

Crossing the Divide: Research Methods to Facilitate Representative Data Collection within Conflicted Communities

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Abstract

In order that development strategies alleviate poverty and empower communities, strategies must be initiated and supported by a broad spectrum of the intended beneficiary community. Communities are rarely homogenous, however, meaning that development researchers/practitioners often have to negotiate and interact with opposing community factions with differing development interests. By associating with one faction, the researcher/practitioner may become alienated from the other, who then fails to participate in the process. Despite this, literature to guide the researcher/practitioner on how to negotiate access in such situations is lacking. In this paper I draw on my experiences of working with the divided ‡Khomani Bushman community in South Africa, some of whom desire development along more Traditional lines while others have Western style aspirations. I examine my research practices that enabled me to ethically cross the divide to collect the necessary data from individuals within both community factions, making my data representative of the broader community.

Keywords

‡Khomani Bushman, conflicted communities, divided communities, community factions, research methods

Introduction: The need to cross the divide

By the 1990s, it had been noted that where development professionals failed to engage with the needs of intended beneficiary populations, development strategies and projects were often perceived as irrelevant by communities, who then failed to invest time or energy in the development initiatives, meaning that such strategies were often unsuccessful. For development research and practice to be meaningful, it must be people-centered, with development researchers and professionals involving the intended beneficiary population in the conception, planning and implementation of strategies to ensure that initiatives reflect the desires and aspirations of beneficiaries. Without this, beneficiaries will not be committed to the success of such projects (Crewe and Harrison, 1998). Furthermore, unless development

professionals and researchers engage with the broader local population to ensure that development strategies are supported by as many of the population as possible, development initiatives will only appeal to and benefit certain people or groups within the community, namely those who were included in the initial stages of the development process. To facilitate this, Chambers (1983) has identified a number of biases¹ that if overcome can enable professionals and researchers to access a diverse range of participants.

Such recommendations need to recognise and address issues of how researchers access and proceed within communities that are divided in relation to development desires as communities are rarely homogeneous (see James, 2000; Erasmus, 2003). Applying development strategies within communities that exhibit differing value sets, resulting in the formation of community factions, can be difficult, with each faction favouring contrasting development initiatives. When value set differences are extreme and concessions cannot be negotiated, the complete breakdown of the development process has been documented (see James, 2000; Erasmus, 2003). Development researchers/practitioners must include individuals from all sections of the community to ensure that one faction does not benefit more than another, or at the expense of another, something that can increase antagonism within the said community. By being seen to be working with one community faction, however, the researcher or development professional may preclude oneself from working with the other faction (Kluckhohn, 1940). Despite the fact that the mishandling of such situations can result in detrimental development outcomes, and although the difficulties of negotiating research in divided communities has been recognised, with Hermann (2001) suggesting that at times it is impossible for the same researcher to conduct work with two conflicting sides, little has been written to guide development researchers and practitioners on how to best manage competing or conflicting dynamics within divided communities. Individual researchers must independently negotiate these dynamics to facilitate appropriate collaboration from all relevant individuals to enable successful data collection, meaningful research and productive development outcomes. Given this, I use my experience of conducting development research within a divided rural Bushman community, to document some initial practices to guide researchers who conduct research in similar circumstances (see, e.g, Tomaselli et al 2005).

In 2006, I made my first visit to the †Khomani Bushman² community, situated in the far north of South Africa in the southern Kalahari desert. While the majority of media, and many research personnel, have sought to highlight and/or examine the *traditionality*³ (identity

politics) of the †Khomani (see Schenck, 2008; Francis and Francis, 2010), or have focused on aspects of cultural tourism (see Tomaselli, 2012), my work aims to situate the †Khomani in the context of the rural poor, and as land reform beneficiaries, exploring whether a successful land claim has resulted in development and poverty alleviation. My research also seeks to better understand and document the perceptions, desires and expectations of the community regarding the land claim, poverty and development and the extent to which these differ between *Traditionalists* and *Westerners*⁴, noting the extent to which development agencies, such as NGO's, influence such perceptions and/or group differences. While the majority of personnel whose work focuses on †Khomani *traditionality* or tourism work with the more *traditional* †Khomani, my research dictates that I work with, and gain insights from, a wide cross section of the community, including both the *Traditionalist* and the more modern *Westerner* †Khomani despite the existing tensions. I also engage with development agencies working with the †Khomani, all of which has to be done without alienating any particular community individual, faction and/or agency. This could have resulted in a particular faction withdrawing from the research process.

The paper initially sets out to describe the †Khomani community and how they have been constructed. This enables the reader to better understand the deep rooted nature of the existing divide, along with the tensions and distrust that have arisen. Such issues have served to prohibit the community from reconciling to enable development, and can impact the ability of development researchers when conducting research. Although the issues and practices that are highlighted may seem obvious to the reader, the researcher must be aware of such issues *before* entering the field or else data collection may be compromised. This paper therefore aims to begin to form a practical guide for researchers working within divided communities, something to be consulted to raise awareness of particular issues before entry into the field and something that should be heeded consistently during fieldwork. Essentially, it highlights the need for researchers to be prepared before entering the field, to be aware of existing divisions and to *always* be conscious of *where* they are and *who* they are with, least they signal allegiance to a particular faction. By appropriately building and mobilising trust, reciprocity and transparency, research participation from various community factions can be encouraged and nurtured.

The †Khomani divide

Prior to my initial arrival in the †Khomani community, I was aware of existing community divisions and that my data would have to represent people on both sides of the divide, the

Traditionalists and *Westerners*, whom it could be expected would exhibit differing desires and values. What constitutes success in terms of poverty alleviation, development and land reform, for one faction of the community, may not constitute the same for the other. Being aware of the community divisions prior to my arrival was extremely important, as it allowed me to make informed decisions regarding my situation and actions, given the potential consequences. Unless researchers and professionals are aware of such divisions, they can unintentionally become aligned to a particular community faction, resulting in the alienation of the opposed faction and the withdrawal of the said faction from the research or development project. I also did not want to increase antagonism between community factions, which may affect the ability of the community to reconcile. It was important that both factions partook and were represented in my research if my study was to contribute to resolving the problems surrounding the amicable development of the †Khomani land and the alleviation of poverty within the community.

The †Khomani Community

The †Khomani community is a relatively new construction. The cause of the existing divisions within the community are best understood through recounting the manner in which the community was comprised. In 1994, when apartheid ended, a number of Bushmen were living in poverty in the rural areas of the Northern and Western Cape. Historically the ancestors of these Bushmen, and indeed some of these Bushmen, had been expelled from their ancestral lands in the Northern Cape, and as such, the Bushmen were eligible to lodge a land claim with the new democratic South African government through the land reform policy. Consequently, in 1995, a group of Bushmen, namely the extended Kruiper family, instituted a claim for land through the Land Restitution Act of 1994.

Initially, the original land claimants, the extended Kruiper family, comprised 50 to 70 adults (Hathorn and Pienaar, 2008), and were of a *traditional* mould, desiring to rejuvenate their Bushman culture while living somewhat *traditionally* on their land. Prior to the land settlement, however, the government recommended that the original claimants expand the claimant group to include other people from the Northern Cape who could demonstrate Bushman heritage (Hathorn and Pienaar, 2008), to which they agreed. The land claimants then adopted the collective name †Khomani, and a Communal Property Association (CPA)⁵ numbering 297 people was established, comprising the original claimants and the additional claimants, a constitution was drawn up and a Communal Property Association Management Committee

(CPAMC) to manage the †Khomani lands was elected from, and by CPA members. In 1999, the rights to six farms (37 000 hectares) in the far Northern Cape were awarded to the †Khomani. It was stipulated that three of these farms were to be used for *traditional* purposes only, in other words, no development in the form of a township was to be undertaken, while domestic livestock farming was forbidden. At this time the South African government indicated that the †Khomani were to be granted land in the nearby Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP). This was realised in 2002 (Chennells, 2006). By this time, additional people claiming to be Bushmen or of Bushmen descent had been enabled to join the CPA. The CPA now numbered approximately 450 individuals (Hathorn and Pienaar, 2008). Many of these new claimants, a number of whom were domestic livestock farmers, lacked the *traditional* desires of the original claimants. As a result, the more *traditionally* minded claimants, the majority of whom are the original claimants, the extended Kruiper family, who live on one particular farm within close proximity to each other, became known as the *Traditionalists*, while the claimants with a more modern agenda, mainly the farmers, were called the *Westerners*.

Although the terms *Traditionalist* and *Westerner* enable a tidy discussion and are popular among researchers, authors and filmmakers etc, they are not as self-explanatory as they seem. Few community members hold only traditional *or* western desires, as the terms imply. *Traditionalists* share particular desires with *Westerners*, such as the desire for sanitation and electricity, and vice versa (Grant 2011). Due to this there are a number of similarities between individuals from each group. However, there are also significant differences. The *Traditionalists* are separated from the *Westerners* not by their desires but by their practices. For example, the *Westerners* do not exhibit the same mind-set in respect to ownership and sharing. Among the *Traditionalists'* households, items (including clothes and money) are shared and borrowed to an extreme degree as with other Bushman groups (see Sylvain, 2005). Items are often borrowed or shared without permission and may not ever be returned. Such is rarely regarded as theft and in some instances there may a reciprocal borrowing or giving at a later date. The two groups also differ in the manner in which they acquire their *traditional* knowledge. *Traditionalists* acquire this knowledge through interactions with family members while the *Westerners* who aspire to learn the *traditions*, and not all do, do so through partaking of the various courses offered by NGOs. It is notable that some *Western* individuals sell themselves as either *Westerners* or *Traditionalists*, depending on which is most beneficial to them at a particular point in time.

Many of the *Westerners* are also better educated and capacitated than the *Traditionalists* and are therefore in a position to dominate the CPAMC and the development proceedings (Grant, 2011). As a result, in 2002, the constitution was changed. Now only two farms rather than three were to be reserved for *traditional* purposes. At this point, the *Traditionalists* (including the original claimants) and their lawyers were becoming concerned that the *Traditionalists* were losing control of the land. That same year, the land was placed under the administration of the Director General of the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), due to mismanagement of monies (Chennells, 2006). In 2004, the original claimants attempted to break away, presenting the *Welkom Declaration*, which requested that the original three traditional farms be removed from the CPAMC and given to them to manage *traditionally* as originally intended (South African Human Rights Commission, 2004). This was never actioned. By 2008, the *Westerners* were threatening to change the constitution again, declaring that there need only be one *traditional* farm (Grant, 2011).

Many *Westerners* did not value the use of land as *traditional*. This is despite the fact that the original claimants, who advocate for such land use practices, had facilitated the ownership of, and access to, land for the *Westerners* by first instigating the land claim and then by inviting new claimants, namely the *Westerners*, to join the CPA. This can be viewed as another example of the *Traditionalists*' mind-set in regard to ownership and sharing as referred to above. Over time, the list of people in the CPA continued to grow, reaching approximately 800 (Hathorn and Pienaar, 2008). While some individuals could certainly demonstrate Bushman heritage, it seems that many used illicit means to enable membership of the CPA and access to land (Ellis, 2004), allegedly swapping CPA membership for CPAMC votes. Currently, there is still dispute over who should and should not be on the CPA. Lawyers and government continue to investigate the situation. While many of the original claimants and the newer claimants have taken up residence on the six farms (Chennells, 2006), individuals not on the CPA have also moved onto the land, despite the constitution forbidding such action without prior consent of the CPA. Consequently, competition over land access has risen, as less land per person is available, while the number of individuals grazing domestic livestock on the land is a concern given that the area is semi-arid in nature and has a low livestock carrying capacity. The *Traditionalists* have been aggrieved by the use of the *traditional* lands by *Westerner* farmers to graze livestock, with some farmers grazing approximately 1000 sheep. Such farmers were in turn angry when they were removed from one of the *traditional* farms in 2010 to make way for game, arguing that the action was unjust as they had not been involved in the negotiations

in this regard⁶. The use of this farm for *traditional* purposes, however, had been determined back in 1999, when the land had been awarded to the original claimants.

Westerners worry that the *Traditionalists* are favoured by lawyers and advisors, while the *Traditionalists* perceive that *Westerners* dominate the development process to the detriment of *tradition*. Additionally, issues surrounding who are the legitimate land owners are of concern, particularly to the original claimants. In order to include both factions in my study, I had to visibly *cross the divide* and work with both community factions, without alienating the other side. Not only did I have to find a way to continually and repeatedly cross this divide, back and forth, but as I had to collect data from local development organisations, which can be perceived as being aligned to certain community factions, meaning that I had to constantly negotiate my way between community individuals, community factions and development agencies.

Before I detail the specific practices that I employed to *cross the divide*, it is important to consider the fieldwork process and my data collection methods that lead to the forthcoming insights. I initially visited the †Khomani community in 2006, embarking on a research process that continues to the present day. Between 2007 and 2008, I lived alongside the community. From 2008 until 2014 I visited the community for shorter periods of three days to a month, making approximately one to four visits a year. When I was away from the community I maintained contact with a number of †Khomani individuals through telephone calls, email and the mail service, usually being in contact every two weeks. Since 2014, I have been employed as an NGO worker, working daily with the community. My data collection methods are varied, depending on what particular research I undertake, but much of my data has been collected using ethnographic methods. I use participant observation, informal unstructured and semi-structured interviews, supplemented with more formal semi structured interviews at times. I have used questionnaires on occasion along with employing more alternative participatory research methods such as body mapping and the use of grassroots comic workshops. During such times I continue to employ participant observation. This paper is therefore comprised of, and informed by, information gathered using a variety of data collection methods and fieldwork experiences incurred over a number of years.

Crossing the divide

Although I was aware of the existing community divisions, on my entry into the †Khomani community I was unsure how I would negotiate working with the two community factions, the

Westerners and the *Traditionalists*. There was little appropriate literature to guide me. Consequently, I applied general ethical and research guidelines to enable my research practice (see Scheyvens, Nowak and Scheyvens, 2003). Given my knowledge of the †Khomani, their past interactions with researchers, development workers, government and authorities, I paid particular attention to issues of researcher independence and associations, reciprocity, trust and transparency. This facilitated my research and enabled me to cross the †Khomani faction divide to collect the representative data that I required for my research.

When working within conflicted communities it is important for researchers to stress their independence (Knox, 2001). Although I was an independent researcher I was aware that I needed to actively and *strategically deploy* this aspect of my identity (see Massei and O'Brien, 2009). During my time with the †Khomani I was visible and vocal about my independent status, imparting verbally to the community that I was not affiliated to the government or any government departments, any NGOs, research projects, community individuals or community factions. I was also seen to associate with people from as many departments, agencies and factions as possible, while alerting the community to the fact that I was there to learn from both community factions about the land claim and how the community wanted to develop their land. To maintain independence, however, the researcher must be aware of who they associate with and what these associations might signify to community members. If a researcher forms a close association with a specific individual, community faction, development agency or government body, other community members and/or invested parties may perceive that the researcher is aligned to a particular community faction. As a result, community members with contrasting philosophies and/or faction alignments may curtail their involvement in the research process, meaning that data will be less representative of the overall community.

I initially demonstrated my independence through my choice of accommodation. Prior to my arrival in the community I had been advised not to stay with the †Khomani community for security and safety reasons. I was also aware that where, and with whom, I chose to stay, or associate, could be perceived as an allegiance signification and could therefore have an impact on the research process (see Leslie and Storey, 2003). Had I stayed in the community, depending on which farm I stayed, or whose house I lived in, I could have been perceived as being associated with or aligned to a particular community faction. I could not afford to reside in the majority of the local guest houses which were mostly owned by the local White population, and I was unsure of the relationship between them and †Khomani. I did not know

if there was any animosity, given the history of colonisation and apartheid. I perceived that my best option was to stay in a guest house on a nature reserve owned by a professor of biology and zoology, originally from the UK but resident in South Africa for many years, also an independent individual of sorts. This decision was fortuitous, as the owner is on amicable terms with most locals, although not over-friendly. Her knowledge of the environment and wildlife, coupled with her friendship with the late †Khomani Master Tracker Vetpiet Kleinman, means that she is respected within the †Khomani community, while her status as a guest house owner and tourist destination, links her to local whites. Staying on this nature reserve meant that I did not become associated with community factions or communities: †Khomani, White or Coloured⁷, as would have been the case had I lived elsewhere. Living at the nature reserve, reinforced and maintained my identity as an independent researcher and contributed to my ability to associate with individuals from all communities and both factions of the †Khomani community.

I also had to assert and maintain my independence in relation to development organisations, such as NGOs. Development organisations often implement particular projects that are attractive to certain community groups or factions (see Crewe and Harrison, 1998). While all development bodies working with the community welcome the participation of all †Khomani, as these organisations advocate particular development philosophies and strategies, *Westerners* and *Traditionalists* are attracted to the specific organisations that provide the most appropriate development strategies in relation to individuals' requirements and philosophies. It is therefore important that researchers are aware of the linkages between development agencies and community individuals and/or factions. Although many agencies have been involved with the †Khomani community since the restitution of the farms, given the limitations of space, only two examples of such organisations have been included in the discussion below. These highlight how linkages are formed and maintained.

The South African San Institute (SASI) was established in 1996. Given the historical inferiorisation of the Bushmen (see Grant, 2011), SASI advocates projects that revive and promote cultural identity and heritage to build cultural confidence and facilitate empowerment (Kuru Family of Organisations, 2004). By building cultural confidence, issues of low self-worth and individual confidence, evident within the †Khomani community, will be addressed (Crawhall, 2001). SASI also promotes the sustained economic and social development of the †Khomani to improve their quality of life, though, not at the expense of cultural identity and

heritage (Kuru Family of Organisations, 2004). SASI therefore established a number of development projects drawing upon Bushmen history and culture. The NGO integrates cultural knowledge, such as traditional plant and animal tracking knowledge into a †Khomani tracking and guiding project, while craft projects take inspiration from traditional Bushmen crafts-making techniques. Overall, these income generating projects aim to promote cultural confidence and pride, enabling income generation. As SASI promote, cultivate and protect the more *traditional* aspects of Bushmen culture, they have similar philosophies in relation to development and capacity building as the more *Traditional* members of the †Khomani community. Consequently, these *Traditionalists* are most attracted to participate and support SASI, meaning that researchers working closely with SASI may be perceived as being sympathetic to the *Traditionalist* faction.

FARM-Africa was active within the †Khomani community between 1999 and 2004. This NGO specialises in working with small-scale farmers, farm dwellers and land reform beneficiaries to alleviate poverty. Prior to the implementation of the project, FARM-Africa worked with the †Khomani to determine the needs of the community and the appropriate methods to meet these needs. Following this, the NGO enabled the †Khomani to establish a livestock bank aimed at increasing livestock ownership to enable long-term secure income generation. Participants also agreed to a programme for capacity building that focused on financial and resource management, and constitution interpretation (Festus and Joseph, 2007). As opportunities offered by FARM-Africa were focused around livestock and financial management along with business practice they appealed more to the farmers and community members with higher levels of literacy and education⁸, namely the *Westerner* †Khomani. As a result associations between researchers and FARM-Africa, or individuals working on the FARM-Africa project could be perceived as an alignment between the said researcher and the *Westerner* faction.

By detailing how development agencies and community factions are linked I demonstrate that although development agencies may promote an *open door* policy regarding participation, such agencies often attract particular people, or community factions, due to their adoption of specific development philosophies and subsequent projects. Consequently, an association between an organisation and a researcher may signify to the community that the researcher has an interest or association with a particular community faction. It is therefore important, on entry to the field that the researcher is aware of the development philosophies of particular development agencies before an association is formed, or is perceived to exist by community members.

In much the same manner, working with research assistants/translators from the local community can also signify a particular allegiance to community factions. While in the field I did work, and still do work with a number of local translators/research assistants. Where a community is divided, however, the hiring of local assistants/translators can reduce the researcher's independent status if the translator/assistant is perceived as being aligned to a particular community faction by other community members (also see Ellen, 1984). Potential participants may withdraw from the research process if they deem the translator/assistant to be from an opposing faction and therefore be unwilling to disclose information in their presence. Initially the NGO SASI suggested that I could use a member of their staff as a translator. I was unsure if such an arrangement would align me too closely to the NGO, and perhaps the *Traditionalists*, which could alienate the *Westerners*. When none of the SASI employees were responsive to this idea of translating, I was able to hire other locals as translators. The individuals whom I employ as translators and assistants, however, also have allegiances and are associated with factions within the community or development agencies. This is something that becomes easier to discern the longer that one is in the field. As I am now aware of community associations and individuals' relationships, I choose certain translators for particular interviews. I would not take a translator from an opposing faction to an interview, as this might inhibit the research process. Normally I endeavour to employ a translator with a similar value set to the respondent to facilitate the research process, in as much as this is possible.

Although this promotion of myself as an independent researcher enabled me to gain initial access to the †Khomani, I also had to sell my research as something of value to individuals to encourage participation as it has been noted that indigenous peoples that have been exposed to many kinds of research, as have the †Khomani, are unlikely to contribute to research unless the research is potentially beneficial and relevant to their needs (Gratton and O'Donnell, 2011). Typically, researchers gain from the research process at the expense of local communities who often stand to benefit little, if anything. As I aimed to work with the two distinct sides in the †Khomani community, I had to be able to demonstrate to individuals from both factions that there was a reciprocal benefit to them being involved in my research. I did this through highlighting the relevance of the research and how it was potentially useful to them, and the faction with which they identified. A number of researchers and development professionals have worked with the †Khomani, and according to the †Khomani many such individuals have

made promises of reciprocity that never materialised. I was clear that although my research focused on development I could not promise any particular structural changes following my research, or that my research *per se* would make any material difference to their lives as I did not work for or with any organisations involved with funding or implementing development projects. While I hoped that my research would improve their situation, I could not guarantee such an outcome. I conveyed to the †Khomani that I aimed to collect information regarding the living conditions of the community and that I would record †Khomani opinions, aspirations and desires regarding the land claim, poverty alleviation and development. From this, I would prepare a document that I would submit as my PhD thesis, and I would send copies of the document to development agencies, technical advisors, government departments and community members. Through this documentation and dissemination, I argued that when institutions, agencies and government were asked why the land reform development process had failed to progress, they would be unable to say that they were unaware of the poverty in which the †Khomani were living, or that the community did not know what they desired, answers that have previously been given (see Grant, 2011). I informed the †Khomani that the document would advocate for people centred community development that would reflect the desires of the community. In other words that the development desires that I was going to report would not be what I perceived that the community required but what †Khomani individuals from both factions reported that they desired. The document could be used as a guide by government and development organisations to implement people centred development projects within the †Khomani community which would therefore be supported by the community and stand a better chance of success. Overall, I demonstrated to individuals from both community factions that I would reciprocate, or that they would benefit through partaking in the research process as I would return copies of my thesis to the community and appropriate individuals and organisations, meaning that research could then be used by the appropriate bodies to benefit the community. While the †Khomani community is divided in the nature of its desires, due to the differing values between the *Traditionalists* and *Westerners*, all community members and development agencies want the development process to move on. Consequently, the promise of my research document was one that could potentially benefit all sides.

Despite the promises I was making in regard to returning documents to the community, upon entering a community, outsiders typically have no-one to vouch for their trustworthiness, meaning that outsider researchers are mistrusted by community members (Smyth and Darby, 2001). When I arrived in the †Khomani community, initially as an outsider, I knew no-one and

therefore I had nobody to vouch for my trustworthiness. It also became clear that there was a history of researchers and involved parties making promises to the †Khomani that failed to materialise. This had resulted in mistrust between the †Khomani and researchers generally. If I wanted community members to partake in my research I had to be able to convince them that I would return the research document as promised; I had to demonstrate that I was trustworthy. I worked hard to build relationships of trust with the †Khomani and their associates, and over the course of my research I did gain the trust of many community members, something that I continue to nurture and maintain to the present day. Rather than attempting to build relationships of trust collectively with groups or factions within the community, I engaged with †Khomani people on a personal level. When working in a divided community the importance of individual trust cannot be underestimated. In my experience if there is an individual relationship of trust between the said individual and the researcher, the individual is more likely to take part in the research process, irrespective of community divisions or which faction the individual identifies with. Many of my relationships of trust were built through reciprocity. For example, when interviewing people I often asked for permission to take their photo, indicating that I would return in the future with a copy for them. Receiving a copy of a photo can mean a lot to people who are normally unable to obtain such objects, especially when it is of children growing up, or an older person. I was, and I am mindful that when making offers of reciprocity I have to fulfil such promises to develop and maintain trust. I am also in the habit of giving community members lifts if needed, in particular to the medical clinic 15 km away. Early in my research, one woman was reluctant to come to the clinic with me as she was concerned that I would not wait for her to bring her home, and that she would be stranded. She did not yet trust me and I did not have a local reputation of trust to call on at that point. Following assurances, I took her to the clinic and waited for her. She was hugely relieved when she found me waiting to take her home after her treatment. Small actions such as these, over a period of time, have allowed me to become known and trusted to †Khomani individuals on a personal level. This has contributed to my reputation as being trustworthy, a reputation that has travelled within the community. This trust and my reputation, although built outside the formal research process have carried over into my formal research. As †Khomani individuals trust me on a personal level, they partake in my research and trust me on a professional level.

Being transparent was also an important practice of my fieldwork, the necessity of which has been documented by Knox (2001). Accordingly, when I meet with †Khomani community members and development agencies, I am always clear that my studies involve research with

people and agencies, irrespective of their allegiances or perceived allegiances. To have been covert regarding my intentions to work with people from opposing community factions and/or development bodies and government, and then to have been discovered doing such, would have had serious implications for my relationship with the participants and the study overall. Once it is perceived that researchers are untrustworthy in one context, then they are perceived as untrustworthy in all contexts. While in the †Khomani community I purposefully made a point of allowing myself to be seen talking with community members and agency representatives in view of people from opposing sides or alternative agencies and government representatives. When I attended meetings, I would talk to people from each faction of the community and representatives from all the development agencies that were present. If members from the local white or coloured community were there I would also converse with them in addition to the local police staff and government officials, to let it be known I did not discriminate.

By being transparent in my interactions I found that I encouraged community members to talk to me. On a number of occasions, people expressed to me that they were available for interview. When I approached one lady, Magdalena Lucas, for an interview she stated that “I’m glad to be included in the research as I was concerned that while I can see other peoples’ views being recorded, mine are not”⁹. Consequently, following my visible interaction with individuals and people clearly aligned to particular community factions, or with a particular development agency’s personnel, individuals from other factions were often provoked into partaking in my research from fear that their alternative opinion would not be recognised and/or considered. Openness and transparency, therefore, can not only enable the research processes but encourage individuals to become involved, as can the promotion of the researcher’s independent status, the reciprocity, relevance and potential research application of the research, in addition to the nurturing of relationships of trust.

Conclusion: after the crossing

This paper is essentially aimed at researchers and practitioners whose work requires that they work within divided communities interacting with various factions. My insights are intended to contribute to the practical side of fieldwork rather than the theoretical and while the considerations within the paper may seem *obvious* in hindsight, when initially entering a field site, researchers are often unaware of, or do not actively engage the aforementioned practices. Although the practices I highlight here may apply to research within a more homogenous community, or when a researcher only engages one faction of a community, researchers

working with multiple factions within one community need to pay particular attention to such recommendations. When communities are not divided, or when a researcher is only working with one faction within a community, the strategic employment of an independent identity, or the researchers awareness of associations are of less importance as the alienation of potential participants from another faction is negligible. I have also suggested that in order to encourage participation, researchers use reciprocity, citing the relevance and potential usefulness of the study to the participants. When working with a community in conflict, to attract participation from the differing factions you have to make your research beneficial and relevant to people with opposing value sets. If the potential outcome of the research is perceived by one faction to be more beneficial to the other, they may withdraw their support. When working in a homogenous community the research potential need only be relevant to one value set, something which is an easier task.

Unlike when researchers work in a homogenous or united community, transparency needs to be more of an active practice when working in a divided community. In a united community it is sufficient to be transparent, which may go unseen, but when the researcher works in a divided community, the researcher must advertise their transparency lest they are accused of failing to be transparent by the opposing faction and the researcher accused of not disclosing the fact that they were working with both factions. Such can result in a lack of trust and discourages research participation. Visible and audible transparency can also attract research participation from alternative factions as already noted. Transparency should not to be confused with lack of confidentiality, however. Although a participant is willing to be seen to, or admit to others that they partake in your research they may still require confidentiality regarding what they disclose to the researcher. This brings us again to the importance of trust. I have already mentioned how a perceived lack of transparency can result in mistrust. Researcher/participant relationships of trust are essential in any research process. Within divided communities participants may find it difficult to work with a researcher who is also working with an opposing faction as they do not trust the researcher's motives, even when the researcher is trustworthy. If a researcher proves to be untrustworthy the results can be detrimental for a particular faction within a community. Consequently individuals within divided communities may err on the side of caution compared to participants from united communities. When trust is built successfully, individuals from opposing community factions will be comfortable taking part in the research, will accept offers of reciprocity and believe that the proposed usefulness of research is genuine. An independent identity and transparent association also facilitate relationships of trust.

Although all communities are individual, and divided communities experience their own specific problems, by adhering to the insights offered in this paper researchers will become aware of how their initial actions in the field, and how they are construed, can affect the research process. It is easy to become complacent while on fieldwork, relaxing, especially during long-term fieldwork, meaning that you become less aware of the aforementioned practices. As a result, even if one were initially able to work with all community factions, this can change through lack of conscientiousness, leading to faction alienation. Researchers working in divided communities should consistently and continually recall the insights in this paper to facilitate data collection that is representative of all factions within a community.

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¹ Such biases include: dry season bias; spatial bias; person bias; project bias, user and/or adopter bias; diplomatic bias; active, present and/or living bias; and security bias (for further details see Chambers, 1983).

² Historically the terms, *San* and *Bushmen*, had negative connotations (Gordon and Douglas, 2000). Although currently San is deemed more politically correct by government and academics, I use the title Bushmen as this is the term preferred by the †Khomani.

³ I have italicised a number of words within this paper in recognition of the ambiguity or contested interpretations of such terms.

⁴ The definition and differences between the *Traditionalists* and *Westerners* is explained in the next section of the paper. The distinction is also further interrogated by Simoes (2001).

⁵ To own land communally in South Africa, CPAs or trusts, must be formed. A CPA is a land owing entity comprised of the individual registered land owners.

⁶ Anonymous (†Khomani domestic livestock farmer), in discussion with the author, translated from the Afrikaans by Dion Noubitsen, September 2012.

⁷ Within South Africa, following successive governments' policies, there are clear distinctions between *race* groups in terms of where and how people live, who they associate with, and wealth levels. In regard to the research site, the †Khomani community, in particular the *Traditionalists*, tend to live in the most impoverished conditions, followed by the Coloured communities, with the White community being the most wealthy (see Grant, 2011 for further detail).

⁸ In 2004 it was reported that on average all †Khomani individuals over 40 years old were functionally illiterate (Bradstock, 2004). Education levels are particularly problematic among the more *Traditional* individuals, some of which place less value on western education, while others lacked the opportunity to attend school when growing up. It can be argued that western education is Eurocentric and obsolete in regard to indigenous peoples. Currently, however, the †Khomani are in receipt of money from funders that requires spending accountability and therefore the maintenance of financial records. Additionally, many community members are unable to read documents regarding the land claim agreement, or more general correspondence from the municipality regarding the supply of basic services etc. Increased literacy would be beneficial.

⁹ Magdalena Lucas (†Khomani woman), interview with the author, translated from the Afrikaans by Dion Noubitsen, Miersouppan Farm, 26 September 2012.