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## A Culturally Grounded Approach to Nepalese Grandmothers' Caring Work: Developing Dohori as a Narrative Methodology

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## A Culturally Grounded Approach to Nepalese Grandmothers' Caring Work: Developing Dohori as a Narrative Methodology

### Abstract

The social sciences have a growing seismic shift from prioritising positivist, objective, and generalizable knowledge to accepting subjective qualitative knowledge. This has given rise to various art-based methods that leverage multi-sensory storytelling/narrative. To further advance innovation in qualitative narrative methods, I will present the Dohori narrative, an indigenous Nepali poetic storytelling method for narrative research with older grandmothers doing care work. I start by presenting a discourse on Dohori to understand better the history and traditional and cultural underpinning of the method. Provided a brief background to Nepali grandmother immigrants and then discussed the promise of Dohori as a form of culturally relevant narrative interviewing with this population. To demonstrate this, I provide an exemplar case study adopting a conventional narrative interview and then Dohori to show the differences. The study showed that Dohori has the potential to elicit stories, emotions, and tacit knowledge and access other areas of consciousness that traditional narrative interviews are not privy to. I conclude by arguing for the adoption of Dohori and similar dialogical poetic methods for research with indigenous populations, especially minority groups with limited voice.

### Keywords

Dohori, culture, grandmothers, narrative, Nepal, qualitative research

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# A Culturally Grounded Approach to Nepalese Grandmothers' Caring Work: Developing Dohori as a Narrative Methodology

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The social sciences have a growing seismic shift from prioritising positivist, objective, and generalizable knowledge to accepting subjective qualitative knowledge. This has given rise to various art-based methods that leverage multi-sensory storytelling/narrative. To further advance innovation in qualitative narrative methods, I will present the Dohori narrative, an indigenous Nepali poetic storytelling method for narrative research with older grandmothers doing care work. I start by presenting a discourse on Dohori to understand better the history and traditional and cultural underpinning of the method. Provided a brief background to Nepali grandmother immigrants and then discussed the promise of Dohori as a form of culturally relevant narrative interviewing with this population. To demonstrate this, I provide an exemplar case study adopting a conventional narrative interview and then Dohori to show the differences. The study showed that Dohori has the potential to elicit stories, emotions, and tacit knowledge and access other areas of consciousness that traditional narrative interviews are not privy to. I conclude by arguing for the adoption of Dohori and similar dialogical poetic methods for research with indigenous populations, especially minority groups with limited voice.

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## Introduction

Anchored on the principle of critical constructivism, which prioritises multiplicity and plurality of knowledge (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Gibbons et al., 1994), narratives serve as qualitative research tools to effectively elicit and better understand people's experiences, societies, and cultures (Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019). With the seismic shift in the social sciences from only recognising and appreciating positivist, objective, and generalizable knowledge to the acceptance of contextualised and subjective knowledge in the 1980s (narrative turn), narrative methods started getting recognition as a salient research tool that offers insight into individual and collective experiences and identities (Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019). Narratives achieve the proposition of Connelly and Clandinin (2006), who maintained that people should be put back as the centre of research. Hence narratives are premised on people's ability to give account and meaning to their lived experiences through storytelling (Andrews et al., 2013; Bleakley, 2020; McMullen & Braithwaite, 2013).

Given its ability to represent social phenomena in their full richness and complexity, narrative research is gaining increased use in education, health and social science studies (Clandinin, 2013; Riessman, 2008); however, social theorist Roland Barthes argues that the history of narrative emerged with the history of humanity, "there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative" (p. 79). Therefore, narrative predates the Western social science theorizing that legitimized it as a research methodology. To avoid further the continuous privileging of Western approaches to narrative methods and show sensitivity to the sacredness

of stories, especially in research with Indigenous communities and diasporas (Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019), indigenous methods of telling stories should be prioritised (Iseke, 2013).

The archetypal narrative interview allows participants to tell stories, unveiling how they organize, perceive, and give meaning to their world, experiences, and themselves (Kim, 2016). Participants are given an overarching question and are free to tell their stories without interruption or suppression. However, narrative interviewers may need to redirect the stories to a specific interest while maintaining the flexibility that allows interviewees to speak in their own voices, create their own schema, and decide the story's plot, start and flow (Narayan & George, 2012). However, in recent times, narrative interviews have moved beyond the traditional interview structure, which may limit participants' expression, to more art-based and Indigenous ways of eliciting and presenting narratives (Camic et al., 2022). These art-based and Indigenous approaches may include folklore, music, and poetry, with the central aim of preserving sacred rituals and knowledge and conveying cultural and social norms, traditions, and familial histories (Kim, 2016). Given this need to avoid privileging Western approaches and give significance to indigenous approaches, Dohori narratives particular to the people of Nepal can become a significant tool for narrative research with Nepalis in the diaspora.

In this paper, I will be presenting Dohori, a conversational dialogic poetry particular to the people of Nepal, as a promising framework for narrative research with Nepalis in the diaspora. I will introduce Dohori and present a context on the situation, role and position of my study population, South Asian grandmothers in Canada. I then consider a range of ways that Dohori's form and features might address the limitations of conventional interviews with older Nepalis in the diaspora. Then I will present a case study conducted with an older Nepali grandmother living in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, using Dohori. Finally, I will conclude by presenting a discourse on the lessons learnt and how this innovative method, which avoids privileging Western approaches and gives significance to Indigenous approaches, can be used in research with older Nepalis, especially those in the diaspora.

As a first-generation South Asian Nepali immigrant pursuing a doctoral degree at McMaster University in Canada, my research is deeply rooted in my cultural background and personal experiences. The inspiration for this study comes from my mother's engagement with *deuda*, a form of Dohori, which sparked my interest in utilizing Dohari as a powerful medium for exploring and sharing life stories among Nepali women.

Also, in my commitment to challenging Western-centric dominance in approaches to data collection, I have chosen to employ Dohari as an arts-based Indigenous method. This decision reflects my efforts to present alternative, arts-based approaches to research. To comprehensively incorporate Dohari into my doctoral research, I have invested considerable time in actively listening, observing, and gaining insights into this unique form of expression, particularly through virtual platforms. This investment is driven by my desire to engage with participants from a place of understanding, creating a comfortable space for meaningful interactions.

## **Nepali Dohori**

Nepali Dohori is a conversational dialogic poetry rooted within the social exchange in communication. According to this theory, individuals engage in a series of interdependent interactions that result in obligations between them (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958). Dohori is typically performed by two individuals, often friends, neighbors, or family members, who take turns singing verses and responding to each other's lines. One person sings a verse, and the other responds with a related or complementary verse. This back-and-forth exchange continues throughout the performance. It is commonly performed at social gatherings, cultural events, festivals, and various celebrations in rural communities of Nepal.

It is an integral part of the local cultural traditions and entertainment. People gather around to enjoy the lively and engaging performance of Dohori. Dohori serves as a form of entertainment that promotes social bonding, fosters joyful expression of emotions, and preserves and transmits the country's unique folk culture.

The origin of Dohori is difficult to trace, and similar conversational dialogical poetry can be found in many ethnicities and languages across South Asia and other parts of the world (Stirr, 2017). It is practised within the Himalayan region, including Burma's highlands, Yunnan's hills, and the Tibetan Plateau (Stirr, 2017). In Nepal, which is bordered by China in the north and India in the south (see Figure 1.), Dohori singers may repeat popular lyrics and improvise new ones, and everyone is free to join in the development and singing of the poems in a conversational manner. It is sometimes recited with instruments, with some of the popular instruments used including bamboo flutes, cymbals, *mādal* or *khaijaḍī* drums or small Nepali folk *sārangīs*. Dohori, as a traditional practice, finds its place in both festivals and nighttime songfest gatherings, serving as a ritual that brings together neighbors, acquaintances, and even strangers.

**Figure 1**

*Landscape of Nepal (iStock, 2016)*



The use of Dohori extends beyond mere entertainment. Beyond its melodic appeal, Dohori plays a pivotal role in social dynamics and competitive status negotiations. The call-and-response nature of the performance promotes camaraderie and encourages active participation from the audience. As friends, neighbors, and family members take turns engaging in this musical dialogue, they showcase their vocal prowess and deepen their relationships with one another. Likewise, Dohori plays a vital role in status negotiation within the community. The skill and wit demonstrated during these singing sessions can enhance a performer's social standing. Individuals engaging in friendly competition through Dohori gain recognition and respect from their peers, allowing them to assert their position in the social hierarchy. Dohori acts as a vehicle for cultural expression and preservation. Through the verses sung during these performances, cultural values, customs, and local wisdom are transmitted

across generations and ensure the continuity of Nepal's rich cultural heritage, safeguarding traditions that might otherwise fade away in the face of modernity.

Dohori has also been traditionally used for communicating more freely in Nepal with little to no retributions. It is improvised flirtatiously to develop new relationships of interest, and for courtship, older people adopt more poignant lyrics and melodies, expressing emotions and relationships and discussing their life experiences. It can also be used negatively to compete, tease and insult one another playfully. Dohori has increasingly become popular in the past two decades, credited to the increased migration of people from the hill villages to Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal (Stirr, 2005). It has become very commercialized and part of present-day Nepal social life, with Dohori clubs found within the city; the poetry is now played in many restaurants, distributed by private music companies and played on FM radio stations that once classified it as unworthy to be heard through the radio (Stirr, 2005). While some Nepalis view this commercialization of Dohori as an adulteration of pure art, making it lose its cultural significance, others see the commercialization as a way of reviving their dying folk tradition and making it a national heritage.

### **South Asian Grandmothers in Canada**

According to recent statistics, Asia is the primary birthplace for a significant portion of the immigrant population in Canada. In 2016, approximately half of all immigrants in Canada were born in Asia, encompassing the Middle East (Government of Canada, 2017). In the subsequent years, from 2017 to 2019, Asia, including the Middle East, continued to be the leading continent of origin for newcomers to Canada, accounting for 63.5% of the immigrant population (Statistics Canada, n.d). Among these immigrants are grandmothers whose purpose in coming to Canada is to support their children by caring for their grandchildren. Most South Asian seniors live with family members, often assisting with domestic care and child-rearing (Kandasamy et al., 2020). The chances of grandparents living with their grandchildren are eight times higher among South Asians than in any other ethnic group in Canada (Todd, 2016). There is very little data focused specifically on older Nepalis in the diaspora, given that statistics on South Asia are largely homogenised. In some situations, data from India is prioritised and used to draw generalisations.

Many of these grandmothers become completely dependent on their adult children after migration, which has been disempowering for older adults (Marcus et al., 2016). Furthermore, as in many cultures globally, the thriving patriarchy sometimes may not allow women to have a voice, reflected in their limited research participation (Lasky, 2020). Furthermore, the culture of keeping family issues secretive can limit older grandmothers' ability to express their discontent and struggles as older immigrants. These social and cultural factors combine to constrain grandmothers' narratives, including those offered in research contexts. As I discuss in the section below, the use of Dohori potentially evades some of these constraints and creates a meaningful opportunity for grandmothers to convey their experiences.

### **The Promise of Dohori as a Form of Culturally Relevant Narrative Interviewing**

The basic format of Dohori, which can take the form of question-and-answer dialogue that builds upon one another or storytelling/narrative where the interviewer introduces stimuli that advance the story/narrative, makes it ideal for different forms of interviews. Dohori allows for the flexibility that participants need to share stories about their experiences, culture, and society. As recommended by Kim (2016), it is the job of the interviewer to listen to the storyteller with attentive care and only ask probing questions that elicit more stories. Thus, in situations where the interviewer and interviewee are proficient in Dohori, adopting Dohori is

ideal for narrative interviews, as the interviewer, who is part of the poetry duet, laces their responses with prompts that advance the interviewee's story. Dohori can also assist in the conceptual shift from the idea that, "interviewees have answers to researchers' questions" to the idea that, "interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own" (Chase, 2005, p. 660).

Dohori also can address power dynamics in qualitative research, giving participants more power and control over the research process. Aligned with the critical constructivist paradigm, which advocates for more power shifts from the more privileged interviewers to the participants (Kaaristo, 2022). Hence, Dohori may give Nepali grandmothers whose power has been compromised because of their dependence on their adult children (Tausig & Subedi, 2022) power over the research process. The nature of Dohori allows the participants freedom of expression, control over the pace of the interview, as well as a decision over the most important story to share. Many older Nepali grandmothers who may also have language difficulties expressing themselves verbally (Umoquit et al., 2011; Umoquit et al., 2013) can use Dohori to express themselves better, and Dohori can also eliminate the cultural bias that may plague questionnaires and other data collection instruments (Langmann & Pick, 2018).

Furthermore, as co-creators of qualitative research knowledge, using Dohori for qualitative can make older Nepali grandmothers more confident in themselves and the research process. Competence and understanding of the research process have been found to increase the confidence of research participants (Witry et al., 2020). This can help address the lack of confidence observed among people who face the challenges associated with migration in old age (Guo et al., 2019) while also increasing their agency, voice, and ability to reflect on their resilience and strength. This confidence may also benefit older Nepali grandmothers who tend to display more mastery of language, adopting the use of idioms, proverbs, sarcasm, and other figurative languages in their expression of emotion and experiences when singing Dohori (Stirr, 2017).

Dohori can also improve older Nepali grandmothers' ability to express themselves non-verbally. Body movements such as nodding of head to show agreement, snapping of fingers to reiterate a point, and shaking of the head to show disapproval or rejection. Hence, narrative interviewers can collect multiple layers of complex data for quality research. Conventional data collection methods can also be paternalistic (Edwards et al., 2004), with researchers only interested in mining participant data. However, Dohori is an art form that can provide a research process that older Nepali grandmothers can enjoy and give them the sense of collaborative co-creators of knowledge.

### **Case Study: Using Dohori to Interview a Nepali Grandmother**

In Nepal, older grandmothers who are care providers are conduits for intergenerational knowledge. Their role is honoured, valued, and appreciated. With Nepal having one of the highest labour migration rates in the world at approximately five per 1000 leaving Nepal for greener pastures abroad (Macrotrends, 2023), in some situations, the left behind older Nepalis and South Asian grandmothers are expected to migrate to provide informal caregiving to their grandchildren (Aubel, 2012, 2021; Kandasamy et al., 2020). They provide crucial support, which is essential for the health and survival of newborn babies and their mothers.

With much of the global effort to promote the health and well-being of newborn babies and their mothers focused on strengthening the healthcare systems and services, there is limited attention reinforcing traditional and cultural family caregiving practices that older grandmothers typically provide (Aubel, 2021). This may lead to the challenges of these important care providers going unrecognised, especially when they face multiple intersecting

problems of ageing in foreign countries, language difficulties, dependence on adult children for finances, loneliness, and social isolation.

Furthermore, much of the previous research on ageing South Asian women has mostly focused on their financial issues (Banerjee et al., 2017), intimate partner violence they face (Madden et al., 2016), rigid gender rules in their community (Ahmad et al., 2013), and racism and exploitation they encounter (Aujla, 2016) in Canada.

In my research, I will be exploring the experiences of ageing South Asian grandmothers in Hamilton, Ontario, working as caretakers of their grandchildren and their roles in their family and community. This will give voice to this relatively invisible population of older immigrants, who, due to cultural expectations of not exposing family issues, seldom talk about the challenges they face as informal care providers who support their grandchildren. In this case study, I describe my meeting with one grandmother I used conventional narrative interviews and then Dohori to answer the same research question to bring to the fore the differences between these two approaches.

## **Study Area**

I chose the Hamilton region as the focal point of my research, which focuses explicitly on the informal care work provided by Nepalese grandmothers to their families. This decision was influenced by the region's proximity to my university, which offers a high level of convenience and easy access to various resources necessary for conducting the research. Being close to where I am studying allows me to establish strong connections and foster collaborations with local organisations and institutions. Additionally, the rapid growth of the Nepalese population in the Hamilton region (Maharjan, 2022) captured my attention. This demographic trend presents a unique opportunity to examine the social, cultural, and economic dynamics associated with the community's expansion and integration into the local society. Focusing on Nepalese grandmothers and their invaluable informal care contributions within their families, I aim to shed light on the intricate dynamics of this vital aspect of the immigrant life of the ageing population.

## **Recruitment of Grandmother**

I recruited a grandmother through a Hamilton-based organisation, the South Asian Heritage Association of Hamilton and Region. The grandmother, who is 58 years old, hails from Pokhara city in Nepal. She has been providing informal family support to her daughter's family in Canada for nearly two years.

## **Data Generation**

The pilot study interview was facilitated on Zoom; due to the participant's limited knowledge of digital technology use, her son assisted her in downloading and logging in. The interview, conducted entirely in Nepali, unfolded in two distinct phases. In the initial hour-long phase, I implemented a narrative interview protocol, having sent it to her a few days before the session. To ensure her familiarity with the questions, I read them aloud over the phone a day prior, and on the interview day, I reiterated the questions while sharing my screen for her convenience. With the grandmother's consent, the interview was audio-recorded and extended for an hour.

During the second phase of the research project, which occurred on a separate day via Zoom, we collaborated to create a Dohori song, utilizing the interview transcript as our creative foundation. I took the initiative to foster a comfortable atmosphere for the participant, by



sharing a couplet I had composed. Despite my status as an amateur Dohori singer, the participant actively participated in the creative process, rephrasing my couplet, and contributing her own couplets to shape the Dohori song.

In contrast to the previous phase, in this session, I deliberately excluded audio recording to prioritize the participants' comfort and to prevent any feelings of surveillance, as Dohari also involves non-verbal performances like expressions, gestures, body movements, laughter, etc. The grandmother demonstrated a heightened sense of relaxation and confidence throughout the song creation, a direct result of our collaborative activity's informal and enjoyable nature. The transcription process, spanning nearly two hours, involved writing the Dohori lyrics in real-time as they unfolded, highlighting the dynamic and participatory essence of the song writing process. The grandmother's evident enjoyment was such that, by the end, she inquired if I had taken adequate notes or if a repeat session the next day was necessary. The grandmother also suggested that she would be happy to dress up nicely, and we could record Dohori in the following interview with her friends.

### **Data Analysis**

I engaged in multiple reads of the narrative interview and the Dohori narrative independently and collectively to help me reflect on the participant's narratives. The data were translated and transcribed from Nepali into English in line with the parallel translation and transcription framework Nikander (2008) recommended, ensuring original ideas are retained during translation. The narratives were then analysed and reported in themes, as Kim (2016) and Riessman (2008) recommended. This also follows the precedents of Cain (1991), who revealed that presenting analysis in themes helps unravel salient messages that participants want to reveal. Although more attention was paid to what was said rather than how it was said (Riessman, 1993), the Dohori narrative elicited many emotions, some of which were captured in the analysis.

## **Results**

### **Narrative Interview**

#### ***Grandmother's Experience of Caregiving***

In the interview, the grandmother reflected on the cultural significance of caring for her daughter, *sutkeri* (a new mom). She further alluded to how joyful it is to be part of the family unit caring for the children, highlighting how she migrated to Canada to take care of them. Her experience in child-rearing also comes from her love for Nepali traditions and knowledge. For instance, she remembers applying mustard oil and homemade kajal (eye makeup with medicinal benefits) under the sun was expected in Nepal, unlike in Canada, where her daughter prefers using commercially produced products like baby powder. The grandmother's caregiving extended beyond her newborn grandson, as she also had an older granddaughter who was 13 years old. With a strong sense of purpose, she took it upon herself to contribute to her daughter's family by taking care of household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and organizing the kitchen and house:

I wanted to help my daughter's family in the best way I could during my stay in Canada. I used to cook food, clean the house, and organise the kitchen. (Slightly aloof) She did not ask me to work. She is my daughter. My son-in-law wanted me to enjoy my stay in Canada too. Every weekend they would try to

take me to the grocery or a new place. I used to go for long walks in the fall. However, I had come from far away and wanted to fully support my daughter, at least for some days. She was *sutkeri* (new mom) and working full time. Child rearing is a collective joy and responsibility of the family and relatives in Nepal, so it is easier. Therefore, I wanted my daughter to rest and focus on caring for her new baby whenever she got time.

I shared traditional ways of taking care of a newborn with my daughter, although she did not take my advice. I could not apply *toriko tel* - mustard oil under the sun. Apparently, kids here only wear powder and cream (laughs). *Jasto Dess, Ustai Bhes ni* - like the country, so is the dress... Applying oil to children is compulsory in Nepal, and you have seen it. The oil used is typically a mixture of herbs and spices that are heated and then applied to the child's body under the sun. It strengthens the child's bones and muscles and improves circulation. But it is okay. Sun is also a rare guest in winter here (smiles).

### ***Challenges Experienced***

The grandmother also told stories of her challenges in immigrating to support her daughter. The challenges found within her stories included financial challenges, the Canadian winter cold, and fear and anxiety associated with falls during the icy winter. The grandmother's narrative provides insight into the financial considerations and emotional challenges she faced during her nine-month stay in Canada:

...It is expensive. You live there; you know it. and I didn't want to spend my daughter's money, so my husband and I carried money from our savings. My husband had a government job, and we had some savings. It would have been so difficult otherwise. You know the exchange rate between the Canadian dollar and Nepali currency; it's nearly \$1 = 97 now. At that time, it was 88 rupees per dollar. We also have so many festivals and celebrations, and emptying our grandchildren's hands doesn't feel good. The feeling of being unable to buy them what they want in the market is unpleasant. In Nepal, I could buy them many things. I was thinking of telling you something; Oh yes, thank God my health was fine during my stay in Canada. Healthcare can be expensive here, and we also do not get appointments with specialists easily. My daughter had an insurance plan in which she could cover my expenses. I was also worried about her father and younger sister the second time I came to Canada. They were in Nepal, and I had never been away this long. *Haina ta* (isn't it)? (blushes and laughs).

The grandmother's commitment to intergenerational care and support within Nepali culture is evident in her willingness to take care of her grandchildren and assist with household chores, even if it meant spending her entire savings. She places value on cultural traditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care, actively engaging in practices like preparing special meals and teaching her daughter about customs such as tying *patuki* (waist cloth) and applying *toriko tel* (oil). She draws comparisons between the weather conditions and child-rearing practices in Nepal and Canada, expressing a preference for the warm sun and outdoor activities found in her home country. While expressing gratitude for her good health during her stay in Canada, the grandmother also acknowledges the need for insurance coverage and access to specialist appointments, highlighting the importance of healthcare support.

The interview showed the grandmother's dedication to intergenerational care and the preservation of cultural traditions, as well as her recognition of complexities such as family dynamics, expectations, and roles. Her experiences and stories highlight the importance of providing support and opportunities for grandmothers working as caregivers away from their native land, enabling them to navigate the complexities of living in a different cultural context while maintaining their cultural identity.

### Dohori Narrative

I began the Dohori narrative by sharing my intention to incorporate Nepali traditional folk in my research, given its significant presence in almost every Nepali household. I told her that growing up, I had seen mothers, aunts, and grandmothers hymning Dohori songs while they cooked and did domestic chores and how the tone of the Dohori songs varied according to their mood. During our conversation, she enthusiastically shared that Dohori is part of her everyday life and listens to it daily. She says watching TikTok videos on Dohori is one of her favorite pastimes.

After that, I shared a couple of couplets I had heard and a few ones I had created. She was very supportive and even improvised the Dohori couplets to make them rhyme better. Finally, I asked the grandmother if she would like to start forming Dohori couplets and share her experience of providing informal care work during her stay in Canada. The grandmother used short poetic sentences to communicate her feelings about migration and the care work she provided. With the Dohori, she was also able to capture her feeling of powerlessness in the new country "Leaving behind all I knew, for my dear chori (daughter), (*sutkeri* (new Mom) too weak." She discussed her dedication to care for her daughter and grandchildren (*naati naatina*) while highlighting her effort to remain calm and build resilience in the face of the challenges she faces in the country:

swadeshko manchey bideshma gayera  
 naati naatina heriyo ekbaddha bhayera  
 Nepalbata airport gayou, bhasha bujhina angrezi najaanera  
 Airpoerma jwai chori lina bolaiyo,  
 tyahako bhasha najaanera dherai tolaiyo  
 Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini  
 budeshkaal samjhera aasu pokhiney

Grandparents from Nepal went abroad  
 looked after *naati naatina* with full dedication.  
 Were constantly confused not knowing the language and navigation  
 had to call daughter and son-in-law to even pick them up at airport  
 Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to that country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.

She further talked about how their daughter and son-in-law became entrapped in a foreign land because of money. As much as she loved them and understood why they left Nepal, seeking better opportunities, she expressed concern about having to go to this foreign country

to look after her grandchildren. She also expressed how income migration has led to loneliness in old age, bringing sorrows and tears:

Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini  
 budeshkaal samjhera aasu pokhiney  
 Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini  
 budeshkaal samjhera aasu pokhiney

Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to another country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.  
 Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to such country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.

She mentioned her struggles with the language of the new country. Her discourse on the language difficulty was laced with many emotions that were not captured in the narrative interview. She illustrated her difficulties navigating the environment due to language difficulties, citing how she had to call her daughter and son-in-law to pick her up at the station. She indicated that she would like to learn the language if she has the opportunity, as she feels tired from trying to understand the language and powerless when she cannot respond to people:

naati pani heriyo khana pani pakaiyo  
 bhasha nabujhera dimaag thakaiyo  
 nabujhda kheri man huncha dhararra  
 padney subidha paye mpani bolthey phararra  
 Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini  
 budeshkaal samjhera aasu pokhiney

I took care of my grandson and also cooked food,  
 In an effort to understand the language, my mind got tired and wooed,  
 When you don't understand the language, the helplessness you feel,  
 If I get the opportunity to learn, I will speak with zeal  
 Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to that country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.

One unpleasant experience stands out for the grandmothers where she felt stared at and encountered language barriers at an eatery. This incident reinforces her belief in the importance of learning the local language, prompting her to suggest age-specific language classes as a solution. Throughout the interview, she emphasizes the need for support and opportunities for

grandmothers working as caregivers. She expresses a strong desire to learn English, recognizing its value in enhancing communication with her grandchildren, imparting knowledge about Nepali culture, and gaining independence in daily life:

ekpatak restaurantma khana jaada, jharkera bolyo auta karmachaarile  
 man dukhyo, tara kehi bhanna sakina angreazi bolna najaanera  
 hamro paalama Nepalma angrezi thoyena  
 Canadian sarkaarle Nepali hajurama hajurbuwalai angrezi class ndiyi bhayena  
 Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini  
 budeshkaal samjhera aasu pokhiney

A sneer from a staff member in a restaurant once,  
 Left me feeling down, unable to respond,  
 There was no English in our times,  
 To aid immigrant grans, Canada must plan  
 Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to that country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.

The analysis further reveals her desire for social connection in Canada and how the lack of language proficiency makes this even more daunting. She indicated that the comfort and luxury in Canada do to address the individualistic culture, which leads to social isolation in the country. Furthermore, the analysis revealed her grief with her daughter returning to work soon after having a new baby because of the capitalist culture, number of dependents, car, and home loan:

Nepalma naati naatina hurkaaada thahapaina din gateko  
 tya gayera herda dherai jaso din kaatna garho bhayeko  
 sukha subidha sistamko desh  
 tara panu hamilai ta bhayo pardesh  
 Chori phasey Jwai phasey bideshko paisama  
 aba hami kinajaney arko deshama?  
 chora chori gharma huda kati ramro dekhini

In Nepal, days flew quickly, caring for young ones with affection,  
 In a foreign land, time continues to drags, we are longing for connection.  
 Canada's comfort and luxury, the life people spend,  
 Yet, still a foreign land, we strive to comprehend.  
 Daughter and son-in-law are stuck in a foreign land for bounty,  
 Now, why should we go to that country?  
 How good it felt when they were in their own home,  
 Remembering our lonely old age brings tears to my eyes.

### Discussion

Narrative analysis, narrative interviews and storytelling are popularly used in qualitative research. Indigenous methods such as Dohori are far less used, and there is little

documentation on how it has been used for data generation. Dohori has the potential to elicit stories, emotions, and tacit knowledge and access other areas of consciousness that traditional narrative interviews are not privy to.

In contrast to a narrative interview, the Dohori interview allowed the participant to express herself more freely and discuss subjects that she previously avoided. Given the culture of keeping family issues under wraps, the participant particularly focused on the importance of her work as a care provider, only highlighting financial and weather challenges. The grandmother also seemed more confident and cheerful when she was singing Dohori until the end of our conversation. It seemed that Dohori empowered her, as it is an art of storytelling in which she was competent, giving her an increased voice to talk about her experiences in a more engaging way. As a result of this empowering feature of Dohori, there was a sense of trust between the participant and researcher, which is critical when discussing sensitive and evocative topics. Compared to the traditional interview, the participant started adopting the use of figurative language to better express herself. For instance, the grandmother used "dhararra" and "phararra," which are Anukaranatmak words known as echoism. Dohori also aids in maintaining the interest of the participant (Nkyekyer et al., 2021) because participants keep improvising the lyrics.

Another empowering advantage of Dohori observed in the study is that Dohori allowed the participant to take more control of the research process. She decided on the most significant issues to share and the interview pace with little to no interruptions from the researcher. Dohori poetry facilitated the co-creation of knowledge as both researchers and participants could collaboratively engage in its composition.

### **Drawbacks**

Dohori as a data elicitation tool requires skills to contribute during the sing as this is a conversational duet poetry and may be challenging for those not talented in poetry. Like many Indigenous methods, it may be inaccessible for narrative researchers who do not speak Nepali or have a Nepali cultural background. Researchers using Dohori must also be conversant with Nepali proverbs and idioms, as this is an integral part of the art. Hence the adoption of Dohori largely depends on the capabilities and experience of both the researcher and the participants.

As with other qualitative methods, to improve the validity of the analysis of the Dohori, it is important to return the result to the participants to ensure that they are understood. This is especially critical in using Dohori because it is laced with idioms, proverbs and a lot of figurative language, which are subject to the researcher's interpretation. Hence, using Dohori requires significant work and engagement with participants.

### **Conclusion**

Innovative and indigenous art-based methods continue to advance in narrative research (Iseke, 2013). This is crucial as researchers embrace the constructivist ideal, which accepts multiplicity and plurality of knowledge. Methods such as poetry, especially indigenous storytelling poetry, can become a salient tool for narrative data collection, particularly with populations like older adults who are limited in their expression through traditional narrative inquiry. This paper presents an argument for adopting Dohori for research with older Nepali grandmothers. It has shown its advantages, which include advancing their voices and empowering them, addressing power differences, and improving their confidence and ability to contribute to knowledge creation. The paper also documents an exemplar case study comparing the use of Dohori and traditional narrative interviews with a Nepali grandmother providing informal care to her grandchildren in Hamilton, Ontario. Finally, this method and

other conversational poetry can also be adapted for narrative research within other cultures and populations with this culture.

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