



Book Review: *Collaborative Cross-Cultural Research Methodologies in Early Care and Education Contexts* edited by Samara Madrid Akpovo, Mary Jane Moran, and Robyn Brookshire

Author(s): Amy Jo Dowd

Source: *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (June 2021), pp. 196-198

Published by: Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

Stable URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2451/62231>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33682/1kxn-8s2a>

## REFERENCES:

This is an open-source publication. Distribution is free of charge. All credit must be given to authors as follows:

Dowd, Amy Jo. 2021. "Book Review: *Collaborative Cross-Cultural Research Methodologies in Early Care and Education Contexts* edited by Samara Madrid Akpovo, Mary Jane Moran, and Robyn Brookshire." *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 7 (1): 196-198. <https://doi.org/10.33682/1kxn-8s2a>.

---

The *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)* publishes groundbreaking and outstanding scholarly and practitioner work on education in emergencies (EiE), defined broadly as quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocation, higher and adult education.

Copyright © 2021, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies.



The *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, published by the [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#), is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#), except where otherwise noted.

## BOOK REVIEW

***COLLABORATIVE CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES  
IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CONTEXTS***

**EDITED BY SAMARA MADRID AKPOVO,  
MARY JANE MORAN, AND ROBYN BROOKSHIRE**

**ROUTLEDGE, 2018. XXV + 216 PAGES**

**\$51.95 (PAPERBACK), \$46.76 (E-BOOK)**

**ISBN 978-1-315-46077-2**

*Collaborative Cross-Cultural Research Methodologies in Early Care and Education Contexts*, edited by Samara Madrid Akpovo, Mary Jane Moran, and Robyn Brookshire, offers an array of reflections on how each of the contributors' cross-cultural early childhood research collaborations played out, and what each author learned from the approach they chose to crossing borders, languages, capabilities, and mindsets. This volume of case studies offers rare insights into how the studies we routinely read in journals are carried out and the many processes, principles, and pitfalls involved when crossing cultures. While part one considers research as a situated activity in which context is king, part two takes up the complexities of positionality, ethics, and power, and part three delves into the many ways to share, investigate, and illuminate lived experience. The more I read, the more I wanted to read (or re-read) the research these efforts produced. Akpovo, Moran, and Brookshire's book is an ode in three parts to crossing boundaries on behalf of children and families; the insistence of Thapa, Akpovo, and Young in chapter 5 that collaboration should not be optional in research holds for all who contributed to the volume.

Three main ideas on the centrality of good collaboration ring throughout the book's dozen chapters, thereby painting a coherent picture of the importance of context for child development efforts, research and reciprocity, and reflections on improving cross-cultural research and practice. These themes elicit valuable lessons learned for education in emergencies researchers and practitioners, along with guidelines for good collaborative cross-cultural practice.

The contributors in part one in particular note the power of, and thus press for, good early childhood practice globewide, while also highlighting the need to negotiate hybrid early childhood content that combines the science on early childhood with local practice. Pence (chap. 2) describes this as the need for early

childhood science to “hear more” (p. 25), whereas Kirova, Massing, Cleghorn, and Prochner (chap. 7) refer to it as the need for global early childhood priorities to combine with “unique, traditional and local practices” (p. 109). This combination is clear in the examples offered: collaboration between elders and assistants on faraway Fijian islands (chap. 11) and in Canada (chap. 2); between national early childhood development leaders and rural parents in Kenya (chap. 3); among children using cameras to document their lives and their rights in multiple middle-income countries (chap. 10); and among two groups of teachers reflecting together on their practice in videos they took in the US and Italy (chap. 9). While most studies profiled in this volume are small in scale, their intimate engagement with early childhood content, practice, and impact highlights the centrality of context and speaks to sustainability and self-reliance.

While reading this volume, I actively considered my research practice and priorities through the eyes of each author and came away with a reflection similar to that of one teacher, featured in chapter 9, on co-constructed research design: “There are a lot of things that I’ve picked up that I’m going to look at as far as my practice goes personally. Definitely” (p. 144). Through rich contextual examples, the contributing authors describe how they engaged with global and local child development priorities by interrogating their meaning in context and their challenges by culture. They show how this collaborative process can enrich curriculum, content, and learning for all involved.

Relationship and reciprocity feature repeatedly in the in-depth cases presented in part two and elsewhere that declare the importance of relationships—between collaborating researchers, between researchers and practitioners, and between researchers and their research participants or subjects. These relationships—whether a longstanding partnership or a fortuitous invitation—are noted repeatedly to be a key starting point for collaborative cross-cultural research. The authors characterize such relationships as needing time and discussion in order to develop fully, which can mean defying planned interview schedules and daring researchers to relinquish their hold on the plan in order to prioritize their investment in the collaboration. Models of reciprocity are shared in authors’ descriptions of activities and carefully negotiated power relationships that span the phases of their research practice—design, data collection, interpretation, and reporting results. Every chapter offers perspectives on how to navigate the tension between the power of insider knowledge to illuminate findings and ensure relevance on the one hand, and on the other the value of the outsider in providing new perspectives and giving the researcher an opportunity to see oneself through others’ eyes.

Many of the contributing authors conclude with welcome reflections on how to improve cross-cultural collaborations. Mutua and Swadener (chap. 3) recommend “humility, good listening, transparency, humor and interrogating one’s power and privilege” (p. 43) in their chapter on decolonizing cross-cultural research. From their perspective as human rights educators, Koirala-Azad, Zanoni, and Argenal (chap. 6) similarly advise taking “a posture of humility geared towards learning” (p. 84) to combat power and privilege inequities. Georgis, Gokiart, and Kirova (chap. 8), who work with immigrant and refugee communities, address the cycle of privilege and power by defining their relationships with parent participants as opportunities for co-learning, based on the parents’ strengths and their own aim of co-creating knowledge. Finally, Thapa, Akpovo, and Young (chap. 5) suggest practical tools, such as starting collaborations by sharing narratives to set the tone and making space for multiplicity and diversity, which can reduce miscommunication. They also suggest holding plenaries with study respondents at the end of the research cycle to ensure accurate interpretations. The advice given in each chapter echoes that of the others—take a learning stance, be prepared to reflect, share your perspectives, and make room for others’ strengths.

These tips and tricks, values and priorities are implied throughout the book as elements of good qualitative cross-cultural research collaboration, but the authors miss the opportunity to push for their application by all researchers who cross cultures—both qualitative researchers and those who use quantitative and mixed methods. Considering context, positionality, relationship, and reciprocity could take more of researchers’ time, funds, and efforts, but building relationships, exploring multiple viewpoints, and ensuring an exchange in both directions will benefit their credibility and ensure sustainable change for children. This volume not only presents readers with reflections on why this is true in the authors’ experiences, it also offers guidelines on how readers can learn from their lessons and replicate their good practice.

**AMY JO DOWD**  
*The LEGO Foundation*

*The views expressed here are the author’s  
 and do not represent the LEGO Foundation.*

*For permission to reuse, please contact [journal@inee.org](mailto:journal@inee.org).*