

## Chapter 30

# Using Ethnographic Approaches to Co-Construct Strategies for Success With Students With Dyslexia: A Project With Tertiary Students in Aotearoa, New Zealand

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter takes a dual focus/lens to applying and performing research methods in inclusive and special education in a tertiary/post-secondary setting with a group of students with dyslexia. It links the core ideas of United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities Article 24, Inclusive Education to describing the development and implementation of a co-constructed, collaborative project to identify success strategies for students with dyslexia, utilizing both student and teacher perspectives and experiences, and examines the fit of utilizing ethnographic approaches in this. As practitioner – researchers, authors provide a narrative case study of a project which was developed/co-constructed to respond to a set of identified needs for a group of students presenting with dyslexia. Authors then examine how the project practices link to research methodology, particularly ethnography, and produce both a set of strategies to work inclusively in the future with students with dyslexia and also construct a methodological approach within the lens of new ethnography. This serves to theories both the project work and guidelines for future use of ethnographic approaches for research in the field of inclusive and special education.*

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## INTRODUCTION

We hope to demonstrate in this chapter that the research approaches/practices of new ethnography as outlined can benefit researchers in inclusive educational settings. In particular this applies to those with a lived experience of disability willing to share voice and ownership in partnership with others and discover new ways to succeed together. The project narrative is provided to ground the link from the practical collaborative approach used within the project with a discussion to demonstrate the underpinning methodological concepts from the ethnographic lens. It also provides a set of constructs which identify the approaches of the new ethnography for the future, which were developed through reflecting on the suitability of ethnographic approaches in this context.

The project below demonstrates how this new ethnography occurred in practice in a tertiary setting over the course of a year with a group of students with dyslexia. These students were able to come together with the Student Support Services team and co-construct strategies for success with students with their specific learning disability which enabled them to succeed in passing their assessments at a tertiary education level.

## ETHNOGRAPHY AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND THE NEW ETHNOGRAPHY

### Ethnography

Ethnography has been around for a very long time, particularly as practiced by cultural anthropologists, but despite the extensive history there remains disputed understandings and definitions within Social Sciences ranging across “the study of culture”, “understanding another way of life from the native (sic) point of view”, “entering a natural setting to do field research”, to “the written up reporting of such work” (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 196).

Crouser (2005, p. 122) explicitly raises the difficulties traditional ethnographic methods have posed in disability research suggesting that ethnography is a very useful but underutilized if not largely ignored tool for researchers in disability, perhaps because “while disability communities would seem an ideal site for ethnographic investigation, disabled people, long subjected both to marginalization and objectifying examination, may resent and resist”; the attention involved in traditional informant ethnography and he suggests that, “indeed disability ethnography faces some of the same ethical challenges as ethnography involving populations subjected to classic Western imperialism” (Crouser, 2005, p. 122).

Nevertheless the important point about the concept of ethnography regardless of these disputed territories Berg and Lune go on to identify is “that the practice places researchers in the midst of whatever it is they study” (Berg & Lune 2012, p. 197) and it is this aspect which is relevant for working in the field of inclusive education for tertiary students.

### The New Ethnography

More recently, the traditional approaches associated with ethnography have been developed, refined, advanced and stretched in new ways to enable full rich and deep representation from a participant as opposed to informant view and what is known as the *new ethnography* (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 198) has emerged. In this new ethnography research strategies comprise a broadening of methods and methodolo-

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