

Recommended Guideline for socio-cultural researchers when undertaking fieldwork in cultural settings.

We, the participants of the 2005 Training Workshop on “Field Research Methodology designed for Cultural Mapping Field Officers” and current staff of the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture, in

1. Respecting the Fijian people for sound policy advice,
2. Appreciating the current roles of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, Culture & Heritage, and the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture,
3. Realising the vulnerability of natives to researchers,
4. Recognising the non-existence of a proper research guideline within the Institute,

recommend the following approaches for a proper Fieldwork (Research) Guideline for IFLC, as employed by some research methodologies engaged by regional and overseas researchers who have visited Fiji:

I. Pre-Research Phase (Preparation Stage):

PROCESS/PROCEDURES	CODE OF CONDUCT/ VALUES/ ETHICS
<p>STAGE 1. IN-HOUSE PREPARATION In-house preparation involves:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The sitting together of researcher(s) and coordinator to look at the vision, goal objectives of research. b. Choosing a topic and identifying a problem running parallel with the vision and goal of research; narrowing focus by forming a hypothesis and determining whom to question, i.e. population; make an outline of major headings/subtopic to be researched c. Identifying a research methodology. d. Selection of research sites location and duration of research. e. Preparing Informed Consent Forms for yavusa heads, mataqali heads and respective informants. 	<p>Researcher(s) and coordinator should create an understanding of one another's roles so that both parties can have the same vision and goals. The researcher should be competent and capable of conducting research, i.e. he/she should have credibility with professional integrity.</p> <p>Research must be clearly defined and agreed to in consultation with the participants of the research. It should empower locals, redefine an area or to understand a social reality better. If research initiative is conceived externally (outside of Fiji) and driven by policy imperatives and market interests, it is important that these are made clear to the local stakeholders and include their perspectives as early as possible.</p> <p>Best methods to use include participant observation, semi and unstructured interviewing. Ensure that strategies and methods used are culturally appropriate and ethically consistent.</p> <p>Issues to take into consideration include: Population size – <i>does it meet the required number for research?</i> Events currently underway – <i>would they be a barrier to your research?</i> Location of site – <i>Would it affect the authenticity of information provided by informants – rural vs. semi-urban vs. urban status?</i> Taboos and strict protocols imposed by site/village.</p> <p>The following questions should be highlighted in the informed consent form: <i>Purpose of research? Who benefits from the study? Who has access to the results and data? How confidentiality of informants and data provided is maintained? Who controls the research</i></p>

<p>f. Preparation of materials and equipment for research. These include tape recorder, camera, first aid, stationeries, Yaqona for <i>sevusevu</i> and <i>tatau</i>.</p> <p>g. Communication with Provincial Office.</p> <p>h. Preparation of schedules for awareness and actual research exercise</p> <p>i. Logistics-arrangement of transport.</p> <p>j. Briefing with other researchers and coordinators and checking of questions and other papers that should be taken to the field for research. (Questionnaires, approval Letters, receipts, impress form, brochures, Pamphlets & etc). Include in the resource (budget) considerations some acknowledgement of individual/group participation.</p>	<p><i>process? How ethical are methods that the researcher is prepared to use to gain access to informants? Who has control of the interactions? Who has control of storing of data? Who owns the research report? And other questions.</i></p> <p>Researcher(s) should be encouraged to work according to budget allocation of the research project.</p> <p>The Provincial Office has to be informed prior to the actual research date of the purpose of research.</p> <p>The vanua has to be informed accordingly prior to arrival of purpose of visit and date. It is important to maintain the appointed date and time and not to reshuffle as it may drastically affect their future schedule and your relationship with them.</p> <p>Provision of a schedule for vehicle booking is vital thus prior arrangement for transportation should be made with transport officer for vehicle usage. [Logistics needs to be arranged with Administration Officer who is responsibly for in and out of staff.]</p> <p>Researcher should maintain a level transparency, accountability and good governance according to the values, policies and code of ethics of the Public Service.</p>
<p>STAGE 2. INDIVIDUAL PREPARATIONS Individual preparation involves the researcher to prepare for:</p> <p>a. Personal belongings (toiletries, cloths & etc)</p> <p>b. Researchers should be aware and expect unforeseen circumstances in the field so, psychological preparation is vital.</p>	<p>Researcher(s) should know that preparation of personal belongings is very important because villages should not be responsible for the provision of personal items.</p> <p>Understanding of cultural norms and values of a particular village are important because the above social aspects will vary in different villages. Therefore, researcher(s) need to look at the <i>icavuti raraba</i>, taboos, traditional relation/ ties that exist, <i>kau</i> and <i>vu</i>. These necessitate the researcher to follow at every stage of the research.</p> <p>Ensure barriers which may hinder participation are eliminated e.g. language, age, gender &s.</p>

<p>c. Individual should conduct his/her research of the village where research will be undertaken on written materials in the Institute library or other libraries.</p>	<p>Focus of literary research should be on everything that is available regarding the site/location in question. This will ensure the research having a thorough knowledge of the issue researched and the population being researched. Reviewing literature is important as these will: <i>further focus research question; influence researcher in gaining entry; help researcher's establish rapport with subjects whilst in the field; generate issues that have been neglected; spark ideas on how to proceed with research.</i></p>
<p>STAGE 3 FIELD PREPARATIONS Stage three involves:</p> <p>a. Final check of equipment to be used such as tape recorders, camera before conducting actual research.</p> <p>b. Awareness raising in villages of purpose of research. Also encompassed within are the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of key informants • Disseminating brochures, pamphlets & posters. • Facilitation of 'homestay' lodging. • Identification of sacred sites and areas restricted for visitation. <p>c. Consult with appropriate groups including individuals, community leaders and institutions throughout every stage of the research.</p> <p>d. Obtaining the consent of owners/custodians</p>	<p>Researcher should test all equipment prior to taking it into the field so that it may not cause inconvenience and/or disturbance to the informant.</p> <p>Researcher should maintain the reputation of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs and the Institute of Fijian Language and Culture in respecting and accepting the culture of the village or research site. Researcher should adapt to the culture and environment and should not show any sign of dissatisfaction whether verbal or non verbal because it can affect the image of the Ministry and Department.</p> <p>Clarify and articulate the cultural ideals, values and protocols that may be relevant for the subject and participants of the research.</p> <p>Care must be taken to ensure that appropriate consent is negotiated and obtained at different points of the research. It must be remembered that informed consent to participate is not necessarily consent to report or to disseminate information from the research.</p>

II. Research Phase:

PROCESS/PROCEDURES	CODE OF CONDUCT/ VALUES/ ETHICS
<p>APPROACH “First Impression Lasts”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of isevusevu. Introduction of researchers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief awareness of the purpose and aim of research [prepare brochures/posters to assist in awareness] Explain benefits of the exercise. Allow question and answer session with villagers. Seek consent from and Head of the Yavusa or village and stress confidentiality of any information gathered. Undertake ethnographic mapping of the village. Identify an assistant to assist in the facilitation of the map. 	<p>Be Respectful and presentable (men wearing sulu & shirt; women with sulu & jamba).</p> <p>Local etiquette on traditional protocols must be observed and followed at all times.</p> <p>Acknowledgment and maintenance of mana (dignity) of the ‘researched’ and the ‘researcher’ is central to the research. This aspect is relevant to the honouring of the individual and/or clan or tribe in all aspects of research, including participation, ownership and responsibilities. Reasons for research must be clearly defined and agreed to in consultation with the participants of the research.</p> <p>Establish agreed understanding of mutual benefits of the research.</p> <p>Avoid harm or wrong; respect well-being of humans and animals within the vicinity. Work to preserve archaeological, fossil and historical records. Be observant and take note of anything that you come across.</p> <p>Researchers should not exploit individuals, groups, animals, or cultural or biological materials. They should recognise their debt to society. They are obliged to reciprocate with the people they study in appropriate ways.</p> <p>Researcher(s) should ensure that participants are protected in terms of their personal identity, details and involvement. The issues of confidentiality and safe participation are made more critical. As communities are small confidentiality are often difficult to maintain when doing these communities.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proceed with the research. Qualitative Method of research to be adopted and used: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaires–Formal (structured) printed interview schedules or questionnaires maybe used to ensure that 	<p>Be unbiased; Be respectful, attentive & value informant input; Be a cultural relativist. Judging informants according</p>

<p>complete, comparable information is available for everyone of interest.</p> <p>II] Unstructured interview - Informal (unstructured) conversation with varying degrees of formality from daily chit-chat that helps maintains rapport. This includes probing, open/closed questions.</p> <p>III] These other research techniques could be utilised: Life Histories – in depth interviewing of particular people; Participant Observation – Direct, firsthand observation of daily behaviour; Tape Recording – Obtaining full and accurate record of interview</p> <p>Whilst undertaking research, the interviewer must be physically, mentally & spiritually on par.</p>	<p>to their own culture.</p> <p>Be an attentive listener/observer Maintain rapport Maintaining naiveté (innocence) at all times.</p> <p>Pay attention to the details of daily life, seasonal events and unusual happenings. Maintain a personal diary.</p> <p>BEFORE INTERVIEW Use a small machine that looks less intimidating; Check that equipment and batteries are in good working condition; Use long playing quality tapes so that the conversation is not regularly interrupted; Inform the informant that you will be taped or video recording the conversation (for more than after this informant feels vulnerable).</p> <p>DURING INTERVIEW Place recorder in the best position possible to catch both the voices of the interviewer/informant; Do not constantly check the recorder; it is distracting to the informant; Listen analytically; Stop conversation when changing tape sides. Ask informant to briefly reiterate what she/he last said when recording begins on next side; Respect what informant's view should be recorded. Develop inner critical dialogue - speaking to oneself during the interview process.</p> <p>Encourage and ensure that the language used is appropriate. Ideally informants should be encouraged to use the relevant local lingua franca/dialect throughout the research.</p> <p>Ensure that the interviewer gets adequate rest, food, and spiritual nourishment (keep yaqona consumption to a minimum).</p> <p>AFTER INTERVIEW Carefully, clearly label tapes with the informant's identification, topic, date of interview and interviewer</p>
<p>f. NOTE - TAKING Note - taking is useful when conducting participant observation, interviews and other fieldwork approaches.</p>	<p>Develop your own shorthand; Make commentaries or interview notes of your sessions with informant. To record body language in relation to speech patterns. Concentrate your attention on key words and ideas and follow these as they develop in conversations. Important to write notes whilst or soon after you have</p>

	<p>finished the interview (written on the same day)</p> <p>Field notes should include and address the following: WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW.</p> <p>Write down anything that enters your mind. These can be lost if not written immediately.</p>
<p>g. PHOTOGRAPHY</p> <p>Photography, regarded as visual anthropology is important, since photographs of places, things and events can be shown to informant for events can be shown to informant for their comments. The use of audio-visual equipment is essential, however, only if one has access to the latter.</p>	<p>Check that camera is in excellent/working condition;</p> <p>Take pictures at close range</p> <p>Store in proper casing especially when travelling;</p> <p>NOTE in appropriate form, and format, the ratio of shots taken, number of camera, topic of research, interviewer & informant.</p>
<p>h. SCREENING/FILTERING DATA GIVEN BY INFORMANTS.</p> <p>i. CROSS - CHECKING</p> <p>Emphases on cross checking of information provided so that account given by informant is genuine and honest.</p>	<p>Ensure that any data/information given by informant in regards to titular, land, Tukutuku Raraba, Vola ni Kawa Bula, and Customary Fishing Rights be totally disregarded. The Native Lands and Fisheries Commission addresses such issues</p> <p>Ask the informant to reintroduce the story again and look for inconsistency OR directly confront the informant with evidence of the problem in a gentle manner.</p>
<p>j. CLOSING THE INTERVIEW</p> <p>You may wish to pre – interview the informant at a later date. Interviewing creates a relationship between the participant and that such relationship creates expectations. This may commit the researcher to earlier promises such as contacting the informant.</p>	<p>No promises. Show respect to informants, their generosity and for sharing their stories with you. Acknowledge with thanks</p> <p>VERBAL AND NON – VERBAL Cues which an interviewer can use when closing an interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explaining the reason for closing: <i>Well, I have no more questions for now.</i> Clearing House Questions: <i>Is there anything else we should discuss?</i> Summarising the Interview Making personal enquiries and comments: <i>Do you think that Fiji will win the World Cup?</i> Expressing thanks and satisfaction Shake hands with the interviewer [Most acceptable non-verbal cue]. <p>Be consistent, kind, patient and respectful.</p>
<p>k. Undertake regular communication meeting with community leaders, key research participants and reference people to discuss progress, obtain feedback and report on achievements or otherwise.</p>	<p>Fijian people are connected by family/community links and obligations that exist before and after the phases of research. Research with Fijian villages need to be set in a context of enduring relationships rather than as an episode encounter.</p> <p>Relationships by kin or community carry certain</p>

	<p>obligations that are determined and acknowledged by the context of content. It is essential to identify and incorporate the roles and obligations of village subjects appropriately to enhance the research process and outcomes.</p> <p>Researchers are obligated to reciprocate with the people they study in appropriate ways.</p> <p>Researchers should do all they can to preserve opportunities for future fieldworkers.</p> <p>Concerns over the public right to know as against a community's privacy to certain knowledge can pose ethical dilemmas. The researcher should therefore take care, as a custodian of certain knowledge, that private knowledge is kept private.</p>
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III. Post-Research Phase (Analysis Stage):

PROCESS/PROCEDURES	CODE OF CONDUCT/ VALUES/ ETHICS
a. Collected Data.	<p>Researchers should maintain that information gathered from a village should not be disclosed to the next village or any village/individuals/groups for that matter.</p> <p>Research is knowledge. Knowledge is Power. Research on Fijian peoples should facilitate their well-being through both the involvement in and use of research outcomes</p>
b. Transcribing.	<p>Recordings should be transcribed according to dialect spoken at time of interview.</p> <p>Create a catalogue of new vocabulary, seeking assistance from relevant provincial office.</p>
c. Editing	<p>Data are to be analysed through themes from descriptions by informants.</p> <p>Researchers should provide the opportunity for individual informants to veto their own contributions before these are included in any documentation.</p> <p>Informants should be informed of development resulting from their participation. Where possible, informants should be presented back to villages so that they are able to see the positive impact of research.</p>

<p>d. Audio Cassettes, Photographs, Audio Visual</p>	<p>Provide appropriate captions for photos to be included in computer files under the relevant subject.</p> <p>Audio cassettes to be labelled accordingly to allow consistency in the retrieval and transcription of tapes.</p> <p>Audio Visual materials need to be recorded appropriately and edited sooner after the footage was recorded in the field to avoid deterioration in colour and display.</p> <p>All of the above should be made available to informants upon editing.</p>
<p>e. Accessibility to information collected. Cultural data should not be placed in the public domain without prior approval of the custodians and/or informants.</p>	<p>Researchers who develop close relationships with individuals must adhere to the obligations of openness and informed consent. They must also carefully and respectfully negotiate the limits of the relationship.</p>
<p>f. Report Outcome</p>	<p>Research in villages must enhance the mana, well-being and lives of the inhabitants of the respective communities. Outcomes of the research must therefore be of practical value, be community-oriented and must be particular to the group researched.</p>