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**DEVELOPING CULTURALLY BASED METHODS OF INQUIRY IN
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

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DEVELOPING CULTURALLY BASED METHODS OF INQUIRY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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Introduction

In recent years, concerted efforts have been made in trying to bridge the gap between research, practice, and policy in health and social arena. Not only are researchers conducting research grounded in the reality of practice, practitioners are also using research findings to inform their practice models and approaches. It is claimed that qualitative research methodologies are in a better position (than quantitative methodologies) to bridge research and practice. Numerous studies have been conducted using an array of qualitative research methods such as ethnography, life histories, action research which are proved to be more able to inform practice and policies (Bate, 2000; Leninger, 1985; Goldstein, 1991; Padgett, 1998).

However, a pertinent issue of the relevance of culture in research has been overlooked, resulting in the use of culturally insensitive methods of inquiry which in turn limits the uncovering of important findings. In this paper, I will explore the relationship between culture, ways of knowing and research methodology. As culture is expressed and reflected by our world view, by the way we engage with people, by what we perceive as knowable and what constitutes knowledge, the process and method of a research inquiry is then intricately linked to culture. Qualitative research, in emphasising insiders' perspectives and stressing the relationship between the researcher and the participants as instrumental to data collection, therefore needs to be culturally based.

Drawing on my recent experience of conducting a research related to culturally appropriate practices in social work (Ling, 2001), I will argue that a culturally based method of inquiry not only yields findings which inform practice, but the method and process of data collection in itself