

Laidlaw Summer I Reflection

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To be completely candid, conducting this research has been one of the most scary, stressful, time-consuming, nerve-wracking, anxiety-inducing experiences I have ever endeavoured to complete. There is something quite unique about conducting interviews with a group of people you have only learned of through literature reviews. When I think back to the beginning of my data collection, I see a girl who is just in awe of all the insights of people I only know to be strangers. Over the course of a couple hours of discussion, I learned that interviews may seem cold and one-sided when you get results thrown in front of you in a table in a peer-reviewed journal, but there is so much more to it. I have such an appreciation now for what it takes to be a qualitative researcher. When I spoke with Filipino sachet-consumers and sari-sari store owners, I not only learned about them, but they learned about me. Amongst prompts I had spent months preparing, we shared anecdotes of the snacks we both enjoyed and family rituals and life in the Philippines. Nevertheless, though my conversations were a wonderful mix of storytelling and questions and answers, I struggled with my feelings as a researcher.

When I was still at the early stages of conducting interviews, I wrote this in my research journal, "...this is hard. Conducting your own study is turning out to be a lot because you spend all this time preparing for it and hoping it will go one way and hoping that you will find all the results you need to make the change you want and achieve your goal and you hope everything will be perfect but I guess it's just not like that. I think especially because this is my first study, it has a special place in my heart and I don't want to lose sight of the wonderful conversations I've been having, it's just hard." Looking back, I really did have to harvest a very particular set of skills in myself because I knew that completing this research would be difficult, but I also knew I was going to get it done, no matter what. After such amazing conversations, I had become

invested in using my findings to support sachet-consumers and sari-sari store owners in any way I could, to make the changes they wanted to make. For me, successfully leading this study was about doing exactly this.

I got to work, inadvertently honing in on my resilience. I had to keep reminding myself of the end goal in order to persevere even when my results were not what I was anticipating, and things seemed to be going wrong and everything seemed doomed to crash and burn. I made sure to be as empathetic as possible to any and all of my study's participants' musings, as well as to myself. I had to learn to pace myself, something I had never really practiced in all my years of schooling. Being a part of this new environment forced and encouraged me to create a kinder inner monologue, in times I felt I was not succeeding.

I am also grateful to have connected with a country I was born in but was never able to completely experience. Sharing with the people I interviewed about my life as a Filipino-Canadian and them sharing their experiences living in the Philippines struck a certain place within me I did not know existed. Feeling this way helped me extrapolate from my life to better understand the context of participants' experiences with the sachet economy. I learned to be analytical of the data I collected, while understanding the fact that I was speaking with real people with real hopes and desires and stories, just like myself. From this, I am grateful to have learned how to be a more empathetic leader of this study, without judgments or reservations.

These past few months, I have laughed and cried and felt hopeless and felt excited and I cannot wait to see what the future holds. Within me, I have found an eagerness and curiosity for research and I thank my study's participants for being vital to this journey. Although I may have been discouraged many times by my own mind, I have strengthened my will, remembering that ultimately there is always a goal to be reached. Conducting this research has been one of the

most scary, stressful, time-consuming, nerve-wracking, anxiety-inducing experiences I have ever endeavoured to complete, and I am so incredibly grateful.