

Abstract: *This research gives an insight into the difficulties of doing family folkloric research in documenting folk wedding songs in the Rajput community of Bhakkar, Pakistan. I have gathered and analyzed 84 folk wedding songs taken from women of that community-majority by those who are my relatives. To overcome these drawbacks, I employed certain strategies like compromise, collaboration, and negotiation. These tactics would often prove very important to maintain rapport while doing research with people when research is going on in relation to folklore. The findings discuss challenges that are encountered in the process of folklore studies with the family context, which "require an adaptable approach." In this study, my experience in family folklore research has been very inclusive of unique challenges such as research encounters and developed insights on how to cope with them effectively in such situations.*

Key Words: Challenges in Fieldwork, Family Folklore, Folk Wedding Songs, Rajput Women

Introduction

Family folklore studies are the collection, documentation, and study of traditional beliefs and customs, stories, and practices passed down within families. These studies have driven people to explore the way family traditions reflect and shape cultural identity, values, and social structures. Dundee (1965) defines from a folkloristic view that Family folklore comprises the verbal, customary, and material traditions passed down within a family group. These traditions would, of course, be stories, sayings, jokes, recipes, customs, rituals, and heirlooms that give voice to the collective memory and identity of the family.

[Toelken \[1996\]](#) explains family folklore studies from an anthropological perspective that family folklore refers to the oral, behavioral, and material forms of folklore that are transmitted across generations within a family. These forms of folklore serve to strengthen family bonds, preserve family history, and reinforce cultural norms and values.

From a cultural perspective, Elliot (1986) defines family folklore as encompassing the narratives, rituals, and artifacts that families use to construct and convey their collective identity. It includes both the every day and the extraordinary elements that families celebrate and remember as part of their heritage.

Taking a sociological perspective pertaining to family folklore, Jones and Roberts (1995) claim that it is a repertoire of traditional knowledge and

practices that are shared within a family and contribute to the family's sense of cohesion and continuity. These traditions can be seen as a microcosm of larger cultural patterns and social structures. In the field of verbal folklore, it is pertinent to mention that verbal traditions of family life have an early and lasting impact on members of the family. The early life traditions such as the mind of a child, folksongs on ceremonies, daily life proverbs, and many other items identify and categorize the family members from another group [Dundeel (1965)]. Oral traditions connect and bond the family to their ancestors including family names, stories, sayings, and folksongs can be a resource to maintain coherence and recognition factors in constructing the permanence of the family history. Folklorist Wilson (1991) endorses that the stories and sayings are comparable to a family novel that describes the contexts of family events and the distinctiveness of the family members.

Historically speaking, in the 19th century, two German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm encouraged people to collect lore through their publication of household tales and legends. Taking inspiration from the Grimm brothers, scholars around the world became motivated to find and publish traditional materials. Folklorists find many elements of family life under the umbrella of traditional expressive behavior. With the contribution of Grimm brothers and many others like Iona and Peter Archibald Opie, Tyler Gibbons and Robin MacArthur, John Avery Lomax, and Alan Lomax, and

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others remarkable contributions made to aspects of family folklore.

Family folklore studies were not an early interest of folklorists. Usually, they collected tales, ballads, or other genres that belonged to a particular group. They tried to trace the international similarities and differences between the different genres of folklore. Till the early 20th century, the folklorist started to focus on larger groups and research traits and talents of individuals and their families. Folklorist [Glassie \(1999\)](#) emphasized the importance of photographs and drawings of houses in various countries. His research claimed that interior decorations and structure of the houses influence their individuals, families, and communities. When folklorists collected material from family members, they focused on the songs, stories, and artifacts rather than on the function of folklore in family life. It was a big shift in the research tradition of folklore.

In the Pakistani context, while searching for family folklore research, I found out that there is a dearth of family folklore studies. Folklore as a family as a family heritage is hard to find out. However, there are many genres of folklore that have been documented, recorded, and persevered as cultural heritage, that may not come under the umbrella of family folklore studies.

Literature Review

Family folklore research is conducted by many folklorists for diverse topics. [\(Sherman, 1986; Scheiberg, 1990; Yocom, 1997; Danielson 1996; Boatright, 1958; Garrett, 1961; Baldwin, 1975; Stewart, 2008, Jones, 1983, Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker, 1982\)](#). Many research issues such as positionality and the power relationship between researcher and respondents, family politics, and reflexivity of researchers are the major ones that these researchers discussed through their family folklore research experiences.

[Sherman \(1986\)](#) talks about her research on the family's Seder and documents the Seder activities with a focus on the problems faced by fieldworkers involved in folkloric fieldwork. She highlighted the role of a fieldworker who often conflicts with the role of a family member. She concludes that a researcher [fieldworker] when comes to family research accompanied by a set of social and personal identities the way they help or hinder family research studies.

[Stahl \(1977\)](#) presents a carefully developed methodology for studying personal narratives for a thoughtful examination of current interpretive practices of research. Her analysis of several personal narratives includes an extensive investigation of her position as a reader, and interpreter and the theoretical implications of her positions regarding research. [\(Miller 1997\)](#) talks

about the sensitivity of family folklore and mentions that when family research on a sensitive issue is published it is irreversible and can harm the respondents who are family members (P:332).

[Yocom \(1997\)](#) mentions little research on family folklore in America. She identifies the negative side of the family folklore fieldwork. She mentions that because the American folklorists worked in their own families with whom they bound themselves privacy requests, the discussion on family folklore remained very limited. [Scheinberg \(1990\)](#) discusses the role of the researcher in her / his own family and the issues of positionality during fieldwork. Her work on family stories identifies many issues in collecting data from her family. She also mentions some ways through which she dealt with the participants strategically.

[Tangherlini \(2020\)](#) talks about the primary challenges are the subjectivity and reliability of memory. Family memories are often selective and can be distorted over time, making it difficult to create an objective narrative. Other interplay such as in the interview process would also affect the reliability of the information collected since power imbalances in a family make some members more influential than others and can cause a breakdown in the story. Other ethical considerations include privacy issues where participants' lives are involved, and there should be sensitivity in what will be told, especially regarding the family.

[Noyes \(2018\)](#) explores some of the methodology concerns in integrating digital tools into the study of family folklore. She covered one of the major challenges arising in her research: how to maintain authenticity in digital forms. Another issue is the matter of access and technological literacy needed for the process of digital storytelling. Not everyone in the family may be equally comfortable with digital tools; therefore, competition may arise over participation and representation. This would lead to a distorted account of family mythology since only the technically savvy members are attributed but this excludes other opinions.

According to [Cohen, \(2015\)](#), the most appropriate issue is intergenerational cultural transition. As soon as immigrant families assimilate to another culture, with time, the younger generations begin to disconnect themselves from their original ancestral practices, and thus there is a sort of assimilation or remolding of family folklore. This results in two things: original cultural tales' close coordination with other family members who retain copies of the versions or stories for their account. The other challenge is language. The traditional story is often transmitted in the indigenous tongue of the family, although certainly not completely understood by subsequent generations raised in a different linguistic environment. This may lead to partial, even

misunderstood folklore, which makes it harder to preserve original cultural narratives.

By [Ben Amos, 2012](#), is the dialectical relationship between collective and individual memory. Just as a family's folklore can be seen as a shared tradition, there exists an individual interpretation of the folklore within a family that may not necessarily map onto the collective account. This can make the work of the researcher in producing an integrated understanding of how folklore consolidates social identity in the family rather more problematic.

According to Lancer and Redner in 2009, during research, one of the biggest challenges that they encountered is the fact that the woman's contribution to family folklore remains invisible. Traditional narratives often prioritize male experiences and perspectives, marginalizing or completely omitting the roles of women. This bias makes it difficult for researchers to capture the full scope of women's influence within the family's folklore and traditions. As a result, uncovering and documenting women's roles requires a conscious effort to seek out stories, practices, and rituals that may not be immediately apparent or widely recognized.

[Glassie \(2005\)](#) identified challenges the family folklore studies like the dynamic relationship between memory, place, and family folklore, emphasizing the importance of considering both the physical and emotional landscapes in which family traditions are rooted.

Research Methodology

The major tools of data collection for qualitative research were in-depth interviews and the recording of folk wedding songs. I conducted 15 interviews with women who recorded folk wedding songs and 5 other women (along with the women who were interviewed) for interpretation of folksongs in the Rajput cultural context. I visited household women's relatives (singers) along with my key informant at the designated time. Usually, folk wedding song recordings would take an average of an estimated 1 hour (depending on the number of songs recorded, preparation, and repetitions). However, interviews and interpretations of the folksongs usually took an estimated one hour thirty minutes to two half hours.

Challenges in Family Folklore Field Research: Discussion and Analysis

The quote by [Williams \(1969\)](#) is more accurate, "Family research is like pulling hair, but it can also be like heaven." This statement captures the dual nature of this kind of work, its challenges and frustrations, as well as its rewarding and enlightening moments. It is a hard and challenging job regardless of family or non-family research. The

issues one encounters are varied in nature as compared to research done other than the relatives.

Dealing with Self-Apprehensions during FieldWork

Fieldwork can be special and different if respondents are known, and the locale is familiar ([Cohen, 2015](#)). It brought comfort to me as a researcher, and I enjoyed many benefits of it. Gaining access to informants is easy as compared to researching with strangers. The family and relatives are "invariably flattered at this show of attention from the relatives" ([Dorson, 1964](#)). As told earlier, I was greeted well while visiting for interviews song collections, and recordings. Some of the relatives were those whom I had never met for many years. Hence, the research study provided me with the opportunity for a family get-together. For me, "rapport building" which is emphasized in anthropological studies was already intact with relatives and friends. I felt that there was generally a feeling of mutual trust, liking, and cooperation between me as a researcher and my relatives.

I was also confused about obtaining data and interviews from women's relatives. How will I cope with the new researcher-participant situation with my relatives? I constantly asked myself whether women would answer my questions. Do they understand what I wish to ask of them? From the participant's side, they also did not expect my status as a researcher and were surprised to know that their words were valuable to be documented.

This reflects their status as a woman in a society that is inferior to men and their credibility as a person is never recognized. Like any other ethnic group in Pakistan, Rajput women are subordinate and have a secondary position within the household. Their status and role in family life as a daughter, sister, mother, and wife are limited and restricted. Men dominate and reinforce their decisions and usually, their opinion is not asked for. Hence, they were surprised to know that their information was worthwhile. For this reason, they felt flattered and honored that I found them "interesting enough" to provide information for a dissertation.

Introducing Research Study

I was comfortable with the people whom I know, but at times it becomes hard to maintain the balance between relationships and professional work. I knew sometimes too much information confuses the researcher and significant data may be taken for granted, wasted, or ignored by the researcher. Some issues I found were culturally specific like how and whom will I be able to contact for interviews. Whose house I will go to first? How will I contact you? How will I talk to male members of the family before talking to females? How and to whom I will observe Purdah? I tried to deal with them accordingly and some of them I managed to resolve; however, I could not

prevent women from family politics and gossip during interviews and song recordings.

Introducing my research study, particularly within the intimate context of family folklore, brought with it a host of challenges and opportunities that ultimately shaped the course of the entire project. As a fieldworker engaging with family members, I knew that the initial introduction was a critical juncture it would not only determine the project's feasibility but also set the tone for the fieldwork relationship that would unfold.

At the outset, I found myself grappling with a mix of apprehension and anticipation as I prepared to introduce my research study to my relatives. I was acutely aware that their initial reception could sway the project's direction, so I meticulously planned my approach. I had many visions: eager relatives who could be convinced to cooperate but did not speak out and then, perhaps even unwilling; in opposition to the fearful screeches that might have been indicative of second thoughts.

Knowing how critical this introduction is, I stressed the need for a deep discussion on the objectives and importance of the project. I proceeded by articulating my personal ambitions for pursuing a research degree explicitly and underlining the academic significance of my study. By describing how and why this research mattered and what it could achieve, I ensured the gap between them being unfamiliar with the research processes and scholarly pursuits bridged relatively simply. This interview procedure and recording of folk wedding songs were the focus of my research. Many young people were first fearful and nervous about answering such questions as they had never been asked formally before. I tried to allay their fear and made them feel like an informal conversation and not formal by simplifying the methodology and somewhat comparing it with an informal talk with a structured approach. I emphasized how family folklore is important to their families and recognized their efforts in maintaining these songs, thus appreciating the efforts of persons like them in maintaining cultural heritage.

The introduction stage stretched longer than I had anticipated following all the preparation on my part. Nephews and nieces being naturally inquisitive, asked questions on all different facets of why I had to do the research, my academic qualifications, and what I do here at AIQU, and even details about the research process. They asked me several questions regarding my personal life, such as my educational background, my marriage, and my reason for marrying a Rajput man. They also wanted to know what I was going to do with the folk songs and how their participation would support my degree. Their questions of a mixture of curiosity and wariness presented me with a mix of worries regarding becoming academic subjects on a subject that,

perhaps more than most, was so intimate and private as the folk wedding song. Some initial misunderstandings were already assuaged by conversations with my sister-in-law, who helped arrange earlier introductory meetings. Still, some of my relatives entertained those wrong notions about the purpose of the project, while others hypothesized that I could be making some media instead of conducting research.

I had a research objective and methodology, but at times, I walked through the complex personal relationship and even approached cultural perceptions. What I wanted was to open communication so that confusion could be addressed, and to build a cooperative atmosphere where relatives' voices and traditions can respectfully be documented and laid out for cultural value. However, I found myself inclined to skepticism whether the participants grasped my research objectives or even knew what I expected from them. I wondered if they would engage with the project as fully as I needed them to. This initial phase not only laid the groundwork for fruitful fieldwork but also affirmed the importance of clear communication and mutual understanding in family-based research endeavors.

Locating Myself as a Researcher

In qualitative research, the feelings of power and powerlessness were often located within the positionality of the researcher. As defined, 'Positionality' is indicative of the particular social, structural, and organizational positions that individuals occupy. Such positions define the identity, power structures, and social fields of the individual which mediate their interactions with others ([Das, 2011](#)).

The Positionality of the researcher has been discussed under various stances in the discipline of anthropology such as inside-outside ([Soni-Sinha, 2008](#); [Chawla, 2006](#), [Few et al. 2003](#); [Narayan, 1993](#); [Mani, 2006](#)). It was not easy for me to determine my status and positionality within the community in which I was conducting fieldwork. I have met them many times as their sister-in-law though our previous get-together here used to be a private family matter. However, when I decided to work with my relatives, I was aware of the fact that my new relationship as a researcher.

In simple words, an insider researcher conducts research on the cultural, racial, or ethnic group to which he/she belongs. The outsider or stranger enters society and attempts to learn about the way of life of its people. The insider/outsider issues can influence the analysis of the research ([Das, 2011](#)). In the case of outsider anthropologists, the cultural closeness brings the researcher into a disadvantageous position too. Often, insiders tend to take certain things for granted, for example, an

insider's familiarity with a given social norm makes it even harder to discuss it with respondents due to the taken-for-granted reality. Working in the field with multiple identities and shifting roles is a difficult task to handle.

Consequently, putting myself in a flexible role positively helped me. Firstly, my gender helped me in accessing participants. As a female researcher and a relative to them, I had easy access to women of the community, and I was not perceived as a stranger to them. After a brief introduction to my in-law's family, I was welcomed easily. I think that gender advantage in field research supported me to understand women's life situations and experiences. Mostly my relationship with the respondents remained friendly. Though I am a non-Rajput woman married to a Rajput man. So, I have both emic and etic perspectives for the Rajput families.

However, power within the interviews was visible and could be identified. My education, working woman status, mother of sons, and sister-in-law are the most influential positions I had. These positions made my respondents participate in research with me. As a sister-in-law, all of the respondents want to cooperate with me so that I may get maximum data for my research. They don't want me to get disappointed about what I wish to get from them as Rajputs. However, among the respondents, there was a constant competition that who could sing/narrate more folksongs to me. As a sister-in-law they wanted me to know every positive aspect of their community like their pride, royalty, and commitment as a Rajput. They do not wish to portray Rajputs as "bad." They also excluded me as non-Rajput as an outsider and as less powerful.

The insider perspective offers privileges to the researcher like cultural closeness and easier establishment of trust. It gives an advantage to people who do not try to impress an insider to present a more positive impression of themselves [Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984]. Further, the insider status works quite beneficial as they have a good understanding of a macro-society, and they deeply understand its daily routines, symbols, value systems, feelings of empathy, etc. [Van Ginkel, 1998:256].

My non-Rajput family background and being a working and educated woman were the positions that were dissimilar to the respondents. These positions provided with me the opportunity for more questioning and probing for any clarity I needed to understand the cultural interpretation of folk songs. My curiosity as an outsider provided me the opportunity to ask for extra explanations from the respondents that an insider overlooked. Even after becoming a part of the family and following Rajput customs, I remain an outsider in many respects. I sometimes had a subtle feeling of "being out of place" with my respondents. I felt that I was alien to their

thick cultural orientation of language, proverbs, ethnic jokes family politics, mannerisms and body gestures, etc. I could not enjoy and understand some jokes, and contexts of proverbs used during conversations. When I asked about some of the proverbs or jokes from them, they simply laughed at me and replied that only Rajputs can understand not you!

Theoretically, I was aware of some of the dilemmas of family folklore research like role negotiation, and folklore is a worthwhile topic for research. However, while entering the field, the scenario changed and kept on changing every day. I thought that I would be researching in a community that I knew before and was related to. But many times, I felt that only shared experiences and solidarity based on gender cannot be assumed [Mohanty, 1988]. I struggled sometimes to get data and a couple of times I was interviewed by the women who were my respondents. Similarly, "simply by being of the country/ culture/ group/ family, one is not automatically guaranteed infinite and non-terminable knowledge of the culture" [Panourgia 1994: 46]. The change of positions and identities during research process helped me and I kept on changing my positions in field while getting information from the respondents rather than fixing myself on a position like a researcher or a relative.

Rajput Women and Men's Response to Folksongs as a Topic of Research

The initial response from women regarding my choice to research folk wedding songs was marked by surprise and dubiety that mirror the sentiments expressed by men within the family. Many women, like their male counterparts, questioned the significance of folk songs as a worthwhile subject for academic inquiry.

One respondent encapsulated this sentiment succinctly, expressing disbelief that folk songs could yield anything of importance for research. She laughed off the idea, dismissing folk songs as mere entertainment sung at weddings, devoid of deeper cultural or scholarly value. Her skepticism typifies a broader perspective held by women that folk songs were trivial and did not have anything substantial to be worth researching.

I first approached these women participants with some preliminary objections and initiated informal talks. These informal talks were quite productive, as I shared my approach toward folk songs in terms of their importance and cultural heritage. With such initiation, my efforts started striking with echoes, and the interest in women participants' attitudes regarding my research increased. I carefully listened to their apprehensions and opinions and allowed them a space to vocally enumerate their reservations regarding folk songs.

Time went by, and persistence paid off; I finally could win the cooperation of those whose voices were part of the process. Women valued the opportunity to add their voices to a field of study dominated by male perspectives. One informant managed to articulate her enthusiasm with regard to the importance and value of folk songs as a method through which women's words and experiences could become validated and documented: In a culture where the voice of women often gets dominated by male voices, research created an opportunity for stories to be acknowledged and put into writing. During these processes, I realized that there was a change of attitude among women participants. They started noticing the role of folk songs not only as musical expressions but as sites of cultural memory and gendered experiences in their community. Their desire to be involved in the research process indicated that their cultures needed recognition and representation in a learned platform.

Participant Observation in the Family

This is even more challenging practicing participant observation within family settings and raises methodological considerations beyond those most familiar with observations from other contexts, than in public spaces or institutions (Garret, 1961). Indeed, if one has completed other kinds of observational research, in institutional environments, and so on, this is not the case: in a home, there are the complex dynamics of complex life and the very intimate terms of relationships that seem to be tricky to penetrate. Of course, I made every effort to keep my presence as low-key and limited as possible, but I was fairly confident that my being there was disrupting some of their routines.

Probably the biggest challenge was easy accessibility to the families for observation. Families are sensitive to privacy and uncomfortable opening their private space to an outside researcher. In this, I had to negotiate with caution and gain trust, either based on established connections or as a result of good references from the intermediaries. Some families opened their doors to me very warmly while others remained skeptical and even resistant to being observed.

Ethical considerations were paramount for the whole process. Informed consent of all participants, both in and out of the extended family, was a necessity, though always difficult and sometimes impossible, especially with people's varying levels of understanding and consent capacity. On average, I spent 3.4 hours in participants' homes through interviews and recording of songs. Although these brief visits had their merits, they created disadvantages in terms of recording the range of family dynamics and behavior. The initial visits were often awkward because the family and I were getting accustomed to each other's presence and roles.

Hence, participant observation in family settings must be taken out with great sensitivity, patience, and meticulous planning. Tackling the initial awkwardness, consideration of ethical issues, and optimizing the visit schedules greatly help one glean about relations within families, their behaviors, and cultural practices.

Role Negotiation

Research work conducted within the familial sphere as relates to folklore comes with challenges that differ from other academic research activities. Details of these complexities of role negotiation in such situations are elaborated by Scheinberg 1990, showing how familiarity and pre-existing relationships may confound the negotiation between researcher and respondent. Reflecting on my own experiences researching folk wedding songs within the Rajput community, I found the challenges of role negotiation to cut across the very design and fruit of my study.

Traditionally, the roles of the researcher and the informant evolve gradually with interactional trust as it evolves. In the case of family folklore research, however, because respondents are part of the family network as well, this dynamic takes a quite different turn (Tangherlini, 2020). I do not think that I quite received training for the subtleties of handling family members as both respondents and research participants from my previous anthropology experience. They came to know me, not just as a research worker but as the sister-in-law, which complicated their acceptance of my new role in recording folk songs. When they were asked regarding focus on folk wedding songs, my relatives felt it was unexpected and would not let them see any relevance for documentation because CDs and internet resources offered much more comprehensive options and accessible familiarity. Some participants were even questioning their own work, and issues raised included voice quality and musical authenticity compared to those in the marketplace. This would be a point of weakness as it sets in from the very start in role negotiation where I would have to argue for the academic legitimacy of their oral traditions while showing sensitivity to their feelings and concerns.

Another direction in going through perceptions around my role as a researcher was also challenging. For many, the formal nature of "interviews" seemed intrusive and damaging to their status in the community. During interview sessions, they kept forgetting that I was a researcher and asked questions related to my personal life. It took some time for them to concentrate on the interviews and provide the data I was seeking. To manage such discomfort, I eventually toned down my method by substituting the 'word interview' for the 'baatchet', an ordinary word for informal conversation in the region. This changed the word diminished the tension

and answers became easier to collect. After such adjustments, role negotiation was still a dialogue in the entire course of research I undertook. On occasions, people deliberately changed the subject to something they perceived to be of more interest or safer to talk about. This merely comprised some of their own requirements of what would be useful research information. That therefore demanded a lot of patience and flexibility on my part as I needed to weigh their desire to contribute meaningfully against research objectives.

Furthermore, the discomfort that some participants showed highlighted even more general methodological concerns relevant to ethnographic inquiry. Properly informed consent and acting within ethical limits were, therefore, critical since cultural norms and personal safety intersected with the aims of scholarship ([Lareau and Rao, 2020](#)). Interventions in the interview process, giving assurance, and keeping the research agenda open for discussion helped create trust and comfort for participants.

Captive of the Feminist Gaze: Navigating Cultural Sensitivity in Research

The very landscape of the evolution of academic research constantly calls for attention from us, but the predominantly influential subject for our perception, i.e. the nature of our methodology and findings, is highly dictated by the lens through which we view our subjects. My journey of 25 years as a researcher within the Department of Women and Gender at AIOU has been critical as well as the most engaging moments within the domain of feminist ideologies. Although these concepts were essential in raising issues of women's lives in patriarchal societies, they did indeed present great methodological research challenges when conducting a study with Rajput women, especially while using folk wedding songs as a research tool.

Feminist theory bases its stand on the sustenance of systemic oppression and subordination of the feminine sexes within patriarchal structural settings. It is based on such a historical dogma of training and advocacy that such ideology initially shaped my methodology in understanding the women of Rajput. However, it was at the point of resistance that I had to balance the call for feminist principles against the need to make broad cultural considerations as I moved along to explore this area.

The feminist lens tends to paint women only as victims of the mores of patriarchy, focusing on their fights for equality and freedom. Of course, these are all enormously important battles, but setting up this framework in an unsuspecting manner with regard to Rajput women risks oversimplifying lived experience and cultural context. Central to this shift was the concept enunciated by [Zeitlin \(2000\)](#), referencing [Hymes \(1975\)](#), which emphasized the job of

folklorists as providing cultural meanings and understanding traditions through the eyes of the community. It really spoke to me, therefore, in hearing and recording emic perspectives among Rajput women. I privileged voices and interpretations of their cultural practices, particularly those expressed in folk wedding songs, rather than making external judgments or interpretations.

Moreover, the sources of tension had to be reconciled between the insights from feminism and the imperative of respect for culture. It became imperative that I highlight the agency and resilience of Rajput women in a cultural context without undermining the more generalized feminist critique of patriarchal structures of power. It involved a tightrope balance wherein I have tried to present a nuanced presentation that is both respectful towards the feminist gaze and respects the cultural specification of Rajput women's experience.

Taking Part in Family Politics

From the very outset, I was inducted into family politics which played a major role in my initial days of research. Frequent requests from various families often landed me at houses with no relevant folksongs, but such calls were important to keep up relationships and to get an insight into how the different families were competing with each other for attention. Each family wanted to be attended to and hence a competitive situation required careful handling on my part.

To gain rapport with the respondents I participated in family politics and gossip. These always discussed matters pertaining to the details of family life, including accepted or rejected marriage proposals and wrangles over land, among other general family disputes. This was the strategy opted by my respondents to invite me into their lives and sometimes delay the interviewing process. These interactions, sometimes divergent from my objectives for the research, were to establish trust and relationships with the families.

One major problem was recording songs from two hostile families, both of which were singing the same folk songs. Since it was their songs that I was recording, I had to take much care while negotiating strained family relationships. Recording songs from both families ensured that I was staying neutral, and hence my research was being carried out without any bias on either side.

Family politics also led to data saturation [Strauss and Corbin, 1998](#) since at about 20 songs, it was clear there were too many repetitions and nothing new was coming out. The consequence of the continued family politics was stagnation, as some families were scared that their material would get drowned by others if they were too prominent. Consequently, I had to re-record some songs for a

few women in order to get a good dataset. Researching and entering family politics is both challenging and necessary. It demands that relationship tension, competition, and the objective of research must be kept at arm's length. Though it all proved to be confusing, these experiences enriched my comprehension of the families and their cultural practices eventually summing up to make the most comprehensive study.

Formalities in Family Interviews

More intensive interviews in family situations proved to be highly time-consuming, and formalities associated with family relations had a significant role to play in the research process, according to Sherman (1986). My journey took me through new homes where warm greetings and hearty hospitality were extended, bringing layers of complexity to my research work.

The expectation of hospitality was there right from the word go, and it went on much beyond the interview itself. Families welcomed me, urging me to stay for extended tea sessions, lunches, and dinners. Although these gestures were most touching, done really with honor for the guest, they greatly eat away more time than is spent on interviews. I always landed into canoeing through conversations dominated by family talks and politeness rituals, where negotiation on these formalities became a neat balancing act. It could insult my hosts the second I accepted their invitations to meals or even longer stays since it involves the pride and traditions that lie behind being part of a family. Sometimes, I ended up accepting their hospitality graciously while trying to steer them back to the areas of research at hand.

Some measures to cope with the time constraint are as follows: for instance, I had light tea breaks instead of eating the full meal, which kept me from losing concentration during interviews. I was flexible in moving interviews, especially while cooking, and started only after participants had finished household chores. Indeed, most of them preferred interview times when their men had gone out for work, etc., as it would have been cozy to share folk songs and intimate opinions with me.

Men's Reaction to Family Folkloristics Study

When I was studying folkloristics within the family context, specifically folk wedding songs, my own family circle, notably the male half, exhibited a lot of skepticism and hostility toward my research interest. The stand they took at that time reflected prevailing opinions within society in regard to the belief system about folksong's heritage. My husband's reaction from the very first day reflected the attitude of the majority then. He questioned the importance of learning folk songs, suggesting instead topics he considered more socially significant, such as

women's education or women's empowerment. His uncertainty also reflected a faith shared by many male relatives that folk songs and male family members were trifling or nonexistent. Such disbelief in fact extended to resistance to the very idea that Rajput women might be singers or that their folk songs held any social meaning.

My journey of research just kept retaining the same statement from other family men that there was nothing relevant concerning folk wedding songs in their context. So they chided me to focus on matters that they considered most concrete and influential in women's lives. Most of them would want me to deal with the realms of education and health. This was the biggest provocation for me as a person and a professional. It thus brought to the fore deep-seated gender stereotypes and heralded a demand for deeper understandings of the cultural values involved within the folk traditions, particularly those observed by women within family settings. Indeed, above these preliminary hurdles, encounter such a standpoint enlightened understanding relating to the societal values that bear kinship relationships and view the horizon regarding culture.

Conclusion

On the other hand, family folklore research collects data from one's own members by using other strategies not used in traditional research. Furthermore, family folklore research also has its advantages and challenges during fieldwork for the researcher. One of the significant features of family folklore research is the relationship between the researcher and the participants. This relationship remains flexible and oscillates between them. The positionality of the researcher as an insider and outsider matters in obtaining data from family participants. The positionality of the researcher depends on his /her multiple identities which both the researcher and participants and as kinship members maintained during the research process. In every role, certain strategies of compromises and negotiations are made by both sides. Akin to the researcher, the family participants also apply certain tactics to provide or avoid information for the researcher. This research concludes that family folklore research employs different kinds of challenges than conventional fieldwork strategies. Family folklore research dealing with family, or the native family is by no means unproblematic as compared to conventional research. It has its *modus operandi* that is applied during the fieldwork by the researcher and participants to obtain data for research.

Recommendation for Future Research

That is why future studies should concentrate on designing specific guidelines of ethics based on family folklore research and those guidelines would cover

the unique issues related to insider-outsider dynamics and ensure protection for the interests and privacy of both the participants and the researcher.

Future research would have to engage in and develop innovative methodologies that respond to the particular demands of family folklore research, such as creating new tools for negotiation and compromise to be used in situations where conventional fieldwork strategies fail.

Such peer networking sites established by the family folklore researchers will help researchers communicate experiences, how they have taken over their experiences, and strategies used to overcome these experiences. This reduces emotional and psychological burdens burdening researchers who study within their own families.

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