

POPH90285 Research Project in Public Health

***‘A Workplace Like Never Before’***  
**An aspirations-driven evaluation of a  
Peer Research project**

Monica Enriquez | SID: 808716  
Master of Public Health (MPH)  
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health  
University of Melbourne

Supervisors: Ms. Elle McLachlan (Semester 1),  
Ms. Tilini Gunatillake (Semester 2)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  

---

MELBOURNE

**Date Submitted:** 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018

This report is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne.

The views expressed herein are those of the author and may not reflect the views of  
The University of Melbourne and/or the Melbourne School of Population and Global  
Health.

## Affirmation

---

This thesis does not contain any material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any educational institution, and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Amy', written in a cursive style.

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2018

## Acknowledgements

---

I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the custodians of the lands I've had the privilege of living and learning on these past three years. Sovereignty was never ceded. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and strive to reflect this in my actions and words. I wish also to acknowledge First Nations people globally whose survival stands testament to the strength and resilience of culture in the face of erasure.

To my team of official and unofficial supervisors: Elle McLachlan, Tilini Gunatillake, and Richard Williams, thank you for sustaining me and my research project with your guidance and support.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the team of Peer Researchers, Training Coordinators and Principal Investigator from the More Than a Landlord program, who gave their time and trust to share their personal experiences for this research project.

I haven't quite yet found a thank you big enough to share with Kerry Arabena and the First 1000 Days Australia team in all its permutations, whose kindness, encouragement and generosity knows no bounds, but I hope this paper provides a start.

Lastly, thank you to my friends, family, peers and colleagues from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health and beyond, your support grows and inspires me every day.

## Abstract

---

**Title:** ‘A workplace like never before’: an aspirations-driven evaluation of a peer research project.

**Background, aim and objectives:** The 2017 pilot *More Than a Landlord* (MTaL) project utilised peer research methods to collect data from social housing tenants through a household survey. The aim of this study was to conduct an aspirations-driven evaluation on the impacts of participating in the MTaL project on Peer Researchers (PRs). The research objectives were to first identify the aspirations of PRs, and to then use these to guide an exploration of the perceived impacts of research participation on PRs.

**Methods:** Qualitative data was collected from a research team of 3 PRs, 2 Training Coordinators, and a Principal Investigator using semi-structured in-depth individual interviews and one focus group, which were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.

**Findings:** By centring PR perspectives, this evaluation explored the value of the MTaL project in terms most relevant to its participants. PRs’ aspirations were mapped into three interrelated key areas: community, interpersonal and personal, which guided the exploration of the project’s perceived impacts on PRs. *Community impacts:* Stronger connections between PRs and their immediate community of AHV tenants; housing maintenance issues addressed, building trust and hope amongst the community and increased self-worth amongst PRs. *Interpersonal impacts:* Improved relationship between tenant and landlord; PRs’ social and support networks were extended and consolidated; ability to support and provide for family. *Personal impacts:* Access to employment and professional development; sense of purpose and fulfilment; increased self-esteem and confidence; recognition of own abilities and strengths; better understanding of self and relation to others.

## Statement of Positionality

---

My writing is inescapably influenced by my experiences of growing up in a middle-class, migrant Filipino household and navigating the world as a self-identified Person of Colour with close proximity to whiteness through tertiary education. Of course, these aspects of my identity intersect with many others which remain undisclosed. My understanding is that one's bias can be acknowledged and managed, but never fully eliminated from one's research. I am mindful of the historical erasure of Indigenous voices in research, as well as my "outsider" perspective and the accompanying worldview and biases I hold as someone who does not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. However, I came to see this vantage point as beneficial in its distance and detachment from the project, thus providing a space for study participants to tell a different story of their experiences in the More Than a Landlord (MTaL) pilot study and have their voices amplified in the literature.

I was first introduced to the MTaL project as part of a subject on the First 1000 Days Australia (F1000DA) movement during the second year of my Master of Public Health degree. I approached the F1000DA team at the start of my research year to enquire about potential projects which would allow me to utilise my studies in health program evaluation, community-based participatory research, and qualitative research, and the small-scale evaluation of Peer Researchers experience of the MTaL project was born. Although the ultimate ideal would have seen the facilitation of a Peer Researcher-led impact evaluation of the MTaL project, the time constraints of this student research project and my limited knowledge and training to lead a community-based participatory research project did not allow for this. However, my hope is that this study lays the foundations for the replication and revision of these methods for future rollouts of the MTaL project and other F1000DA facilitated household surveys.

## List of Abbreviations

---

<b>MTaL</b>	More Than a Landlord
<b>AHV</b>	Aboriginal Housing Victoria
<b>F1000DA</b>	First 1000 Days Australia

### Study Participants

<b>PR</b>	Peer Researcher
<b>TC</b>	Training Coordinator
<b>HTC</b>	Housing Training Coordinator
<b>ATC</b>	Academic Training Coordinator
<b>PI</b>	Principal Investigator

# Table of Contents

---

	Page
Affirmation	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Statement of Positionality	v
List of Abbreviations	vi
<b>1. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Peer research: answering the call to decolonise and indigenise research	1
1.2 Evaluating the impact of peer research	2
1.3 The More Than a Landlord pilot study	3
1.4 Research aims and objectives	5
<b>2. Methods</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1 Evaluation approach	6
2.2 Study design and methodology	7
2.3 Sample and recruitment	8
2.4 Ethical considerations	9
2.5 Data collection and analysis	10
<b>3. Results</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Community	12
3.1.1 <i>Shared experience, shared goals: improving housing</i>	12
3.1.2 <i>Interactions with community</i>	13
3.2 Interpersonal	15
3.2.1 <i>Relationship between tenant and landlord</i>	15
3.2.2 <i>Relationships within research team and with academia</i>	17
3.2.3 <i>Perceived impacts on family</i>	18
3.3 Personal	19
3.3.1 <i>Employment and professional development</i>	19
3.3.2 <i>A sense of purpose, agency and personal change</i>	22
<b>4. Discussion</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1 Impacts on Peer Researchers	24
4.2 Significance of centring Peer Researcher perspectives	25
4.3 Implications and applications of study findings	26
4.4 Study limitations	28
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6. Appendices</b>	<b>32</b>
Appendix A: Demographics of study participants	32
Appendix B: Focus group guide	33
Appendix C: Individual interview guide for Peer Researchers	34
Appendix D: Individual interview guide for Training Coordinators and Principal Investigator	37
<b>7. References</b>	<b>40</b>

# Background

---

## 1.1 Peer research: answering the call to decolonise and indigenise research

Due to the influx in Indigenous-conceived and Indigenous-led, holistic and strengths-based approaches to improving health outcomes amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,<sup>1,2</sup> the landscape of health research practices amongst Indigenous communities is shifting. Research conduct amongst Indigenous communities has not always adhered to ethical standards, in particular: consent, mutual benefit and participation.<sup>3-5</sup> Such ethically unsafe research has been exploitive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance research agendas that dismiss community priorities and devalue Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. An additional harm of this research discourse is that Indigenous peoples are portrayed as passive objects of research, dispossessed of agency to generate solutions to the very issues they face.<sup>6,7</sup>

Acknowledging the role research has played in advancing the 'politics of colonial control,'<sup>8</sup> Indigenist scholars and leaders of Indigenous health reform alike have demanded reformation by way of 'decolonising' and 'indigenising' research practices.<sup>1,4,8-11</sup> Alternatives to imposed Western models, frameworks and standards of scientific inquiry must be actively sought so that the context-specific experiences and understandings of Indigenous peoples are centred and privileged by research.<sup>2,12</sup> Due to its potential to redistribute power more equitably amongst 'researcher' and 'researched,' peer research methods are looked towards in hopes of redressing the long-standing scepticism and apprehension that research has been regarded with in Indigenous spaces.<sup>8</sup>



Informed by the values of community-based, and participatory action research, peer research recognises and values the expertise of community members in their knowledge and lived experience, as active partners in research.<sup>13</sup> In peer research, individuals who share aspects of identity, lived experience or social location with the community under study ('peers') are directly involved in research study design, participant recruitment, data collection, analysis and dissemination, to co-construct knowledge and social change with academic researchers.<sup>13-15</sup> Increasingly, peer research methods are utilised to reassert the value and authority of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in fields of public health, education, social science and environmental research.<sup>16-21</sup>

## **1.2 Evaluating the impacts of peer research**

As a tool, peer research can be used in different ways, for different purposes. The highly context-specific nature of peer research generates an assortment of different forms and approaches to involving peers in research, without standardisation.<sup>22,23</sup> Some studies exhibit *instrumental* use of peer research to operationalise a pre-determined (usually by external academic researchers) research agenda while other studies utilise peer research for its *transformative* potential in facilitating change amongst actors and systems as peer researchers participate actively in the planning and realization of research aims and objectives, though the two are not mutually exclusive.<sup>13,23</sup> Similarly, evaluative practices may adopt different perspectives in assessing the impact of a peer research project depending on the agenda of the leading stakeholders. An impact evaluation from a user's perspective will vary from that of the researcher, the project funder or the community. What an evaluator

prioritises, privileges, perceives as 'normal' or 'different', not only dictates the framing of the evaluation but can go on to shape the context in which it is situated.<sup>24</sup>

In the literature, the impact of peer research is often reported in terms of its utility in improving rigour, quality and acceptability in research findings.<sup>15,25,26</sup> The ability for peer research to facilitate knowledge transfer, capacity building and empowerment at the level of the individual and the community, though widely recognised, is less easy to capture through traditional evaluation practices and tools. Changes facilitated by peer research may be: subtle and iterative, occurring over longer periods of time often well beyond project completion; non-linear, such that periods of progress may be accompanied by periods of regress (and vice versa) and thus unsuited to point-wise assessment; and may occur in spheres for which measurement remains quite coarse and quantitative, failing to capture complexity and nuance e.g. behavioural and attitudinal changes.<sup>27,28</sup> As a result, the transformative aspects of peer research often remain under-reported or unreported.<sup>26,29</sup> This gap in the literature contributes to an underdeveloped understanding of how research participation affects peer researchers and their community in unanticipated ways.<sup>22</sup>

### **1.3 The More Than a Landlord pilot study**

The 2017 More Than a Landlord (MTaL) pilot study was a peer research project resulting from a partnership between Aboriginal Housing Victoria (AHV) and the First 1000 Days Australia (F1000DA) based at the Indigenous Health Equity Unit, University of Melbourne.<sup>30</sup> AHV is a not-for-profit registered Housing Association that provides affordable housing to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. F1000DA, a movement for strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander families through foundational work in addressing children's needs from pre-conception to two years of age,<sup>31,32</sup> were approached by AHV to assist in developing the research strategy for MTaL.<sup>30</sup>

The project aimed to collect data from AHV-supported households in the City of Whittlesea (northern metropolitan Melbourne) to generate a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of tenants and their families in order to inform AHV service delivery. To address this aim, a household survey was developed in partnership with local stakeholders including Aboriginal-controlled organisations, mainstream service providers and focus groups of AHV staff and tenants. Identifying an opportunity to build research knowledge and capacity within tenancy, a team of five Peer Researchers (PRs) who were tenants of AHV at the time, were recruited and employed by AHV to deliver the survey. Under the guidance of AHV and F1000DA staff, PRs completed a three-day intensive training course in a classroom setting which addressed: introduction to research (ethics, confidentiality, informed consent, data quality, management and security) and the logistics of survey delivery (organising home visits, safety protocols, technology troubleshooting). Further on-the-job training and support was provided over the eight weeks of fieldwork that the household survey was delivered.

Findings from the household surveys are detailed in the 2018 *More Than a Landlord Household Pilot Study Report*.<sup>30</sup> The report describes a rich profile on the aspirations, needs and demographics of AHV tenants. In response to tenants' feedback, AHV established a Life Skills Coaching program offering tenants the assistance of a Life Coach in identifying aspirations and developing the skills,

prolonged motivation and focus to achieve them. PRs were among the first clients to receive a Life Coach and, at the time of writing, continue to utilise this resource.

An external evaluation of the project's impacts has not yet been conducted. While the *More Than a Landlord Household Pilot Study Report* frames the impacts of research participation on PRs primarily in terms of skill building and employment opportunity, there is scope for further exploration into PRs' *own* perspectives on how they were impacted by participating in the MTaL project.

#### **1.4 Research aims and objectives**

The aim of this study was to conduct an evaluation into the impacts of the MTaL project on PRs using an approach that privileged PR perspectives as definitive authorities on their experiences. Two research objectives were set to address this aim: (1) to identify the initial aspirations and expectations of PRs regarding the MTaL project; (2) to then use these perspectives to guide an exploration into the perceived impacts of research participation on PRs.

In addition to contributing to the literature on peer research by documenting the impacts of the MTaL project, the findings of this aspirations-driven evaluation are anticipated to inform and refine the implementation of ongoing and future iterations of the MTaL project and similar peer research-driven household surveys facilitated by F1000DA.

## Methods

---

### 2.1 Evaluation approaches

“The way that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples view the world matters, especially in research that attempts to build or generate knowledge to improve their current situations... This necessitates that we as researchers listen to and be guided by the voices of the Indigenous experts, those living with and dealing with the consequences of the circumstances we are investigating.”

– Sherwood and Kendall (2013) <sup>21</sup>

The evaluation approach for this study has been tailored to the specific context of the MTaL project and is governed by values and principles from indigenous evaluation, strengths-based approaches and positive psychology, and developmental evaluation.

By framing evaluation as a values-based practice that is not power-neutral,<sup>24,33</sup>

Indigenous evaluators intentionally “seek to identify the value added by community-based projects in terms that are *relevant to that specific cultural community*”

(emphasis mine).<sup>18 p.330</sup> Privileging and legitimating the perspectives and

experiences of PRs encourages future program delivery and research practice to

have regard for the impact peer research processes can create for its participants in addition to data-driven research outcomes.

Strengths-based approaches re-orient Indigenous research partnership models so that Indigenous peoples are centred as agents of change for their own social and

emotional wellbeing.<sup>2,34</sup> Rather than focus on the limitations that Indigenous peoples disproportionately experience, positive psychology foregrounds drivers of wellness,

resilience and thriving, such as relationships, family, spirituality, identity and

culture.<sup>35</sup> These are reflected in the aspirations-driven approach of this study which

recognises the role of personal goals in determining well-being across life-span development.<sup>36</sup> Just as the MTaL project is rooted in strengths and aspirations, our evaluation approach provides an opportunity to '[strengthen] collective capacity to imagine and build better futures.'<sup>37p.184</sup>

More than one year after project completion, the impacts of the MTaL project are still emerging in part due to the ongoing implementation of the Life Skills Coaching program, but also due to the complex pathways through which the project addresses health and wellbeing. Principles of developmental evaluation, which seek to respond to the needs of a dynamic program by engaging in ongoing, iterative learning and avoids "straightforward" problem-solution mapping,<sup>38,39,50</sup> were utilised in determining the very scope of this study and in the development of interview questions.

## **2.2 Study Design and Methodology**

The aim of this study was to conduct an aspirations-driven evaluation on the impacts of participating in the MTaL project on PRs. The study operated within an interpretivist paradigm where reality was understood to be subjective and knowledge was context-specific and socially-constructed.<sup>40,41</sup> As the experiences of PRs and the ways they understood and constructed their reality as agents of social research lay at the centre of this evaluation, a phenomenological approach was adopted to encourage PRs to speak on their lived experiences within the frame of their *own* understanding and meaning-making, rather than through an imposed "outsider" perspective.<sup>40,42</sup> Qualitative data were collected from PRs and the research team involved in designing and implementing the MTaL project, through in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Ethics approval for this study was obtained

from the University of Melbourne Human Ethics Sub-Committee as a standard project (1851854.1).

### **2.3 Study sample and recruitment**

Participants for this study were sourced from the 2017 pilot MTaL project research team:

- **Peer Researchers (PR)** (n=3). Self-identified tenants living in AHV-owned social housing expressing interest in the MTaL project who were recruited, trained and employed by AHV to participate as Peer Researchers. All PRs identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and as mothers.
- **Housing Training Coordinator (HTC)** (n=1). Employed by AHV initially to deliver the Peer Researcher training and provide logistical support to Peer Researchers during survey delivery. The HTC identified herself as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- **Academic Training Coordinator (ATC)** (n=1). Employed by F1000DA to design the survey tool and deliver training to Peer Researchers on all aspects of survey delivery. The ATC did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- **Principal Investigator (PI)** (n=1). Employed by F1000DA. Instrumental to the Peer Research study design of the MTaL project but not directly involved in training or survey delivery. The PI identified as Torres Strait Islander.

Further details of participant demographics can be found in Appendix A.

Initial contact between the evaluator and the PI, ATC and HTC was established through the initial supervisor, an employee of the F1000DA that was not directly involved in PR training or household survey delivery, who extended the invitation to participate in the study by word of mouth. The HTC had an open line of communication with PRs as their 'Life Coach' and was instrumental in mediating the recruitment of PRs for the study. PRs were first invited to the study by phone call and upon indicating interest, were then invited to meet with the evaluator in-person to further discuss the evaluation and were supplied a Plain Language Statement and consent form. Of the five PRs who completed training for the MTaL project, contact was established with four PRs and three chose to participate in the study. Participants were offered a \$50 Coles/Myer gift voucher for each individual interview and focus group attended as compensation for their time.

## **2.4 Ethical Considerations**

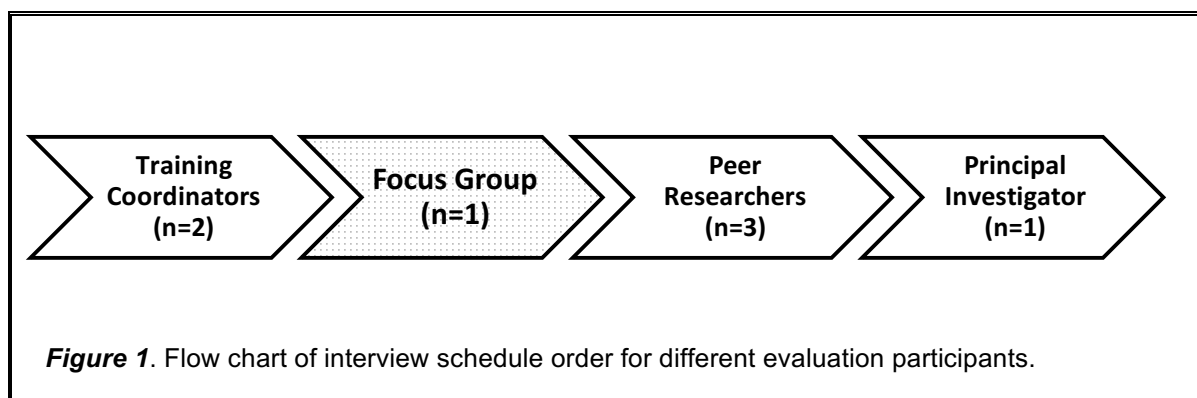
The confidentiality of participants in this small sample was maintained by de-identifying data, using pseudonyms and, where possible, aggregating personal responses when reporting findings. Given the existing relationships between the research staff and the key agencies involved in the project, care was also taken to assure participants their participation was entirely voluntary, and that their disclosure of feedback would be held confidential and would not compromise or influence the relationships with their colleagues or workplace. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.



## 2.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to interviews and focus groups, the evaluator participated in informal activities to develop a better understanding of the MTaL project and establish a rapport with participants. These included: meetings with F1000DA and AHV staff (including the Director of Strategy and Impact at AHV), attendance at short course presentations on the MTaL project and AHV-hosted family events. Basic content analysis was conducted on promotional and training materials for the MTaL project as a starting point for developing questions for interviews and focus groups. Consent was sought from Peer Researchers to obtain access to interviews conducted with the ATC in late 2017 for media purposes, to also assist in interview guide development.

Participants were invited to provide feedback on their experience of MTaL through individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews (n=6) and one focus group. Interviews with participants were strategically scheduled (see Figure 1) with data analysed as it was collected, in order to shape the evaluator's understanding of the project and refine successive interview guides (see Appendix for Interview Guides).



Individual interviews were first conducted with TCs to inform the evaluator's understanding of the MTaL project. A focus group was then co-moderated by the evaluator and HTC to introduce PRs to the evaluation and develop the guide for individual interviews. Focus group discussions explored PRs' expectations (what they *thought* would happen), aspirations (what they *hoped* would happen) and their motivations (why they chose to participate), with some reflection on perceived impacts of the project. The focus group was followed by individual interviews with PRs, providing an opportunity for more in-depth probing on the personal narratives introduced during the focus group. The individual interview with the PI was deliberately placed at the end of the schedule to minimise the evaluator's interviewer bias in interviews with PRs.

All participants completed one individual interview each (ranging from 41 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes) and the focus group was attended by the HTC and two PRs (1 hour and 15 minutes). Proceedings were audio-recorded, de-identified, censored of personal information then transcribed using online transcription service Rev.com. Qualitative data was then collected from transcripts using Microsoft Word (Version 15.22). In line with DeCuir-Gunby et al.'s method of codebook development,<sup>43,44</sup> data-driven codes and then broader themes were developed independently by the evaluator, first within the context of a single transcript then across all transcripts, and overseen by research supervisors. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback throughout data analysis to ensure their responses were accurately represented by the evaluator.

## Results

---

Three PRs (Lauren\*, Felicity\* and Lynn\*) offered personal stories of how they came to be involved with the project, and common themes were identified across individual interviews and focus group in their framing of opportunities: to do something for oneself and one's family, for employment and personal development, to develop and strengthen social networks, to have a voice and, perhaps the strongest message across all three PR narratives, to improve housing. Each PR's story highlighted different priorities and aspirational areas. The following exploration of PR's perceived impacts of research participation is guided by key areas mapped from their initial aspirations: the community, the personal and the interpersonal.

### 3.1 Community

#### 3.1.1 Shared experience, shared goals: improving housing

The desire to improve housing was a leading motivator across all three PRs interviewed. As self-identified tenants of social housing, they saw the opportunity presented by the MTaL project to have their voices heard as tenants. Lauren considered this aspect of her identity the core basis of her involvement as a PR:

I really only went into it so that I had a voice, because I've been in housing twenty years now and I was sick of not having a voice.

- Individual Interview, Lauren

It pricked my ears up for the first time in community, somebody asked us what we really thought. And for me, that was a catch for me because I wanted people to know what I thought about Aboriginal Housing. Not that I'd had a really bad history with them, but it was more about not being listened to as a tenant.

- Focus Group, Lauren

---

\* Names have been changed to maintain anonymity of participants

PRs recognised how their own status as tenants of social housing influenced the way they were perceived by the households they surveyed with one PR, Lynn remarking that they were ‘on the same page [. . .] in the same situation’ and therefore in an optimal position to engage them. As PRs envisioned the improvement of housing access and conditions for current and future tenants of AHV as the end goal of client engagement and data collection, they were also motivated by the chance to extend the platform to be heard to other tenants. The tenacity of their shared drive to make a difference to their community was observed by all members of the academic research team.

Though PRs identified this was a longer-term goal, they believed their research involvement has still contributed to progress. For example, PRs spoke about prompting the creation of a maintenance feedback form which resulted from an unmet need they collectively identified during data collection. Enabling fellow tenants to feel heard by having their housing maintenance issues addressed by AHV was perceived to build trust and hope amongst the community. Feeling that they were able to effect positive change through their work left an impression on some of the PRs’ own sense of self-worth: ‘the respect you realize you can have for yourself by doing a good job and actually listening to other people.’

### **3.1.2 Interactions with community**

Data collection and fieldwork gave PRs the chance to interact more with their surrounding community of AHV tenants than they previously had. Their shared identity and familiarity with the tenants were considered both helpful and a

hindrance, due to conflicting expectations of being an employee of AHV *and* a fellow community member.

Two PRs remarked on their relief at the lack of negative feedback from tenants regarding the conduct of the MTaL project, indicating that they felt responsible for the processes and outcomes of the project. Although PRs maintained that they assured tenants the sole purpose of their visit was to conduct a household survey – rather than to inspect housing or follow up on maintenance requests, tasks that other employees of AHV e.g. housing officers are responsible for – concerns were raised for the tensions arising from the many identities and responsibilities that PRs simultaneously hold, as: self-identified tenants and members of the community, employees of AHV and researchers collecting data.

The impacts of these tensions are further highlighted in Lauren's experience of conducting a survey with an older resident who disclosed an unexpected, sensitive matter:

I got a bit of a shock when I was doing the surveys. Because it was all about goals and aspirations, and I came across an old couple that I had to do a survey with – I didn't know any of their story or anything – and I've sat in the house, and I've gone, "So, what are your goals?" I said to the husband. He goes, "Well, I don't have any. I'm dying soon anyway."

So, I wasn't prepared for that sort of reaction. And by the end, just after the survey's finished, he passed away. That made me a little bit sad, even though I didn't know him, I'd had that little bit of interaction with him. It made him another community member to me, not just another person. You know what I mean? I found that I've never ever expected someone to say, "I don't have goals. I'm dying. Worry about my wife."

[. . .] What was I supposed to do? Sit there and cry? Which, I wanted to. But, I had to keep a straight face. But what happens if it had been someone that had never come across an instance like that before? You cannot be sitting there crying, or walking out crying.

- Individual Interview, Lauren

This desire to express emotion in conflict with the need to 'keep a straight face' revealed a less-emphasised impact of the work on PRs: the discomfort and emotional stress sometimes associated with data collection, which was echoed by other PRs. When this topic was broached, PRs commented on the extensive support they received from their TCs in the form of debriefing and counselling.

Despite these tensions, PRs remained in appreciation of their close involvement with the community, and how it had 'opened their eyes.' Lauren built new connections with and gained cultural knowledge from AHV tenants (Elders in particular) living in her area of residence. For Felicity, the experience of seeing 'the different ways that other people live,' has gone on to inform her practice in how she conducts herself in client-centered work.

## **3.2 Interpersonal**

### **3.2.1 Relationship between tenant and landlord**

One aspect of AHV service delivery PRs hoped that research would address was the relationship between tenant and AHV as their landlord. Although PRs stated that they would not describe their own relationships with AHV as negative, their stories suggested that a lack of engagement with the housing organisation was typical to the experience of being a tenant. Changing this narrative was a shared goal amongst PRs, who envisioned that the relationship shift between tenant and landlord could help the entire community by improving housing conditions and access to housing.

Each of the PRs spoke about how the Life Skills Coaching initiative that AHV introduced in response to the household survey findings has begun to facilitate changes in their own relationships with AHV:

You know, Aboriginal Housing was just Aboriginal Housing, like I said, who we paid our rent to and all that sort of stuff. Now you have sort of ... what is it? Face to a name, name to a face, sort of thing, and we feel like we're not forgotten about. Or maybe I don't know if that's just us, because we're being in the More Than a Landlord Project. I'm not sure how other tenants feel, but for me personally I feel like I've got a lot more... a better connection with absolutely housing now.

[. . .] through meeting [HTC] in this program, I've got a bond with Aboriginal Housing that I didn't have before. I feel like I can trust [HTC] with everything. I can go to her with anything that I want, so that trust factor between tenant and agency has definitely improved, in my personal view.

- Individual Interview, Felicity

So many people wanted a Life Skills Coach. And Aboriginal Housing's never had that before. [. . .] It's the best thing Aboriginal Housing's ever done. We can actually talk to Housing now, whereas before, we couldn't. And I mean, all [HTC] really does with me is helps me get my bills in order and stuff like that. [. . .] You've got someone there to help you out with it. Because, I'm not good at bills and things like that.

- Individual Interview, Lauren

Because [HTC] is one of those persons at AHV that ... is easy to talk to, and easy to confide into, and can trust. Not many people gain that relationship with you, to be able to have that. You don't even see them, you don't even know them. I've been there for 3 years and I haven't met my... I met my housing officer... the other day – yesterday.

- Individual Interview, Lynn

Their relationship with the HTC, who at the time of writing continues to play a role in PRs lives as their 'Life Coach', was perceived to transform previous grievances with AHV's lack of engagement into a positive source of support. PRs attribute the trust and connection they have built with their Life Coach to her life experience, open-mindedness and perseverance, which has allowed for open and honest conversations about housing and life matters, as well as access to the support they seek.

### 3.2.2 Relationships within research team and with academia

Although PRs and academic researchers were not acquainted before commencing MTaL, they formed a bond over the course of the project which all participants consider to be a lasting, positive one that they presently maintain through social media. PRs had initially sought comfort in the shared aspects of identity: womanhood, motherhood, unfamiliarity with research, and tenancy in AHV, amongst their peers. This connectedness extended to the larger research team, cultivated through the technical and emotional support that TCs provided to PRs, especially during fieldwork:

[ATC] just made us feel like we were doing something really good... She uplifted us, if that makes any sense. Just constantly gave us recognition, tell us we're doing a good job. If things come up in our home lives or whatever, she was there to have a chat to. Same with [HTC]. Like I said, we gained this bond that I don't think we could have gained anywhere else. It's a workplace like never before.

- Individual Interview, Felicity

PRs voiced that their relationship with the HTC was especially valued amongst these new connections, particularly as the HTC provided emotional support and encouraged the confidence building and resilience crucial to their progress with regards to seeking employment, paying bills, and coping with other life stressors.

PRs met with an array of university staff, leading researchers and key speakers in the F1000DA movement over the course of the project and through the F1000DA Summit in Brisbane where they were invited to speak on their experiences. This was deeply valued, as PRs deliberated on changes in self-worth that were facilitated by entering academic spaces. Although time spent in these spaces afforded networking opportunities that PRs had stated they would not have otherwise made, more



significance was placed on the symbolic possibility of a reality they had not previously imagined themselves to be a part of, as Lauren shared:

It's the first time any of us have ever done this. So, to come into Melbourne University and places like that, some of us feel like we're not worthy of that. So, when we kept doing it and doing it, we understand, yeah, we're just like those Melbourne Uni people [ . . . ] We don't have to walk with our heads down anymore. We can actually walk with our heads up and our shoulders held high.

- Individual Interview, Lauren

### **3.2.3 Perceived impacts on family**

Each PR identified the potential for their involvement in the MTaL project to provide positive role-modelling and change for their children. Felicity, who wanted to 'show [her] kids that mum can do it,' felt a significant sense of achievement in independently providing financial support to her family as a result of her employment. Reflecting on other impacts, she spoke of the hope for possibility that this opportunity has given her family.

We might live in Aboriginal Housing and we don't own our own home or anything like that, but these are little steps that I'm taking to getting closer and closer to that point eventually.

- Individual interview, Felicity

For another Peer Researcher, Lauren, the perceived impacts of her involvement with the MTaL project extended beyond herself, encouraging her son to enrol in the next iteration of the project as a PR:

Taylor\* left school in year eight, didn't do very well in school. Wasn't a kid that got school. Ended up in a learning centre [ . . . ] And, Paul\* came on as the male Life Skills Coach, so, Taylor was his first person that he picked up when he came. Now, he's actually going to do courses and things like that. So, for me, it's taken a little bit off of my shoulders, too, because we were always fighting about him being home doing nothing [ . . . ] Now that he's got the peer researching coming up, he's so excited about it [ . . . ] So, for me and him, it's made him grow up a little bit. And not have to rely on mummy so much.

- Individual interview, Lauren

PRs also noted some strain placed on their families due to time away from home working, but this was also positively framed as an opportunity for their families to gain independence.

### **3.3 Personal**

#### **3.3.1 Employment and professional development**

Reflecting on their entry point into the MTaL project and how they had reported underemployment or unemployment at the time of recruitment, all three PRs commented on how they had expressed a desire to return to the workforce. They had expected their involvement in the MTaL project would lead to further opportunities for employment and development.

When asked about the skills and knowledge they gained from research participation, PRs recalled content from their Peer Research training, specifically the importance of informed consent, confidentiality and safety protocols when conducting home visits. They expressed appreciation for the practical skills they were able to develop and refine during fieldwork such as cold calling and scheduling appointments by phone, time management and conducting formal household visits. Interestingly, all three PRs disclosed that working in research was not something that they had ever considered or aspired to do prior to MTaL – as one PR put it, the research upskilling and capacity building was a “bonus.”

For some of the PRs, these skills assisted in obtaining ongoing work after the project concluded. Motivated by a renewed interest in the maternal and child health work

F1000DA facilitates, Felicity successfully obtained full time work as a Koori Maternity Services worker. Although she has since resigned from the position due to changes in life circumstances and mismatched expectations in scheduling, Felicity reflected on some of the noteworthy contributions she was able to make to her workplace and the impact that this had on her self-worth:

I was able to take the knowledge that I learnt from the First 1000 Days and bring that over to my work. I had a seminar and I actually got one of the speakers that spoke at the First 1000 Days Summit to come over and speak... I felt like I was doing something good for my work, you know what I mean? To contact her, organize it, definitely, yeah – I was pretty proud of myself [ . . . ] I organized a three-day conference, bringing people from all around the state and booking them into hotels and things like that.

- Individual interview, Felicity

Lynn, who shared that she had minimal work experience prior to being a PR, attributed her current employment, working full-time hours in customer service to her involvement in MTaL. She reflected on looking into courses to pursue further research work at the university in hopes of working alongside the ATC and PI. Due to more pressing responsibilities to support her daughter, Lynn recognised the significant investment of time and money required to obtain research qualifications commenting that while now may not be the right time to pursue this aspiration, it remained a possibility she would reconsider in future.

Employment was central in framing what the TCs perceived PRs wanted to gain from this experience, and subsequently, their tailored approach to training and development for PRs and how they gauged the project's impact on PRs. In their individual interviews, both HTC and ATC expressed concern that they did not want to set the PRs up to feel as though their involvement in the project had not yielded meaningful personal gains e.g. transferable skills and employment opportunities. For this reason, PRs were offered opportunities beyond training and fieldwork to engage

in both paid work and unpaid activities to increase their employability. These included: resume building sessions and regular invitations to present on their experiences at the University of Melbourne for a Masters subject, short courses, publication launches, and the F1000DA Summit in Brisbane. The PRs who had presented at these events noted how public speaking to such audiences elevated their sense of self-confidence, self-worth and reaffirmed an ability to face their fears. TCs also assisted PRs in obtaining an Australian Business Number (ABN) to operate as sole traders in their existing and newfound skillsets. One PR with an art background was even contracted by the Research Team to create the artwork for the 2018 *More Than a Landlord Household Pilot Study Report*.

Nonetheless, some disappointment was expressed by PRs that there was no permanent full-time research position to come from their involvement in the project and that their training course was yet to be accredited. PRs voiced frustration at the lack of definition and general recognition of the title 'Peer Researcher,' particularly as it was unclear to them what future employment opportunities their work experience and certification entitled them to. Recognising their own ability and expertise as researchers in their own right, PRs displayed a sense of authority in demanding course accreditation:

I feel like... not 'We're the experts,' but we *are* the ones that got the information first hand, we were in the homes with people. [ATC and the research team] did amazing work, there's a lot that goes into it, yeah, but I reckon the real hard work is engaging the clients and the tenants.

- Individual Interview, Felicity

### 3.3.2 A sense of purpose, agency and personal change

Beyond the opportunity for paid work, PRs shared personal narratives which framed employment as a possibility to pursue something new and different, and to attain a sense of purpose. Felicity and Lynn shared details of their personal circumstances at the time of recruitment for the MTaL project, which they recalled was punctuated by unemployment, depression and a lack of control in their lives. Both spoke to the significant changes in perspective they underwent as a result of their peer research involvement.

For Felicity, the MTaL project provided “a focus and a purpose, and an out” from what she describes as “a down spiral at that time in [her] life.” The connections that she subsequently made with: AHV tenants, the MTaL research team, the F1000DA movement and with her family have all contributed to changes in her outlook on life circumstances and view of herself. Felicity commented on her accomplishment of “showing the kids that Mum can do things even when she’s down and out – that she can pull her socks up and get her act together,” identifying resilience as a personal quality that her involvement in the project helped her rediscover.

Lynn’s narrative drew more focus to the larger F1000DA movement that informed the MTaL project in giving her a better understanding of herself and her story, and helping her recognise the power she possessed to change her story:

I guess seeing the bigger picture really made me passionate. I really loved it. I guess more so, not just More Than a Landlord, but The First 1000 Days was huge - it was inspiring. I was a child, I was in care too. So I understood half their stories. My mum was Stolen Generation, but I was in care, in the system, in [Department of Human Services] and stuff. And then I had my daughter, and I suppose I'm trying to break that cycle.

[. . .] I kind of never actually understood my lifestyle until I sat in that conference and understood everyone else's ... it's our story, it's our belonging. It's not just something that I'm confused about. It's actually generated in our culture. [...] So, I guess knowing the story and things like that, it kind of made me feel like I'm not alone [...] It made me come to a conclusion, it made me find myself.

- Individual Interview, Lynn

These realisations not only offered a sense of belonging but fuelled a sense of purpose and agency for Lynn throughout and beyond the MTaL project.

In contrast to the TC's framing of Peer Research as an employment opportunity, these outcomes of personal change align with the PI's perspective on the transformative potential of the the MTaL project on its PRs as a 'facilitative process that enables people to give themselves a different identity.' With an established background in facilitating Peer Research projects, the PI imagined that PRs sought to 'be counted [. . .] belong and [. . .] feel valued.' And indeed alongside the skills, knowledge and experience of conducting data collection over the course of their involvement with the MTaL project, PRs recognised the personal impacts their work was having on themselves: an increased sense of confidence, self-esteem and pride; a sense of belonging; a sense of purpose and agency; a sense of fulfilment and accomplishment; recognition of their abilities and strengths; role-modelling for their family; and a better understanding of self and relation to others.

## Discussion

---

### 4.1 Impacts on Peer Researchers

This study sought to collect qualitative data on the aspirations of PRs to inform a deeper understanding of the impacts of research participation experienced by PRs. The results demonstrate the numerous points of impact that research involvement in the MTaL project has had on PRs. While the study's initial objective may have been to examine how research participation in MTaL had personally impacted PRs, the above findings indicate that perceived changes at the interpersonal and community level were also consequential to the personal changes that PRs experienced.

While the 2018 *More Than a Landlord Household Survey Report* speaks to the instrumental use of peer research for collecting data to inform AHV service delivery, this study provides a complementary narrative of peer research's transformative potential. Perceived impacts at the personal level reported by PRs reflect the findings of similar project evaluations centred on the perspectives of peer researchers, with regards to: a more positive idea of self and one's abilities (self-worth, confidence), supportive relationships and new knowledge and skills.<sup>15,26,45,46</sup>

The added dimensions of the *interpersonal* and *community* as key aspirational areas in this study unfurls a more holistic view of how and why PRs are affected by their involvement in peer research. For example, there is particular significance in the finding that PRs were primarily motivated to participate in the MTaL project because of its potential to address the community's desire to improve Aboriginal housing, rather than to increase their knowledge and practice of research skills, as tends to be foregrounded in peer research literature.<sup>26</sup> This supports the findings of community-

centred evaluations of participatory projects which highlight how levels of community engagement are safeguarded when community priorities are deeply and genuinely embedded in research.<sup>47-49</sup> The improvement of relationships between tenant and landlord, and changes in attitude and behaviour amongst PRs as outcomes of the MTaL speaks to the need to explore impacts beyond the specific aims of research.

Despite compartmentalising impacts into key aspirational areas for report writing, there are clear overlaps, linkages and interactions between these areas and indeed, across perceived impacts themselves. For example, unexpected interactions with community members during data collection (*community level*) became a site for TCs and other PRs to provide support to one another through relationship building (*interpersonal level*). These relationships went on to effect changes perceived at the *personal level* such as: building resilience, and developing a sense of control and agency in one's life. This interconnectedness reveals the difficulty in mapping program outputs, outcomes and impacts linearly or one-to-one, as is often pursued through traditional program logic models.<sup>50</sup> Rather than betray complexity for oversimplification, this study's adoption of qualitative methods captures the intricacies of an emergent project like MTaL. The changes facilitated by MTaL do not occur in isolation but rather as ripple effects that are simultaneously pathways to other impacts, resulting from other impacts; they are not just end-products of research but 'embedded in the process.'<sup>28 p.561</sup>

## **4.2 Significance of centring Peer Researcher perspectives**

The strengths of this study are drawn from its focus and prioritisation of PR perspectives. The importance of perspective in evaluation was highlighted by the incongruity between PRs' personal aspirations and what the rest of the research



team had anticipated PRs would gain from the experience. TCs perspectives foregrounded employment as an indicator of success and impact; had these been adopted to guide the impact evaluation, the underlying aspirations and motivators of PRs (e.g. the desire to forge better connections with community) as well as their triumphs (e.g. gaining a better understanding of self and relation to others and a sense of purpose) may have been masked or overlooked entirely. By anchoring this evaluation to the aspirations of PRs, it explored the value of research participation in MTaL in the terms most relevant to PRs. Furthermore, while PRs shared some commonalities in their reasons for becoming involved with the projects, they provided a variety of personal motivators and objectives with differing priorities. The study's ability to capture this diversity of voices is significant in providing a counter-narrative to the broad strokes of homogeneity with which communities are often portrayed in community-based participatory research literature.<sup>51</sup> This study's approach and findings regard MTaL as a vehicle for transformation at the personal, interpersonal and community levels and recognises PRs as the agents of change in their own lives.

### **4.3 Implications and applications of study findings**

Centring this evaluation on PRs' experiences uncovered tensions and opportunities for improving future iterations of the MTaL project. In particular, PRs responses touched on their multiple roles and responsibilities as researchers, community members and employees of AHV as a source of tension. Studies of peer research have shown that unchecked, these tensions may give rise to ethical compromises that place PRs in moral distress and hazard<sup>15,52</sup> and negatively impact the validity and reliability of study data,<sup>53</sup> making this a critical checkpoint for training processes in future. The lack of clarity surrounding the future employment opportunities

available to PRs following their training and fieldwork, presents another site for further clarification amongst the research team. The demand for peer researchers and their particular skillset in the job market is yet to be ascertained and until course accreditation of the peer research training undertaken by PRs is finalised, more support can be provided to assist in navigating opportunities for further work in this space.

By contrast, the understanding of the positive impacts of MTaL on its PRs and the corresponding pathways for these changes conveyed in this study can inform recruitment practices for future MTaL projects to optimise interest capture amongst ideal candidates. In addition to reinforcing the evidence base for the expansion of MTaL and other peer researcher-driven household surveys, this study also makes a contribution to the dearth of literature reporting on the potential benefits peer research offers peers themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Future work should be done to integrate evaluative processes more readily into the MTaL project and other F1000DA household survey projects to allow for data collection points before, during and after the project. These may encourage the research team to: develop a finer and more nuanced understanding of the pathways to impacts and better consideration of the barriers PRs may have to overcome to participate in the project and reap its benefits; make changes to project implementation in real time; and observe longer term impacts. Further research to map the changes facilitated by the MTaL program is instrumental to its replication and reappropriation to other settings, which is especially pertinent given the impending rollout of other F1000DA household surveys in other regions of Queensland and Victoria.

#### 4.4 Study Limitations

As addressed in the Statement of Positionality (see: page v), bias in the sense of a researcher's implicit world view is inextricable from their work: it can be acknowledged but not altogether avoided.<sup>54-55</sup> The framing of bias, as derived from quantitative research paradigms as 'distortion in the results of a study,'<sup>56</sup> warrants an outline of potential sources of bias within a study and the strategies for managing these. In the interest of transparency and accountability for the rigour of this study, these are provided below.

Impact evaluations ideally have baseline, entry-point data as a point of comparison for data collected during and after project completion.<sup>57</sup> In the absence of baseline data for the 2017 pilot MTaL project, participants were asked about their aspirations and expectations after they had already completed the program introducing the potential for *recall* or *hindsight bias*, which calls into question the accuracy or completeness of participants' responses due to the passage of time or deliberate omission. Rather than continuing to collect data retrospectively, practices for baseline data collection have been introduced for the evaluation of the next iterations of MTaL and other F1000DA facilitated household surveys.

In order to address *confirmation bias*, whereby researchers exclusively seek out data that supports their hypothesis and dismiss 'incompatible' data, the evaluator exercised critical reflection regularly, consulted with other academic researchers, encouraged member-checking amongst participants and delayed interviewing the PI responsible for the MTaL study design until the end of the interview schedule.

While conducting interviews, the potential for the interviewer to influence participants' responses through the structure and phrasing of questions (*interviewer bias*) was present. As much as possible, this was minimized by the use of open-ended questions and the framing of interviews as an opportunity to explore implementation aspects, as well as the impact, of the project to prompt critical discussion and evaluation amongst participants. The possibility of *acquiescence* or *groupthink bias*, where consensus takes priority over expressing alternative or unpopular opinions and critiques amongst focus group participants, was also minimised by further probing and cross-checking claims made during the focus group in individual interviews.

Lastly, two of the original five PRs who participated in the MTaL project did not take part in this evaluation (one could not be contacted, and the other declined the invitation to join) which raises the potential for *selection bias*. Their absence raises questions about what barriers (structural, attitudinal) prevent them from further participation and what alternative perspectives on the MTaL project they may have offered.

## Conclusion

---

Although PRs perform an integral role in driving peer research projects, literature reporting on the impact of such projects often overlooks the effects that research involvement can have on PRs themselves. This research project purposefully sought to capture and understand PRs' experiences of participating in the 2017 MTaL pilot study and the impacts they perceived their involvement to have.

At the *personal* level, findings of this study not only reflect the skill building and employability impacts reported in the *2018 More Than a Landlord Study Report*, but captures amongst PRs: increased self-esteem and confidence; sense of purpose, fulfilment and agency; recognition of one's own abilities; consolidated social and support networks; and a better understanding of self and relation to others. The scope of the study was unexpectedly broadened beyond personal impacts to encompass changes PRs perceived their participation in the MTaL project to have at the community and interpersonal level, including: the ability to support and provide for one's family; improvement in the relationship between tenant and landlord; and stronger connections with and amongst community. Such impacts were situated as facilitators in the transformative processes of peer research, and enhance our understanding of the pathways through which personal impacts were mediated within this project. Findings also highlighted the importance of embedding community priorities in peer research.

This evaluation assists in consolidating the evidence-base for the MTaL project and provides insight into opportunities for improving the delivery of MTaL and other F1000DA-facilitated household surveys in future. Further, with its unique vantage

point centred on the perspectives and experiences of PRs and driven by their aspirations, this body of work amplifies PR voices to make a significant contribution to peer research literature, offering evidence of the benefits of research involvement to PRs, as well as consideration factors for how PRs may be affected by their work in unanticipated ways.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant Demographics

Table 1. Summary of de-identified participant demographics from individual interview responses.

	Peer Researchers (n=3)			Non-PR Research Team (n=3)				
<b>Age range (years)</b>	27-48			30-50				
<b>Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander</b>	Aboriginal	•	•	•	Aboriginal		•	
	Torres Strait Islander				Torres Strait Islander		•	•
	No				No	•		
<b>Identify as Stolen Generation</b>	Yes			•	Yes			
	No	•	•		No		•	•
	N/A				N/A	•		
<b>Country or Traditional Lands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gunditjmara (2)</li> <li>Unknown (1)</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wuthathi (1)</li> <li>Meriam (1)</li> <li>N/A (1)</li> </ul>				
<b>Speak a language other than English at home</b>	Very well	•	•	•	Very well	•	•	•
	Well				Well			
	Not well				Not well			
	Not at all				Not at all			
<b>Main source of income during MTaL project</b>	Employed full time				Employed full time	•	•	•
	Employed part time			•	Employed part time			
	Casual/occasional work				Casual/occasional work			
	Unemployed	•	•		Unemployed			
	Student			•	Student			
	Home duties	•	•	•	Home duties			
	Carer				Carer			
	Centrelink	•	•		Centrelink			
<b>Main source of income currently</b>	Employed full time				Employed full time	•	•	•
	Employed part time				Employed part time			
	Casual/occasional work	•	•		Casual/occasional work			
	Unemployed				Unemployed			
	Student			•	Student			
	Home duties				Home duties			
	Carer				Carer			
	Centrelink	•	•		Centrelink			
<b>Highest level of education</b>	Year 10 or below		•		Year 10 or below			
	VCE or equivalent				VCE or equivalent		•	
	Certificate	•		•	Certificate			
	Diploma	•			Diploma			
	Undergraduate degree				Undergraduate degree			
	Postgraduate degree				Postgraduate degree	•		•
<b>What is your marital status?</b>	Single	•	•	•	Single			
	Married				Married	•	•	•
	Separated				Separated			
	De Facto				De Facto			
	Other (please specify)				Other (please specify)			
	How many children are you responsible for?	4	1	4	How many children are you responsible for?	0	3	2

## Appendix B: Focus Group Guide

### Part 1: Aspiration mapping

Question	Probes
Could you please tell me a bit about yourselves and how you ended up getting involved in the <i>More Than a Landlord</i> project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before this, had you heard of anything like the <i>More Than a Landlord Program</i> that were looking to train and employ members of the community?</li> <li>• What were your first impressions of the <i>More Than a Landlord</i> project when you were told about it through the flyers?</li> <li>• Before you even got started with the training, what did you think it was going to involve?</li> </ul>
What were you hoping to get out of participating in the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the reasons you chose to apply for the position?</li> <li>• What are some of the skills you were hoping to gain from participating in the program?</li> </ul>
Was developing research skills important to you? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you <i>think</i> about conducting research prior to doing the Peer Researcher Training Program?</li> <li>• What did you <i>know</i> about conducting research prior to the program?</li> </ul>

### Part 2: Perceived impacts

Question	Probes
Overall how do you feel about having been a part of the pioneering team of Peer Researchers to complete the training program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the training program measure up to your expectation that you would... <b>e.g. <i>be a source of pride for you family; become more employable</i></b></li> </ul>
When you tell other people about your experience of doing the training and becoming a Peer Researcher, what do you talk about first?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the other things that you think have changed the most since you completed training last year?</li> <li>• Which parts of the training do you think were responsible for those changes?</li> </ul>
What are some of the skills you picked up from participating in the training program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ... in your everyday habits</li> <li>• ... for work</li> <li>• ... for your family</li> <li>• ... for the community</li> <li>• ... for yourself</li> </ul>



## Appendix C: Individual Interview Guide for Peer Researchers

### Pre-interview: Demographics

Question	Answer options / Follow ups
What is your age?	
Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal</li> <li>• Torres Strait Islander</li> <li>• Unknown</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
If YES:	Where is your country or traditional lands? Do you identify as Stolen Generation? On which country were you born?
	If born outside of Australia, what year did you first arrive in Australia to live here for more than one year?
What is your Australian resident status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian citizen</li> <li>• Permanent resident</li> <li>• Temporary resident</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> <li>• Do not know</li> <li>• Refuse</li> </ul>
Do you speak a language other than English at home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – which language?</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
How well do you speak English?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very well</li> <li>• Well</li> <li>• Not well</li> <li>• Not at all</li> </ul>
What is your main source of income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed full time</li> <li>• Employed part time</li> <li>• Casual / occasional work</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Home duties</li> <li>• Carer</li> <li>• Centrelink (please specify type)</li> </ul>
What is your highest level of education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 10 or below</li> <li>• VCE</li> <li>• Certificate</li> <li>• Diploma</li> <li>• Undergraduate Degree</li> <li>• Postgraduate Degree</li> </ul>
What is your marital status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Separated</li> <li>• De Facto</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> </ul>
What is your current occupation? (Position Title)	How long have you been in this position? With regards to the <i>Peer Researcher Training Program</i> , what was your position title?

## Part 1: Implementation of the project

Question	Probes
What do you remember the most from the <b>classroom</b> part of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would you say was the hardest part?</li> <li>• What was the most enjoyable part of learning in this classroom setting?</li> <li>• What was the most valuable thing you learnt during this part of the training?</li> <li>• Was there anything that surprised you during this <b>classroom</b> component of the training?</li> </ul>
Would you say that this was a part of the training that you looked forward to? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it important for you that this part of the training was enjoyable?</li> </ul>
Did you find the material was easy to understand? To read? To relate to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe some of the ways the training booklet related to what you ended up doing during fieldwork?</li> </ul>
The main point of the <b>classroom</b> training was to equip you with the skills and knowledge you need to conduct a survey in the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you can bring your minds back to that first week on-the-job, did you feel prepared when you went out to do the surveys?</li> </ul>
Could more support have been provided, so that you felt ready?	Examples include: transport, emotional support, accessibility, child care, food, smoke breaks, financial

What do you remember the most from the <b>fieldwork</b> part of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would you say was the hardest part?</li> <li>• What was the most enjoyable part of conducting the survey?</li> </ul>
Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you find the transport arrangements for getting to interviews/meetings?</li> <li>• What did you think about this pattern of employment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Block hours, choose your own hours</li> <li>○ Being your own boss</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
What are some of the skills and knowledge that you gained while you were doing the surveys?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the most valuable thing you learnt while you were on the job, that wasn't part of the <b>classroom</b> training?</li> <li>• Would it have been better if this was included in the classroom training?</li> </ul>
Did you have any challenges in completing interviews for any reason?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were they?</li> <li>• Do you think you could complete them now?</li> </ul>
Did you have enough support throughout the fieldwork? If not, why not?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the ways that the training coordinators supported you while you were doing the survey?</li> <li>• Is there any other support you think could have been provided during <b>Fieldwork</b>? Examples include: transport, emotional support, accessibility, child care, food, smoke breaks, financial</li> </ul>

## Part 2: Follow up questions

Peer Researchers were asked follow-up questions from topics raised during the focus group.

Examples include:

- Connecting with the community was a big motivator for you to take part in this project. Could you help me understand what kind of a difference this project made by talking about what it was like for you living in Aboriginal Housing before, and how it is now, what kinds of relationships you had with your landlord and the other people who were living in Aboriginal Housing.
- One of the things you said during the focus group was that taking part in the More Than a Landlord Program has “opened so many doors” for you. Where are those doors currently leading to in your life?
- During the focus group, you talked a bit about the difference between getting other certificates in the past, and getting a certificate in something that you were truly passionate about, and have wanted to talk about for so long which I think is wonderful. What do you think was stopping you from doing this before the More Than a Landlord project came along? What sorts of other issues are you passionate about tackling?

In the case of the PR who only attended an individual interview but not the focus group, questions were extended ad hoc.

## Part 3: Concluding questions

<b>Question</b>	<b>Probes</b>
Will you be doing the training again this year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If yes, what made you decide to come back?</li><li>• Is there anything you're hoping will be different?</li></ul>
What qualities do you think make a good peer researcher?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you were talking to someone who was thinking of joining the program but was sitting on the fence about it, what would you tell them?</li></ul>

## Appendix D: Individual Interview Guide for Principal Investigator, Academic Training Coordinator and Housing Training Coordinator

### Pre-interview: Demographics

Question	Answer options / Follow ups
What is your age?	
Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal</li> <li>• Torres Strait Islander</li> <li>• Unknown</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
If YES:	Where is your country or traditional lands? Do you identify as Stolen Generation? On which country were you born?
	If born outside of Australia, what year did you first arrive in Australia to live here for more than one year?
What is your Australian resident status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian citizen</li> <li>• Permanent resident</li> <li>• Temporary resident</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> <li>• Do not know</li> <li>• Refuse</li> </ul>
Do you speak a language other than English at home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes – which language?</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
How well do you speak English?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very well</li> <li>• Well</li> <li>• Not well</li> <li>• Not at all</li> </ul>
What is your main source of income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employed full time</li> <li>• Employed part time</li> <li>• Casual / occasional work</li> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Student</li> <li>• Home duties</li> <li>• Carer</li> <li>• Centrelink (please specify type)</li> </ul>
What is your highest level of education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year 10 or below</li> <li>• VCE</li> <li>• Certificate</li> <li>• Diploma</li> <li>• Undergraduate Degree</li> <li>• Postgraduate Degree</li> </ul>
What is your marital status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Separated</li> <li>• De Facto</li> <li>• Other (please specify)</li> </ul>
What is your current occupation? (Position Title)	How long have you been in this position? With regards to the <i>Peer Researcher Training Program</i> , what was your position title?

## Part 1: Expectations and aspirations

Question	Answer options / Follow ups
Tell us a bit about yourself and how you ended up getting involved in the <i>More Than A Landlord</i> project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What motivated you to apply for the position?</li> <li>• What were you hoping the program would achieve? What were the objectives of the organisation that you represented?</li> <li>• What was your capacity in helping deliver the Peer Researcher Training Program?</li> </ul>
<b>PI specific:</b> Can you tell me a bit about how the More Than a Landlord project came about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How and when was the Peer Research component conceived?</li> <li>• Why was it important to include Peer Research methods?</li> <li>• I understand that you've worked within a Peer Research model before, what were you hoping the Peer Research would achieve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For this project</li> <li>○ For the Peer Researchers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Was there a vision for the involvement of Peer Researchers in the project beyond data collection?</li> </ul>
If you can think back to when you first started in this position, do you remember what you thought your role would require you to do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking back now on your involvement, was there anything surprising or different to what you thought the role was going to be?</li> <li>• Having carried the program out to completion, how would you describe your role now?</li> </ul>
What were your first impressions of the Peer Researchers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did they ever voice what they were looking to gain from participating in the <i>Peer Researcher Training Program</i>? What were they?</li> </ul>
Could you describe your relationship with the Peer Researchers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you say this has changed (if at all) since you were first introduced?</li> </ul>

## Part 2: Impacts of the MTaL project

Question	Probes
For you, what were the most important outcomes to see result from Peer Researcher Training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective / successful do you think the training was in meeting these objectives?</li> <li>• Were there any unexpected impacts that the <i>Peer Researcher Training Program</i> had?</li> </ul>
We will be speaking to the Peer Researchers in later interviews about the impacts they felt the training program had on them, but would you be able to talk about any impacts or changes that you observed in the Peer Researchers who completed the program?	<p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on families</li> <li>• Personal goals and aspirations</li> <li>• Relationship with AHV</li> <li>• Role or engagement in community</li> <li>• Tangible, practical, measurable outcomes (e.g. getting a job, financial stability)</li> </ul>

### Part 3: Implementing the MTaL project

This section was specific only to Training Coordinators as the Principal Investigator was not directly involved in training or survey delivery.

Question	Probes
Can you briefly describe the training process? Please speak to how the program was structured, and what you hoped it would achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think each component offered Peer Researchers, in terms of: skills, experience and knowledge?</li> <li>• How did you find levels of engagement <b>in each section</b>? Was each component received in the same way by the Peer Researchers?</li> <li>• Were there parts of the training that were more effective or better received?</li> <li>• Were there parts of the training which could have been improved? How and why?</li> </ul>
What kind of things were you looking for to see if the training was going as planned/achieving what it was set out to do? Not just in terms of content, but in terms of soft skill development too.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the classroom component</li> <li>• Feedback on the ongoing on-the-job training during the fieldwork component</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Component</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were some of the challenges faced?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By the Peer Researchers</li> <li>○ By you</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coming out of the classroom component, were you satisfied that the Peer Researchers were adequately trained for fieldwork?</li> <li>• Who do you think should be delivering this part of the training? What sort of qualities should they have?</li> </ul>
<b>Fieldwork Component</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were some of the challenges faced?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ By the Peer Researchers</li> <li>○ By you</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Did anything unexpected occur during fieldwork? Could this have been anticipated?</li> </ul>
What are some of the ways that you provided support to the <i>Peer Researchers</i> during each of these components?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What aspects of support were best received?</li> <li>• Were there any ways you feel more support could have been provided for the Peer Researchers?</li> </ul>

## References

---

1. Kelaher M et al. (2014). 'Does more equitable governance lead to more equitable health care? A case study based on the implementation of health reform in Aboriginal health Australia.' *Social Science and Medicine*. 123(2014): 278-286.
2. Craven RG et al. (2016). 'Towards a positive psychology of indigenous thriving and reciprocal partnership model.' *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. 47: 32-43.
3. Bailey J, Veitch C, Crossland L and Preston R. (2006) 'Developing research capacity building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health workers in health service settings.' *Rural and Remote Health*. 6:556.
4. Humphery K. (2001). 'Dirty questions: Indigenous health and "Western research"' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 25(3): 197–202.
5. Schnarch B. (2004). 'Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) or Self-Determination Applied to Research. A critical analysis of contemporary First Nations Research and some options for First Nations communities.' *Journal of Aboriginal Health*. 1:80-97.
6. Ivanitz M. (1999). 'Culture, ethics and participatory methodology in cross-cultural research.' *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. 2: 46-58.
7. Wallerstein NB and Duran B. (2006). 'Using community-based participatory research to address health disparities.' *Health Promotion Practice*. 7(3): 312-323.
8. Cochran PAL et al. (2008). 'Indigenous Ways of Knowing: Implications for Participatory Research and Community.' *American Journal of Public Health*. 98(1): 22-28.
9. Johnston-Goodstar K. (2012). Decolonizing evaluation: The necessity of evaluation advisory groups in Indigenous evaluation. In R. VeLure Roholt & M. L. Baizerman (Eds.), *Evaluation advisory groups. New Directions for Evaluation*. 136: 109–117.
10. Rigney LI. (2001). 'A First Perspective of Indigenous Australian Participation in Science: Framing Indigenous Research towards Indigenous Australian Intellectual Sovereignty.' *Kaurna Higher Education Journal*. 7: 1-13.
11. Dodson M. (1994). 'The Wentworth Lecture – The End in the Beginning: re(de)finding Aboriginality.' *Australian Aboriginal Studies*. 1:1-13.
12. Kendall E et al. (2011). 'Beyond the rhetoric of participatory research in Indigenous Communities: Advances in Australia over the last decade.' *Qualitative Health Research*. 21(12): 1719-1728.

13. Roche B, Guta A, and Flicker S. (2010). *Peer Research in Action I: Models of Practice. Community Based Research Working Paper Series*. The Wellesley Institute: Toronto, Canada.
14. Eaton AD et al. (2018) 'A blended learning curriculum for training peer researchers to conduct community-based participatory research.' *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. 15(2): 139-150.
15. True G, Alexander LB and Fisher CB. (2017). 'Supporting the role of community members employed as research staff: Perspectives of community researchers working in addiction research.' *Social Science & Medicine*. 187:67-75.
16. Chambers AH, Tomnay J, Stephens K, Crouch A, Whiteside M, Love P, McIntosh L and Crowe PW. (2018). 'Facilitators of community participation in an Aboriginal sexual health promotion initiative.' *Rural and Remote Health*. 18(2): 4245.
17. Holmes W et al. (2002) 'Researching Aboriginal health: experience from a study of urban young people's health and well-being.' *Social Science and Medicine*. 54: 1267-1279.
18. Kawakami AJ et al. (2007). 'Improving the practice of evaluation through indigenous values and methods: Decolonising evaluation practice – returning the gaze from Hawai'i and Aotearoa.' *Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-being*. 4(1): 319-348.
19. Larson S. et al. (2018). 'Using measures of wellbeing for impact evaluation: proof of concept developed with an Indigenous community undertaking land management programs in northern Australia. *Ambio* [internet]. May 2018. DOI:10.1007/s13280-018-1058-3.
20. Mikhailovich K and Arabena K. (2005). 'Evaluating an Indigenous sexual health peer education project.' *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. 16(3): 189-193.
21. Sherwood J and Kendall S. (2013). 'Reframing spaces by building relationships: Community collaborative participatory action research with Aboriginal mothers in prison.' *Contemporary Nurse*. 46(1): 83-94.
22. Guta A, Flicker S and Roche B. (2013). 'Governing through community allegiance: a qualitative examination of peer research in community-based participatory research.' *Critical Public Health*. 23(4): 432-451.
23. Cornwall A. (2008) 'Unpacking "participation": models, meanings and practices.' *Community Development Journal*. 43(3): 269-283.



24. Wehipeihana N and Grootveld C. (2016, July 12). A Vision for Indigenous Evaluation: A framework for increasing participation and control by Indigenous peoples. [Webinar]. Retrieved online: <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/vision-for-indigenous-evaluation/>
25. Salimi Y et al. (2012) 'Is Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) Useful? A systematic review.' *International Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 3(6): 386-393.
26. Vaughn LM et al. (2018). 'Partnering with insiders: A review of peer models across community-engaged research, education and social care.' *Health and Social Care in the community*. 26(6): 769-786.
27. Sandoval JA et al. (2012). 'Process and outcome constructs for evaluating community-based participatory research projects: a matrix of existing measures.' *Health Education Research*. 27(4): 680-690.
28. Springett J. (2017). 'Impact in participatory health research: what can we learn from research on participatory evaluation?' *Educational Action Research*. 25(4): 560-574.
29. Bath J and Wakerman J. (2015). 'Impact of community participation in primary health care: what is the evidence?' *Australian Journal of Primary Health*. 21: 2-8.
30. First 1000 Days Australia and Aboriginal Housing Victoria. (2018). *More Than a Landlord Household Pilot Study: Report*. Indigenous Health Equity Unit, The University of Melbourne and Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Melbourne.
31. Arabena K et al. (2016). "What hope can look like": The First 1000 Days – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. *Developing Practice*. (44): 26-36.
32. Ritte R et al. (2016). 'An Australian model of the First 1000 Days: an Indigenous-led process to turn an international initiative into an early-life strategy benefitting indigenous families.' *Global health, epidemiology and genomics*. 1(e11): 10.
33. Anderson C et al. (2012). "It is only new because it has been missing for so long": Indigenous evaluation capacity building.' *American Journal of Evaluation*. 33(4): 566-582.
34. Tsey K et al. (2007). 'Empowerment-based research methods: a 10-year approach to enhancing Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing.' *Australasian Psychiatry*. 15(Supp): S34-S38.

35. Government of South Australia. (2016). *Recognising the Strength of Culture: Aboriginal Cultural Response for the Child and Family Health Service. Discussion Paper*. Government of South Australia: Adelaide, SA. Retrieved online: <[https://www.cyh.com/Archive/library/CaFHS/Recognising the Strength of Culture Discussion Paper April 2016.pdf](https://www.cyh.com/Archive/library/CaFHS/Recognising%20the%20Strength%20of%20Culture%20Discussion%20Paper%20April%202016.pdf)>
36. Nurmi JE and Salmela-Aro K. (2006). 'What works makes you happy: the role of personal goals in life-span development.' In Eds. Csikszentmihalyi M and Csikszentmihalyi IS. *A Life Worth Living*. Oxford University Press, Inc: New York, NY. pp. 182-199.
37. Mertens DM. (2009). *Transformative Research and Evaluation*. The Guildford Press: New York, NY.
38. Gujit I et al. (2012). *Developmental Evaluation: Applying complexity concepts to enhance innovation and use. Report from an expert seminar with Dr. Michael Quinn Patton. March 22, 2012*. Wageningen UR Centre for Development Innovation: Utrecht, Netherlands.
39. Walton M. (2014). 'Applying complexity theory: A review to inform evaluation design.' *Evaluation and Program Planning*. 45(2014): 119-126.
40. Blaikie N. (2000). 'Chapter 4: Strategies for Answering Research Questions.' *Designing Social Research*. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK. pp.85-128.
41. Broom A and Willis E. (2007). 'Competing Paradigms and Health Research.' In Eds. Saks M and Allsop J. *Researching health: Qualitative, Quantitative and mixed methods*. pp. 16-31.
42. Minichiello V, Aroni R and Hays T. (2008). *In-Depth Interviewing: Principles, Techniques, Analysis. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Sydney, Australia: Pearson Education Australia.
43. DeCuir-Gunby JT, Marshall PL and McCulloch AW. (2011). 'Developing and using a codebook for the analysis of interview data: an example from a professional development research project.' *Field Methods*. 23(2): 136-155.
44. Saldaña J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers: 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. SAGE Publications: Arizona, USA.
45. Cahill C. (2007). 'The personal is political: Developing new subjectivities through participatory action research.' *Gender, place and culture*. 14(3): 267-292.
46. Coser LR et al. (2014). 'Finding a voice: Participatory Research within Street-Involved Youth in the Youth Injection Prevention Project.' *Adolescent and Youth Health*. 15(5): 732-738.

47. Bond C, Foley W and Askew D. (2016). "It puts a human face on the researched: A qualitative evaluation of an Indigenous health research governance model.' *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*. 40(Suppl. 1): S89-S95.
48. Nakamura N. (2015). 'What is a community's desire? A critical look at participatory research projects with Indigenous communities.' *Social and cultural geography*. 16(2): 165-182.
49. Rasmus SM. (2014). 'Indigenizing CBPR: Evaluation of a community-based and participatory research process implementation of the *Elluam Tungiinun* (Towards Wellness) Program in Alaska.' *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 54: 170-179.
50. Dozois E, Langlois M and Blanchet-Cohen N. (2010) *DE201: A Practitioner's Guide to Developmental Evaluation*. The JW McConnell Family Foundation: Montreal, Quebec.
51. Kesby M. (2005). 'Rethorizing Empowerment-through-participation as a performance in space: Beyond Tyranny to Transformation.' *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 30(4): 2037-2065.
52. Banks S et al. (2013). 'Everyday ethics in community-based participatory research' *Contemporary Social Science*. 8(3): 263-277.
53. Richman KA, Alexander LB and True G. (2012). 'Proximity, Ethical Dilemmas and Community Research Workers.' *AJOB Primary Research*. 3(4): 19-29.
54. Mauthner NS and Doucet A. (2003). 'Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis.' *Sociology*. 37(3): 413-431.
55. Minkler M. (2004). 'Ethical challenges for the 'outside' researcher in community-based participatory research.' *Health Education and Behaviour*. 31(6): 684-697.
56. Galdas P. (2017). 'Revisiting Bias in Qualitative Research: Reflections on its Relationship with Funding and Impact.' *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 16: 1-2.
57. Ovretveit J. (1998). *Evaluating Health Intervention*. Open University Press: Buckingham.