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Foreword

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The creation of the International Journal for Transformative Research (IJTR) emerged out of a belief that professionals in any work setting can research their own practice with transformative outcomes for themselves and others. The aim of transformative research is to challenge existing ways of seeing and doing things, and to generate a radical shift in our perception of social, political or educational theories, ideas and actions, creating different kinds of understandings that lead to new practices. We welcome articles submitted for peer review which provide accounts of first hand experiences, where the researcher has experienced a transformational shift in the values, attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviour as a consequence of researching their own practice; or alternatively can give an account of how they have had a transformational influence on individuals, groups, organisations or the wider communities to which they belong.

The idea for this special issue came from the international development community's adoption of Sustainable Development Goals and the accompanying rhetoric about the need for social transformation in order to achieve those goals. This special issue is focused on the benefits of a transformative lens to inform the methodology used in studies in the international context. Four articles make up the special issue, three are situated in Africa and one in Asia. All take on the complex, messy task for figuring out how to use transformative research to address wicked problems such as illiteracy, economic development, and climate change.

Arko-Achemfuor, Romm and Serolong provides us with a description of a transformative approach to using research in a community development project using an Indigenous lens in South Africa. The transformative nature of their work is evident in the systematic approach they used to engage appropriately with many different constituencies and using the data to inform subsequent decision making. They demonstrate how a team building approach inclusive of academics, practitioners, village

chiefs, tribal councils, and farmers can lead to a better understanding of what is needed to raise the economic status of a community. Their contextual analysis revealed several important factors that were germane to making decisions about appropriate interventions. First, the area had a high level of poverty, unemployment rates, and illiteracy. While the researchers' intent was to support the development of farming as a viable source of livelihood, they found that many issues had to be addressed prior to teaching new farming techniques. Chief amongst these issues was the need to support literacy development in the farm community. Their research provides an excellent example of transformative research being conducted in a community-based manner that is also responsive to the culture and conditions in that specific context.

McIntyre-Mills, Karel, Arko-Achemfuor, Romm and Serolong extend the discussion of the project described in the previous article to focus on implications for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and also reflects on the inclusion of the voices of women and children in this project. Their description of a transformative research approach includes not just the building of relationships, but also the building of support networks. They provide evidence of the transformations that occurred in the communities based on the collection of qualitative data in the form of narratives and conversations. This approach allowed them to address the power dynamics and to respect the voices of those who struggle in this remote, drought-prone area. The research was conducted to support social and environmental justice in this era of climate change.

Hesse-Biber also situates her work within the context of the impact of climate change on farmers, with a specific focus on gender differences in the country of North Benin in West Africa. She describes a transformative hybrid mixed methods approach to studying the gender differences. The case study includes a quantitative data collection via survey, as well as qualitative data collection from a gaming scenario and observation. Interestingly, the survey revealed no differences between male and female farmers in their knowledge of the impact of unpredictable variations in rain on agriculture. However, the qualitative data provided insights into the strategies and decision-making processes that varied by gender. Hesse Biber argues that the use of a transformative lens and

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mixed methods approach contributed to transformation in understandings of responses to climate change. Men tended to support strategies for farming that would allow them to leave their farms and seek employment elsewhere, leaving women in an even more vulnerable position. The transformative approach led to asking different types of questions that were germane to understanding issues of social, economic, and environmental justice.

Widianingsih and Mertens shifted attention from Africa to Asia, specifically to a transformative research project in West Java, Indonesia. They argue that a transformative approach is needed in order to make progress toward achieving the SDGs in a complex, high poverty setting with environmental degradation. They provide a framework for conducting a transformative, mixed methods, cyclical study that begins with forming culturally respectful relationships with a broad range of constituencies. The researchers consciously attempted to address issues of power inequities to be inclusive of all voices. The challenge emanates from many sources, one of which is that the government purports to use a participa-

tory approach to policy development, but little has been done to improve environmental health or on other conditions that affect women and children. They also included a contextual analysis of historical, economic, and political factors that are relevant in Indonesia. This case study might be the messiest of the four cases reported in this special issue, with multiple interventions being developed and implemented. Data collection included analyzing policy documents, notes from meetings, and extant data bases; and conducting interviews, focus groups, and surveys. Community-based data collection became part of the university's curriculum requirements. The university has formed many different partnerships in pursuing the goal of improving of social, economic, and environment, justice.

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