

Institution: Leiden University College The Hague
Assignment: Assignment E – Reflection Assignment (500 words)
Course: Qualitative Research Methods – BLOCK III 2019
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What intrigues me most in *Grief and Headhunter's Rage* by Renato Rosaldo, is how his personal understanding of the Ilongot's headhunting practice was illuminated by an epiphany: the tragic death of his wife. The rage, grief and anger that followed allowed Rosaldo to truly feel – rather than to understand – what moved the Ilongot to conduct their practices. Rosaldo's experience and also certainly his reflexive arguments, as a form of 'change', allowed me to use Fromm's¹ quote again as reference for reflection: *"But when we start out with the reality of human beings existing, loving, hating, suffering, then there is no being that is not at the time same time becoming and changing. Living structures can be only if they become; they can exist only if they change. Change and growth are inherent qualities of the life-process."*

Here I see the parallel of change and growth coming back in Rosaldo's development, but also certainly in my own position as a student researcher. When I think of the somewhat emotional phase that I find myself in now, after months of 'rage and grief', I am also aware that this affects my positionality throughout my exploration process. Through this lens I can see why I am more interested in the 'emotional' aspects of book visitors, rather than for example, the dry statistics or economic factors of bookstores. A positive implication is that it serves as a mechanism of therapy and self-continuity for myself. When the first interviewee shared her memories of being bullied and how she found a solace in reading books, I could most intensely 'feel that' struggle just by relating to my own life events of grief, and therefore was allowed to better understand what she meant. But, did I really understand? That is the question; how can I truly understand what they are trying to say, or make them understand what I am trying to say? The book, should be the pillar here.

This also shaped the subsequent interviews that I conducted in the sense that it made me think how I wanted to understand the frequent visitors of a bookstore, well, more precisely the booklover; by looking at their formative childhood years and try to draw connections to their present interaction with books.

I am also asking myself; how can I use my emotional position in a more insightful and fruitful manner, rather than to see it as an obstacle or something that prohibits. To use it as "vehicle" as Rosaldo says. In other words, what is my (vulnerable) position as a subject, and how can I use it for the better? It makes me think of what approach I can use in the next interviews to get more to the "feeling" factors, so that I can internalize and contextualize these through my own feelings. Beyond the cliché, I would also like to talk to an older person because I feel that their wisdom will be valuable, in order to experience, to change and to understand.

¹ Fromm, Erich. (1976). *To Have or To Be*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. (p.22)