Economy Perspective* (2011).

Larissa Begley holds her PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Sussex (UK) in 2011. Her thesis is entitled *Resolved to Fight the Ideology of Genocide and all of its Manifestations: The Rwandan Patriotic Front, Violence and Ethnic Marginalisation in Post-Genocide Rwanda and Eastern Congo*. She would like to thank the British Institute in East Africa for their financial support for this research.

Lidewyde H. Berckmoes is a PhD Candidate at the Department for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the VU University Amsterdam (The Netherlands). She received her MA in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, her MA in African Studies from the African Studies Centre, Leiden University, and MA in Advanced Development Studies from the Radboud University Nijmegen. She is interested in the ways people shape their lives and dreams in situations of enduring insecurity. Her research focus is on youth and questions of identity, inclusion and exclusion, previously with Burundian refugees in Tanzania and currently with youth in Burundi.

Yolande Bouka holds a PhD in International Relations from American University (Washington D.C., USA). Her dissertation investigates the reintegration of released prisoners of the Rwandan genocide and analyses their experiences in the transitional justice system. Her research aims to understand how power asymmetry in transitional justice mechanisms

allows the state to control and structure conceptions of criminality, justice, and truth. It also analyses the role of post-conflict justice in national myth-making and individual identity formation. In the course of her research, she spent four months interviewing released prisoners of the Rwandan genocide.

Christina R. Clark-Kazak is Assistant Professor in International Studies and Public and International Affairs at York University's bilingual Glendon College (Toronto, Canada). Christina holds a doctorate in Development Studies from Oxford University. Her research interests include: international development policies, the political participation of migrant children and young people, age mainstreaming, and the intersection of migration and conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on research methods; migration; peace, security and human rights; diplomacy; and international development. For ten years, Christina also worked as a development practitioner and consultant for the Canadian government, international non-governmental organisations and the United Nations. In 2010–2011, she served as President of the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies.

Luca Jourdan is a Lecturer in Political Anthropology at the University of Bologna (Italy). He has worked as a humanitarian aid worker in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Vietnam. From 2001 to 2008 he carried out ethnographic research in North Kivu (Democratic Republic of Congo) on the relationship between youth and war, child soldiers, and the informal economy. A member of the Italian Ethnological Mission in Equatorial Africa, he is currently carrying out research on refugees in Kampala.

Jude Murison is a graduate of the universities of York and Edinburgh, and holds a doctorate in Politics and International Studies from the University of Warwick. Her research focuses on human rights, transitional justice, forced migration, health and agricultural production through looking at the interplay of national policies and laws, and how they are implemented on the ground. Jude is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Policy and Management (IOB) in Belgium, and Ethics Advisor to the European Commission project 'Accessing Medicines in Africa and South Asia'.

Lino Owor Ogora is the Deputy Programme Coordinator, Community Documentation and Transitional Justice Policy Team Leader with the

Justice and Reconciliation Project (Gulu, Uganda). Ogora holds a bachelor's degree in Social Science from Makerere University (Kampala, Uganda) and worked previously for the Norwegian Refugee Council. He holds a post-graduate diploma in Human Resource Management from Uganda Management Institute.

Susan Thomson is Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Colgate University (Hamilton, USA). Her research and teaching interests are in state-society relations in contemporary Africa, lived experiences of conflict and violence, and qualitative research methods, with particular focus on research ethics and doing research in difficult environments. She has published articles in *African Affairs*, *African Studies Review*, *Journal of Modern African Studies* and *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, along with numerous book chapters. Her book *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda* is forthcoming in 2013. Susan received her BA from Saint's Mary University (Canada), her LLB from University College London, and her MA and PhD from Dalhousie University (Canada).

Julie Van Damme is a bio-engineer specialising in agronomy and phytopathology at the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). During her MSc thesis research in Rwanda, she analysed the constraints of the banana-based cropping systems in a systemic way. Julie is currently a doctoral candidate researching innovation processes in the banana-based cropping systems of the Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Burundi, Kivu in DRC) of Africa. For her PhD research, Julie developed a hybrid methodology combining agronomic data and social sciences methods from anthropology and history. She contributed to two projects of action-research in South Kivu for the implementation of *Mutuelles de solidarité* and a pilot-action programme to help the local farmers adapt their techniques to combat a bacterial disease that is destroying their banana plots.

Judith Vorrath is a post-doctoral Fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik-SWP) in Berlin. Previously she was based at the US Institute of Peace in Washington D.C. and the European Union Institute for Security Studies in Paris. Her research focuses on (post-war) democratisation and peace-building, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, and on the role of diaspora groups in peace processes. Judith holds a Doctor of Science from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH). From 2005 to 2010, she pursued her studies as a doctoral student at the Center for Security Studies, Zurich,

and as a member of the NCCR Democracy (National Center of Competence in Research 'Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century'), engaged in a project on democratisation in divided societies. Prior to joining the Center and the NCCR, she worked as a Research and Programme Coordinator at the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF) in Bonn for several years. Judith studied political science at the Universities of Bonn and Edinburgh and holds a MA degree from the University of Bonn.

List of Abbreviations

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
APC	Armée populaire congolaise
CIALCA	Consortium for Improving Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Central Africa
CNDD-FDD	Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie
CNDP	Congrès national pour la défense du peuple
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FNL	Forces nationales de libération
FSRP	Food Security Research Project
GEL	Guichet d'économie locale du Sud-Kivu
GLR	Great Lakes Region
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INERA	L'Institut national pour l'étude et la recherche agronomiques
IRBs	Institutional Review Boards
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government (Rwanda)
MININTER	Ministry of the Interior (Rwanda)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRA	National Resistance Army
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCD-ML	Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie – Mouvement de libération
REB	Research Ethics Board
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RYA	Refugee Youth Association
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
TNT	The New Times
TPS	Tri-Council Policy Statement
UN	United Nations
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Forces
UXO	Unexploded ordnance

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
Chapter 1 Introduction: Why Stories Behind the Findings?	1
<i>Susan Thomson, An Ansoms and Jude Murison</i>	
Chapter 2 From Humanitarian to Anthropologist: Writing at the Margins of Ethnographic Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo	12
<i>Luca Jourdan</i>	
Chapter 3 The Contested Fruits of Research in War-Torn Countries: My Insider Experience in Northern Uganda	27
<i>Lino Owor Ogora</i>	
Chapter 4 Dislodging Power Structures in Rural Rwanda: From ‘Disaster Tourist’ to ‘Transfer Gate’	42
<i>An Ansoms</i>	
Chapter 5 Challenges of Interviewing Political Elites: A View from the Top in Post-War Burundi	57
<i>Judith Vorrath</i>	
Chapter 6 The RPF Control Everything! Fear and Rumour under Rwanda’s Genocide Ideology Legislation	70
<i>Larissa Begley</i>	
Chapter 7 From Scientific Research to Action in Southern Kivu: Ethical Dilemmas and Practical Challenges	84
<i>Julie Van Damme</i>	
Chapter 8 Research as ‘Social Work’ in Kampala? Managing Expectations, Compensation and Relationships in Research with Unassisted, Urban Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo	96
<i>Christina R. Clark-Kazak</i>	

Chapter 9	<i>Nacibazo</i>, 'No Problem': Moving Behind the Official Discourse of Post-Genocide Justice in Rwanda	107
	<i>Yolande Bouka</i>	
Chapter 10	Dealing with Deceit: Fieldwork Encounters and Lies in Burundi	123
	<i>Lidewyde H. Berckmoes</i>	
Chapter 11	Academic Integrity and Ethical Responsibilities in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Working with Research Ethics Boards to Prepare for Fieldwork with 'Human Subjects'	139
	<i>Susan Thomson</i>	
	<i>Bibliography</i>	155
	<i>Index</i>	165

1

Introduction: Why Stories Behind the Findings?

Susan Thomson, An Ansoms and Jude Murison

Academic literature rarely gives an account of the ‘story behind the findings’, meaning the ethical challenges and emotional pitfalls that you, the researcher, are confronted with before, during and after the field experience. These quagmires have a potentially profound impact upon both the research process and its findings. They deserve proper attention, not only to fathom the inevitable bias in researchers’ position in the field and to assess the quality of the research findings, but also to illustrate that the façade of ‘scientific validity and neutrality’ often hides a pragmatic approach that has shaped the empirical research process. As Wilkinson writes, ‘both as social scientists and as human beings, we have a responsibility to “tell it as it happened,” rather than how we would have liked it to be’ (2008, p. 60). Acknowledging this does not degrade the quality and value of empirical data; instead, it places the results of field research into broader socio-political context regardless of the academic discipline that produced the findings.

Our purpose in producing this co-edited volume is to share our knowledge of collecting data. To do so, we gathered together writing that covers a broad spectrum of research themes and individual experiences. The book contains case studies from doctoral research in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), collectively known as the Great Lakes Region (GLR). The themes analysed are not unique – topics such as ethics, anticipating government control and surveillance, working with conflict-impacted communities, managing the expectations of your informants, gaining trust, interpreting lies and disinformation, and building meaningful research relationships are applicable to locales in Africa and elsewhere. Whether you are a new researcher or a seasoned one, the stories in this volume will resonate. If you are organising your first research or study trip, the chapters will elicit ideas and techniques that

you might not have considered adopting in your own research design, and if you find yourself encountering similar challenges in the field, then you can remind yourself that these events are not unique to you, they have been managed and overcome a thousand times over by others in a similar position. This volume will help you anticipate, then mitigate, the emotional and ethical ups-and-downs of field research.

Why our explicit focus on the Great Lakes Region? In the past two decades there has been an explosion of researchers working in the region – undergraduates and graduates in pursuit of degrees, interns and volunteers in pursuit of an ‘African experience’, development and policy practitioners who do field research as part of their everyday work, and study tours sponsored with organisations such as The School for International Training in Rwanda. Our volume represents the combined knowledge of 11 scholars from seven disciplines (agronomy, anthropology, conflict studies, development economics, history, sociology, and political science). All of them have completed their PhDs in the last five years, and all have spent at least three months in the field; others have spent several years researching the region. The average among our authors is 11 months on the ground. Our volume shares the story behind the formal research experience with a broader audience doing similar research, whether in the GLR or elsewhere.

This volume is dedicated to the emotional and intellectual challenges of local-level field research. Certainly in conflict-prone environments like those of Africa’s Great Lakes, the culmination of methodological, ethical and emotional challenges may be intimidating to researchers of any academic discipline or background. This collection fills a crucial gap in the existing methodological literature in providing valuable lessons to scholars and practitioners engaging in research in conflict-affected and highly politicised environments. It demonstrates how doubt and uncertainty are part of the research process by offering others our reflections and providing them with a set of necessary and useful guidelines grounded in our own field experiences. All of the chapters collected here analyse different aspects of lessons gleaned from analysis of the stories behind the findings:

1. Know how and when to roll with it. Sometimes it is not about planning, it is about circumstances, seizing opportunities, and adapting to local realities.
2. It is not difficult to acquire data, but gaining the trust and respect of local actors that result in quality data takes time.
3. Things will be tough. You will face emotional challenges that cannot be planned for and anticipated. Accepting that this is inevitable is one

part of finding a solution to the problem and to turning challenges into opportunities to deepen your analysis.

Rolling with it: Adaptability, flexibility and patience

This first piece of advice is not a cliché about the stereotype that life is slower in Africa, and that somehow as a researcher you should adapt to it. Rather, it is a realisation that the systems and processes do not work the same as back home, and nor should they. Any person who has worked in Africa can produce an anecdote about how they went from office to office in search of an administrative signature or similar. Nigel Barley, in his famous work, *The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut* (1983) estimated that 99 per cent of his time in the field was spent 'on logistics, being ill, being sociable, arranging things, getting from place to place, and above all, waiting' (cited in Devereux and Hoddinott, 1992b, p. xi). The remaining one per cent was spent on conducting his research.

Research is a series of positive and negative emotions – delight, frustration, anxiety, joy, anger, relief, panic and sadness, to name but a few – that will be experienced daily. You will spend more time than expected on nearly every task you have planned (or not planned, as the case may be). The people you rely upon to facilitate your access to your research subjects or field site may be the primary source of your frustration. It can be difficult for a researcher to adjust to any new research setting, particularly in a research setting that is distinctly more impoverished than the norms to which the researcher is accustomed. Devereux and Hoddinott observe this point succinctly when they write, 'The seminars, lectures and conferences, the obligatory number-crunching and report writing, the elaborate theoretical models, the recently published papers, journals and books – all seemed not just meaningless, but positively bizarre, next to the stark realities of life in a Third World community' (1992a, p. 23).

The difference between the research setting and the setting from which the researcher has come is difficult to reconcile. In Chapter 5 of this collection on post-war Burundi, Judith Vorrath shares the strategies she employed as a young researcher with no previous experience working in a conflict-impacted context to navigate her research environment. She suggests that we plan our research carefully, advocating for at least two field trips, one to field test the feasibility of the research design and to familiarise oneself with the research environment, and one to actually gather the core data.

In the research setting we are in a very privileged position. Indeed, for the first time in our lives, we may be in a position of power over

our research subjects because of our race, gender, relative socio-economic advantage and so on. In Chapter 4 of this volume on working in rural Rwanda, An Ansoms reminds us that leaving the field is sometimes more difficult than settling in. She notes that when we leave, we leave behind people who have had an instrumental impact upon our lives, while we leave them in the same social conditions to continue their daily struggles. In a similar way, Christina Clark-Kazak's Chapter 8 in this volume on working with young Congolese refugees resident in Kampala reflects upon the importance of managing research participants' expectations, but with specific suggestions for working in urban areas with vulnerable populations who expect much more than the researcher can possibly provide in return. Clark-Kazak's chapter teaches us that managing the expectations of our research subjects is something that requires more than our empathy. Both chapters consider it critical that researchers think through how to mitigate some of the pitfalls that arise when we are tempted to emotionally engage in the lives of our subjects. They remind us that our primary responsibility is to uphold the ethical imperative of doing no harm, and, if we can, to do some good for the men and women who share so much of themselves with us in our pursuit of academic knowledge.

Throughout the research process our role, position and identity change. As a researcher we are a 'plurality of selves' combining aspects of gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, marital status, age, cultural background, and so on (Mollinga, 2008). Furthermore, people's image of a researcher's identity and agenda may shift throughout the empirical research process. Nilan (2002, p. 368) acknowledges how 'the researcher as human subject is [...] in flux, dealing constantly with shifting realities and contradictions'. The way that we answer the questions that our research subjects have about us, as outsiders, have professional, personal and ethical implications. We must also accept that we will operate within a public and private sphere as we oscillate between 'on-duty' researcher and 'off-duty' human being (Brown, 2009, p. 216). Thinking through all these dilemmas and considering the trade-offs may at times be extremely challenging. As Vorrath notes in Chapter 5 in this volume, different attributes might impact a researcher's work in converse ways. In her case, a certain privileged access to informants and information due to her cultural background was accompanied by difficulties arising from the higher social status of her respondents, as political elites. Ansoms succinctly sums up these trade-offs where she discusses the impact of local communities' interpretation of the identity of the researcher and the utility of the research interpreted. She finds that there is not one way to manage

the expectations of local actors, arguing instead for researchers to commit to long-term engagement with research subjects and sites so that meaningful reciprocal relationships can develop to manage their expectations over time. In the third chapter in this collection, Lino Owor Ogora takes this important insight one step further. He stresses that those of us researching mass atrocity – genocide, crimes against humanity – and other forms of political violence that characterise the Great Lakes Region must find a way to produce balanced policy and academic reports of the crimes committed by all offending parties, not just rebels or government soldiers.

Thinking about when and where to publish one's research is an important consideration for all researchers. In writing up research, senior academics and dissertation committee members advise younger researchers to adhere to standard academic publishing protocols. This usually means adopting methodologies that demonstrate that what we did was planned every step of the way, from design to ethics approval to entering and exiting the field, to the exact location of the field site, to who we conducted interviews with or from whom we collected data. In reality, the research experience is uneven at best, highlighting the need for us to be able to roll with the ups-and-downs of research. Wilkinson sums up this sentiment well: 'I want to start with a confession: my research is the product of circumstance, of serendipity and coincidence, of contingency, of interpretations and being interpreted' (2008, p. 47). All of the chapters in our volume embody this spirit of flexibility and adaptability. Two in particular stand out. First, Luca Jourdan's contribution in Chapter 2 is specifically dedicated to this theme. He writes of the importance of an attitude of 'getting by' in difficult research settings. Jourdan conducted doctoral work in Congo's North Kivu region, an area beset by civil war and resource plunder by various military and government actors. The ability to fly under the radar of authorities, whether legitimate or not, is an important personal attribute when doing research that seeks to understand war and conflict. Ogora's chapter also speaks to 'getting by' as a necessary personal attribute when working with war-impacted individuals, but with an important distinction: Ogora is from the region of northern Uganda that he researches, making 'getting by' more difficult, if not impossible. Although he was the lead researcher, Ogora reminds us to appreciate that our local research partners (research assistants, translators, partner organisations, etc) are also subject to a variety of challenges in the research process that we need to allow for in our own planning.