



Critical Qualitative Research

*Underlying Philosophy, Foundational
Principles, and Practical Application
to Dissertation Research*

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Open Access Resource

Researched and Prepared for National University

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***Critical Qualitative Research:
Underlying Philosophy, Foundational Principles,
And Practical Application to Dissertation Research***

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AUTHOR INTRODUCTION AND NOTE TO THE READER

Welcome to you, the reader and learner! My goal in creating this open access resource is to share with you my knowledge and insights regarding critical qualitative research, and specifically how this methodology may be successfully incorporated in a qualitative dissertation. The resource is compiled to be instrumental in shedding light on all aspects of the critical research approach, providing both theoretical and paradigmatic background as well as practical “pointers”; thereby raising the general level of research competence and paving the way for graduate-level research requirements and expectations to be more understandable, ethical, and productive in a “real-world” sense.

This comprehensive resource was conceptualized and created as a *student research companion* designed to meet the needs of students who are pursuing Masters (thesis) or Doctoral (dissertation) research. This resource has multidisciplinary relevance and will be invaluable to a wide audience in the social sciences, whatever their level of knowledge and experience. The information provided herein will be of assistance to students who are enrolled in qualitative research courses or who may be intending to or currently conducting a qualitative research study. For those who have already adopted a qualitative path this resource provides additional rich information serving to augment or enhance current understanding. This resource will also be of value to undecided students who may not yet have made a methodological decision, and for whom critical qualitative research may be an appealing option to pursue. Moreover, the material contained herein will also hopefully be of use and value to seasoned researchers or instructors who are seeking additional knowledge and expertise in this burgeoning area of qualitative research.

My background is in adult education, psychology, and qualitative research. I develop and teach courses in qualitative research for application in graduate programs. I am the author of [*Designing and delivering effective online instruction: How to engage adult learners.*](#), [*Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end.*](#) and [*101 Golden Nuggets for Preparing a Qualitative Dissertation.*](#) In all materials that I develop I am committed to equity and inclusion thereby making OER resources accessible for all students. As the author of this resource, I have ensured that ethical considerations are meaningfully interwoven throughout, and that all the material contained herein was thoughtfully developed and presented so as to be inclusive and accessible with the goal of being readily adopted and embraced by all learners. I certainly hope you find this new resource useful, insightful, thought-provoking, and applicable to your studies!

I wish you much success and fulfillment as you pursue your educational journey.
Best regards, Linda Bloomberg EdD

OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research serves as a vital methodology for exploring the intricacies of human experiences, shedding light on diverse perspectives, and enriching our understanding of the world around us. As we navigate increasingly complex social, cultural, and scientific landscapes, qualitative research continues to play a pivotal role in uncovering the richness and depth of social and cultural phenomena. As explained by Bloomberg (2026),

Social science research is a systematic process of inquiry that aims to expand our understanding of phenomena, explore relationships, and answer questions that drive knowledge forward. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies play pivotal roles in advancing knowledge across disciplines. The choice among these methodologies will depend on your study's purpose and research questions, the nature of the phenomenon under study, and the preferred approach to gather and analyze data. Understanding these methodologies and their unique characteristics is fundamental for researchers in terms of (a) aligning their chosen methodology with the goals and objectives of their research, (b) choosing the appropriate research design, (c) guiding the selection of suitable data collection and analysis methods; and (d) correctly applying the fundamental principles of the methodology that is selected to ensure accurate and meaningful interpretation of research findings (p. 5).

Guiding Research Principles

The multifaceted nature of qualitative research endows it with several distinctive strengths, making it a powerful tool for exploring complex phenomena within real-world contexts, as outlined by Bloomberg (2023, 2026):

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Contextual Relevance and In-Depth Insights.

Qualitative research prioritizes the specific circumstances and settings in which phenomena occur, ensuring findings are grounded in real-world contexts. Researchers recognize that individuals' behaviors, meanings, and experiences are shaped by specific social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they live in. As contexts are diverse, individuals will experience a phenomenon in diverse ways and they will also interpret the meaning of their experiences in diverse ways. Qualitative research probes deeply into specific contexts, capturing rich, nuanced insights into complex phenomena. Thus, understanding the context is essential for interpreting accurately the findings of qualitative research. The implications are that strategies,

solutions, and interventions can be meaningfully developed with a clear and deep understanding of the relevant contextual factors.

Rich Descriptive Data.

The researcher is considered the primary data collection instrument. This concept means that researchers actively engage with participants in many different ways, using methods that allow for rich, descriptive data that captures the complexities of human experiences. Rich and descriptive data is a crucial aspect of qualitative research as this contributes significantly to the depth and trustworthiness of the findings. Detailed descriptions allow researchers to understand the context in which participants' experiences unfold. This contextual information is essential for making sense of the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences. Further, rich data enables researchers to capture the nuances and subtleties inherent in human experiences. Although qualitative research does not seek generalizability in the same way as quantitative research, the rich and descriptive data of qualitative research may enhance the transferability of findings. This means that readers can assess (transfer) the relevance and applicability of the study's findings to other contexts. In other words, the findings of qualitative research are not generalizable to a whole population but *transferable* to similar settings or contexts.

Holistic Perspective and Respect for Multiple Truths.

Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in their entirety, considering all relevant aspects and their interrelations. This holistic perspective facilitates a more complete understanding. Unlike positivist approaches that assume a singular, observable reality, qualitative research acknowledges multiple realities shaped by individuals' perceptions, social contexts, and historical backgrounds. This ontological stance—that reality is dynamic and situationally dependent—affects how qualitative researchers design and conduct their research. Qualitative research occurs within the context of the natural world and draws upon multiple methods that respect the humanity of the research participants. Because the focus is on context, research is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured, is fundamentally interpretive, and assumes multiple truths exist rather than one single truth. As such, multiple truths are welcomed, acknowledged, and respected.

Recognition of Participant Voice.

Qualitative research values and thus actively seeks out the experiences and perspectives of research participants. Based on interpretivist, constructivist, and critical research paradigms, qualitative methods enable researchers to explore human experiences deeply, producing rich and contextualized insights. As a

priority, the researcher seeks to capture the subjective meanings individuals attribute to their experiences, thereby allowing for a deep understanding of their viewpoints. The outcome is research that is more grounded, authentic, and reflective of the participants' realities; thereby authentically and respectfully amplifying *their voices*.

Researcher-Participant Relationship.

As a fundamental aspect, qualitative research fosters a collaborative relationship between researchers and participants, emphasizing ethical considerations and ensuring the trustworthiness of findings through member checking and triangulation. This relationship goes beyond mere transactional interaction and involves building rapport that encourages participants to share their experiences openly and honestly. The assumption is that when participants feel a sense of trust and comfort with the researcher, they are more likely to provide rich and authentic information by sharing personal insights, feelings, and perspectives. The researcher-participant relationship is a critical factor that influences the overall success and trustworthiness of qualitative research. Therefore, researchers need to invest time and effort in establishing a positive rapport to ensure that the data collected accurately reflects the nuances of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Scope for Reflexivity and Flexibility.

Qualitative research often starts with a broad research question or set of questions and works with a flexible and adaptable research design. Researchers may have a general idea of the topic they wish to explore at the outset of the study but allow for modifications and adjustments as they delve deeper into the subject. This flexibility enables a researcher to adapt to the evolving nature of their findings. In this sense qualitative research allows emergent design where the study's direction and focus evolve as new insights and patterns emerge from the data. Unlike quantitative research which is set up from the start with predefined variables and hypotheses, qualitative researchers are open to modifying their research strategies and methods based on what they learn during the study as it evolves. In this way the research remains responsive to evolving findings and new understandings of the studied phenomenon.

Qualitative Research Caveats

While qualitative research offers a plethora of strengths and unique insights, it is also accompanied by certain shortcomings/caveats that need to be acknowledged, addressed, and carefully navigated. Along with the strengths of qualitative research, it is important to present a balanced view, ensuring that researchers are well-informed of the challenges inherent in qualitative research,

and be equipped to address these challenges effectively, as outlined by Bloomberg (2023, 2026):

Subjectivity.

The foundation of qualitative research is closely tied to subjectivism and interpretivism, asserting that knowledge is obtained through interaction between the researcher and the participants. This foundation contrasts the objectivity required in quantitative research and acknowledges the researcher's influence on the research process. Because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and data analysis, qualitative research is not value free. The categories of political affiliation, religious faith, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disabilities, race, and others create relational power dynamics that influence and shape what is researched, why it is researched, how it is researched, and how the findings are represented after the research has been conducted.

Ways to address the caveat: It is an act of *power* to collect data and analyze and interpret someone else's reality and tell their story. This is a complex issue to be addressed with transparency and integrity. As such, addressing this ethical responsibility requires a reflexive approach to research, which requires maintaining a commitment with regards openness to critical feedback and change (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). As stated by Bloomberg (2026),

Remembering that the human factor is both the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis means that as the researcher you must recognize and acknowledge the subjective nature of the claims made regarding the meaning of the data... This practice contributes to the overall trustworthiness of the research, ensuring it remains rigorous, transparent, and ethically sound (p. 245).

Research Complexity.

Qualitative research data are typically rich and voluminous, posing challenges for analysis and interpretation. The implication is a need for expertise and time in handling complex qualitative data.

Ways to address the caveat: To navigate the complexity inherent in qualitative research, a systematic and organized approach to data management and analysis is crucial. Implementing clear coding frameworks and engaging in peer debriefing sessions can enhance consistency and trustworthiness in data interpretation.

Researcher Knowledge and Expertise.

The quality and rigor of qualitative research hinges on the researcher's abilities, particularly in data collection and analysis. This underscores the importance of having well-trained and experienced researchers for qualitative research.

Ways to address the caveat: To ensure the quality of qualitative research amidst the requisite high level of researcher skill, ongoing training, education, and professional development become paramount. Access to education or training and resources regarding current methods and techniques in qualitative research can enhance researcher capabilities. Additionally, fostering a culture of collaborative learning and mentorship, whereby less experienced researchers can learn from and be guided by more seasoned colleagues, further ensures the development of requisite expertise, knowledge, and skills.

Researcher Bias and Positionality.

The essence of quantitative research lies in its commitment to impartiality and detachment from the subject matter. Such research seeks to minimize biases and produce results that are generalizable across various contexts. In contrast, qualitative research embraces the role of subjectivity and contextual relevance as key factors to develop a more complete and nuanced understanding of the research problem. Because qualitative research is interpretive in nature, this opens up possibilities for bias. A researcher's own beliefs and values will inadvertently color the interpretation of human behavior. This introduces the need for rigorous reflexivity and also the need to ensure that there are thorough checks in place to maintain ethics, methodological alignment, and trustworthiness throughout the research process.

Ways to address the caveat: To counteract potential unacknowledged researcher bias in qualitative research, a commitment to reflexivity is required, where researchers consistently reflect critically upon and question their own biases and preconceptions throughout the research process. Maintaining a reflexive journal throughout the research process is highly recommended. A positionality statement is another good strategy in terms of ensuring credibility. Providing a transparent and detailed audit trail that documents all research decisions can further mitigate bias. Additionally, seeking external feedback through peer review and bracketing interviews offer additional layers of trustworthiness, ethics, and rigor.

Research Paradigms and Philosophical Foundations

Quantitative and qualitative research differ based on the different philosophical thinking they draw upon, which influences the ways in which the

research is designed and conducted. This includes the way we think about the types of research problems that are worthy of study, the purpose of the research, the nature of the research questions that are posed, the types of data or information that is needed to achieve that purpose, the ways in which we collect or gather that data, the ways in which data are analyzed and research findings interpreted, and finally how the researcher makes judgments regarding the rigor of the research. The foundation of qualitative research rests upon several philosophies and theories that influence its approach to inquiry, referred to as a “research paradigm”. A paradigm is essentially a set of beliefs that guide all the researcher’s choices and decisions regarding what to study, how it is to be studied, and why. Guba and Lincoln (1994) developed the idea of “inquiry paradigms” to express the close connections among the concepts of epistemology, ontology, methodology, and methods. Let us take a look specifically at research paradigms; that is the philosophical frameworks or foundations upon which qualitative research methodology is built and developed.

Qualitative Research Paradigms

In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative researchers collect and interpret narrative and visual data *to gain insight into a phenomenon of interest*. Rather than seeking to determine cause and effect or attempting to predict or describe the distribution of an attribute among a population, qualitative researchers seek to understand how people interpret their experiences and how they construct their worlds. The two paradigms that underlie and inform current qualitative research are interpretivism/social constructivism and critical theory:

The Interpretivist/Social Constructivist Paradigm.

Interpretivism emerged as a response against positivism and empiricism and is essentially a reaction against the idea that one can use the same research methods and paradigms in the social sciences as are used in the natural sciences (Willis, 2007). Research conducted within the scope of this paradigm focuses primarily on understanding and accounting for the meaning inherent in human experience and action from the point of view of the research participants themselves. Interpretivism was first developed in the mid-19th century by philosophers such as Comte and Durkheim during the time when the field of social sciences first became a distinct discipline. Interpretivists emphasize that knowing is subjective and assume the meaning of human action is inherent in that action, and that the task of the inquirer is to unearth that meaning (Schwandt, 2016). Social constructivism expands on interpretivism, with research participants being viewed as co-constructors of knowledge, with research being designed to tap into their perceptions and perspectives regarding their life experiences which will lead to reconstructed understandings of the complex social world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The Critical Theory Paradigm.

Critical theories are rooted in emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 1968/1970), which challenges dominant and hegemonic paradigms about knowledge and research and is centered on “consciousness raising” of the individuals and groups that are seen to have minimal power in society. Contemporary expressions of this paradigm have broadened to include oppression and marginalization on many levels. The core focus is on highlighting social justice issues, questioning systems of power and oppression, and giving “voice” to marginalized or underrepresented individuals or groups. Marginalization refers to systemic inequities including institutional oppression, lack of recognition, social privilege, all of which sustain disproportionalities. Critical theory goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of peoples’ understanding of their world, as in social constructivism, and places value on raising awareness and addressing research problems due to inequity, oppression, and discrimination (Cilesiz & Greckhamer, 2022; Willis, 2007). The goal of the critical paradigm is to better understand problematic social phenomena, challenge dominant narratives, drive equitable social change, and promote access, community, and success (Matta, 2022).

INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Over the years qualitative inquiry has passed through several phases or “historical moments”. These “historical moments” overlap or coexist in the present, and so the field of qualitative research continues to evolve and transform (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Denzin et al., 2024). Moreover, changes in research methods are rapidly evolving, which has given way to changes in research focus and agenda (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). Critical research, based on critical theory, advocates for increased awareness of the status quo that sustains and perpetuates commonly held assumptions and biases.

The Evolution of Qualitative Research and the Critical Agenda

Qualitative research has indeed come a long way since the positivist paradigm served as the gold standard for social research, and a wide variety of approaches are now firmly grounded within critical, constructivist, interpretivist, and postmodern orientations. In the past three decades, a “critical turn” has taken place in the social sciences, humanities, and applied fields, with scholars challenging the historical assumptions of neutrality in inquiry, asserting that all research is interpretive and fundamentally political (Denzin et al., 2024). The postpositivist approach to inquiry which had prevailed, was based on a set of beliefs grounded in an objectivist view in which researchers attempted to minimize error and biases in their observations to best represent a reality and enable

predictions. The first strand of critical research emerged from theoretical orientations with regard to postmodernism and poststructuralism where the view of qualitative research moved away from grand narratives and became focused on the idea of multiple realities and socially constructed truths (Alvesson & Deetz, 2021). The second strand developed from the social justice movements beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, including the civil rights movement, women's liberation, and the gay rights movement. Contemporary critical genres include a variety of feminist theories and methodologies, Indigenous research, critical discourse analysis, critical race theory, critical ethnography, critical gerontology theory, queer/quare theory, transgender theory, cultural studies, postcolonial and poststructural studies, intersectionality studies, and disability studies (Denzin et al., 2024). Added to these critical genres is the increasingly expanding body of trauma-informed research, which amplifies participant voices and empowers individuals and groups to decide what stories they wish to share (Alessi & Kahn, 2023; Brigden, 2022; Isobel, 2021).

In essence, adopting a critical approach means asking questions about the historical forces that shape societal patterns as well as the fundamental issues and dilemmas of power, positionality, policy, and domination in institutions, including their role in reproducing and reinforcing inequity, social injustice, and constraint. It is argued that research itself involves issues of power and positionality and that traditionally conducted social science research has silenced groups in society by making these groups the passive objects of inquiry (Cannella et al., 2015; Cannella & Lincoln, 2024; Chilisa, 2020; Darder, 2019; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2024; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2021). **The key purpose** of critical qualitative research is to address, challenge, educate, and hopefully change problematic social circumstances and experiences by promoting liberation, access, transformation, and social change. **The intended outcome** is essentially to empower the oppressed and help them understand, overturn, or overcome their oppression. As stated by Alvesson and Deetz (2021), "Critical research takes on a special responsibility to produce something that is experienced as relevant for those being studied" (p. 177).

Qualitative Research Designs

You may be asking what are the different ways in which to design a critical qualitative study. As discussed above, qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena. It is based essentially on the interpretivist/social constructivist or critical perspective and grounded in people's experiences. Qualitative research encompasses a series of designs (sometimes referred to as traditions or genres), each distinguished by specific assumptions and philosophical foundations regarding what constitutes inquiry within the broad field of qualitative research. Think of a research design as essentially the detailed plan or blueprint of a study that guides all the multiple aspects of the research, including methods, tools, strategies, and techniques to conceptualize and conduct the research so that

overall alignment and trustworthiness are achieved. Each qualitative design thus incorporates ways of defining a research topic, critically engaging the literature on that topic, identifying significant research problems, setting up the study, and conducting the study; that is, collecting, analyzing, and presenting data so that it will be most relevant and meaningful (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026).

Choosing a Qualitative Research Design

There is a great deal of diversity regarding the many research designs that fall under the larger umbrella of qualitative research. Each of the designs is based upon a specific *inquiry paradigm* or *worldview*; that is, a basic set of beliefs and assumptions that guide action; in this case, the research process. The primary differences among the research designs lie in the particularities of the philosophical and methodological underpinnings and the social context that is examined, so each of the qualitative research designs brings to the fore ideological, conceptual, and methodological implications. Because the designs are informed by different philosophical foundations, a researcher's values and assumptions fundamentally influence everything about how research is conceptualized, conducted, analyzed, and presented. To make an informed choice about which qualitative research design will fit best with your study, you will need to be knowledgeable about the various designs, including their key philosophical underpinnings and characteristic applications.

Case Study.

This design allows an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the richness and complexity of a bounded social phenomenon (or multiple phenomena), be this a social unit or system such as a program, event, institution, organization, or community (Bloomberg, 2018; Stake 1995, 2005, 2024; Yin, 2018). Case study design is an exploratory form of inquiry that affords significant interaction with research participants, providing an in-depth picture of the unit of study (the "case"). The single case study design is one of the most commonly adopted designs for qualitative doctoral research due to its broad application across disciplines. A multiple case study design is employed when the research intent is to draw comparisons across cases. The researcher explores the bounded system (or bounded systems) through in-depth data collection methods involving multiple data sources. Case study is employed across disciplines, including education, health care, social work, history, sociology, management studies, and organizational studies. The purpose of this research design is to generate

understanding and deep insights to inform professional practice, policy development, and community or social action.

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Case Study Research.

Recent trends indicate that case study methodology has developed along two very broad, distinct paths, with different epistemological strands determining the particular case study type. (Schwandt & Gates, 2018). One pathway aligns with interpretive constructivist philosophy, with the goal of describing and explaining how everyday practices in specific contexts are connected to larger structures and processes. The second pathway is a critical orientation, which follows the lines of critical theory, seeking to uncover and examine the ways in which individuals and groups are marginalized or oppressed by social or cultural structures, with the goal of raising awareness and bringing about action to address these inequities.

Ethnography.

This qualitative research design is rooted in cultural anthropology and focused on discovering and describing the culture of a group of people from the perspectives of the members themselves. Culture encompasses the shared attitudes, values, norms, practices, patterns of interaction, material objects and artifacts, rituals, and language that members of a group use in understanding their world and relating to others (Van Maanen, 1988, 1995, 2006). Ethnographic studies, like case studies, are reports of data gathered through multiple methods, typically in-depth interviews and participant observation. The researcher as “participant observer” becomes immersed in the day-to-day lives of the research participants to characterize the way of life or culture of a people or group. Geertz (1973) coined the term “thick description” with an emphasis on the need to understand and elaborate the symbolism of what is observed and documented during fieldwork. Currently, there are several major streams of qualitative inquiry: realist ethnographic case study, critical ethnography, participatory action research, Indigenous studies, autoethnography, performance ethnography, and literary and other arts-based approaches (Erikson, 2024; Madden, 2023; Procter & Spector, 2024).

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Ethnographic Research.

Over the years the critical ethnographic turn posits that ethnographic research serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge and for power with Western

researchers seeking to appropriate and distribute knowledge about the “Indigenous other”, and as a result there is an increasing shift in the landscape of academia leading toward broader discussions over “colonizing methodologies” (Giardina & Donnelly, 2024; Madden, 2023; Madison, 2020; Procter & Spector, 2024). As explained by Giardina and Donnelly (2024), the original goal of ethnography was indeed a positivist one; that is, the “accurate collection of facts” and a comprehensive description of the whole way of life of those who were being studied. However, over the years, issues of ethnographic representation and legitimacy continue to highlight the relevance of critical engagement with questions of ethnographic authorship and authority, and as a result, ethnographic research participants are shifting from being *informants* to becoming *consultants or co-researchers*.

Ethnographers are increasingly interested in social change (critical ethnography or decolonizing ethnography) by studying populations that have been marginalized or overlooked (feminist theory, queer/quare theory) or on the study of the cultural past of a group of people in order to uncover cultural roots and whether and how the group has changed over time (ethnohistory, multicultural studies). A researcher may also be interested in their own personal experience by engaging in extensive self-reflection to explore the cultural and contextual description and analysis of her or his life (autoethnography). What characterizes all of these approaches is the emphasis on interpretation; that is, tapping into the core of the meaning of experience from the perspectives of the research participants.

Phenomenology.

It is important to understand the history and origin of phenomenology as essentially a philosophical discipline and movement that began at the turn of the 20th century when Edmund Husserl published *Logical Investigations*. The purpose of phenomenological research is to explore the meaning of the *lived experience* of people in order to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants (van Manen, 1990, 1997, 2016, 2023). While case studies focus on exploring the case or event to gain a better understanding of the case itself, phenomenology focuses on studying individuals to better understand the *essence of their experiences and* seeks to uncover the taken-for-granted presuppositions, habits, and norms that structure everyday experiences. The essence is considered to be universal and is present in particular instances of a phenomenon (van Manen, 1990, 2016). Phenomenologists arrive at this essence by locating significant statements through the analytic process called *interpretive*

phenomenological analysis (IPA), developing “meaning units”, and then describing what the individuals have experienced within the context of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Phenomenological Research.

Critical phenomenology combines phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience with a critical view of how subjectivity is shaped by sociocultural and economic conditions, focusing on experiences of marginalization, oppression, and power to identify and transform common experiences of injustice (Ferencz-Flatz, 2023; Magri & McQueen, 2022; Weiss et al., 2020). Critical phenomenology builds upon the phenomenological tradition, which emphasizes the study of lived experience, but incorporates insights from critical theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and poststructuralism to analyze how power structures and social conditions shape our understanding of the world. The focus is on experiences of marginalization, oppression, and power, aiming to understand how these experiences are shaped by social structures and how they contribute to injustice. This is essentially an interdisciplinary field, drawing from philosophy, social sciences, and other disciplines to address complex social and political issues. Critical phenomenological research explores topics such as health, gender, discrimination, race, disability, and sexuality, examining how these issues are experienced and how existing social structures contribute to them.

Narrative Inquiry.

Narrative inquiry is a research design for studying experience as lived and told stories. The philosophical underpinning of narrative inquiry is Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience. This qualitative design is focused on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell. Narratives are always interlinked between an individual and their social and cultural context, and as such, narratives cannot be isolated or looked at independent of context. In narrative inquiry, participants tell stories of their lived experiences, and then in relational ways, the researcher inquires into and about these experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). This design is essentially the study of life experiences as a *storied phenomenon*. In contrast to phenomenology, where the goal is to describe the essence of the experience of a phenomenon, the narrative researcher works with the participant to discern the individual storied experience and then composes a narrative account of the storied experience. Methods such as

interviews, life history, text data, and other artifacts such as photos, videos, artwork, journals, or letters are used to provide data for a descriptive analysis. Narrative researchers inquire into the institutional, social, cultural, familial, and linguistic narratives in which each participant's experiences are embedded and that shape each individual experience. Chronology is central to narrative inquiry, as this allows participants to recall specific events, situations, changes, and trends within their life stories.

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Narrative Inquiry.

Interview methods are the primary data collection tool, offering a basis for sharing power and allowing participants to tell their stories in their own ways and on their own terms. Narrative inquiry also typically makes use of the life history method. This method captures individuals' experiences in relation to the political and institutional landscapes in which they are located and the different contexts that they encounter, thereby showcasing how they have navigated external events throughout their lives, and providing them an opportunity to understand their path through life (Söderström, 2022). Loseke (2022) draws attention to the inherent critical component of narrative research, explaining that we must be cognizant that “power shapes storytelling because cultural meaning systems influence who can—and who cannot—tell what kinds of stories in what kinds of circumstances as well as whose stories likely will be believed and whose likely will be silenced or ignored” (p. 10). It is also important to realize that power, to a large extent, determines the content of a story because stories with the potential to appeal to the largest audiences will incorporate the systems of meaning shared by those in relatively privileged audience positions although these meanings are often not shared by those with less power in society. As such, narrative inquiry occupies a relevant space within critical qualitative research.

Grounded Theory.

Grounded theory was first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a “discovery of theory” from data that is systematically obtained and analyzed in social research. The purpose is to inductively generate theory that is grounded in and inductively derived or generated from the data. The goal is to move beyond description and to have the researcher generate or discover a theory of a process, an action, or an interaction grounded in the views of the research participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Study participants would all have experienced the

process, and the development of theory might explain practice or provide a framework for further research. A core component is that theory development is generated by or “grounded” in data from the field, especially in actions, interactions, and social processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The constant comparative method is the key means to develop a new theory from the data.

Classical Grounded Theory is an inductive process that collects data, analyzes the data, develops substantive theories, and reviews the literature to explain the findings. Two main approaches have emerged since the original classical grounded theory was introduced. The Glaserian approach is the extension of the original grounded theory approach by Glaser (1992) while the Straussian approach is the “full conceptual description” approach advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1998). More recently, Charmaz has made a distinct contribution to the development of grounded theory, taking this research design to a new level by way of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2015, 2016, 2017; Charmaz et al., 2018). This approach to grounded theory focuses on generating new theories through inductive analysis of the data gathered from participants rather than from pre-existing theoretical frameworks.

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Grounded Theory Research.

Constructivist grounded theory asks emergent critical questions seeking to understand a social phenomenon and construct theories through participants’ experiences, using iterative data collection and analysis. This approach addresses power inequity, and injustice, by encouraging a deeply reflexive stance referred to as methodological self-consciousness, which leads researchers to examine their data, actions, and analyses (Charmaz, 2016). As Charmaz (2016) explains, “This methodological self-consciousness requires scrutinizing our positions, privileges, and priorities and assessing how they affect our steps during the research process and our relationships with research participants. Thus, engaging in this kind of reflexivity profoundly affects the practice of constructivist grounded theory in critical inquiry and where it could take us” (p. 34)

Action Research.

This is a collaborative and applied research design that seeks effective solutions to complex problems that people confront in their communities and organizations (Mertler, 2020; Stringer & Aragon, 2021). The research team works together to continually explore new ways to find solutions to the identified problem.

The emphasis is on addressing the problem by generating knowledge and taking action within the social system in which the problem is located. The research process is iterative, cyclical, and participative in nature and is intended to foster deeper understanding of a given situation informing future action, starting with conceptualizing the problem and moving through several iterations of interventions and evaluations.

Action research studies have direct relevance to improving practice and advocating for change. This type of research is especially valuable to those involved in professional, organizational, educational, and community research, with a focus on engaging stakeholders in collaborative learning and working on developing localized solutions. There are currently different strands of action research. The strength of action research is indeed its focus on generating solutions to practical problems or issues and its ability to empower those working in practice-based environments by engaging them in the research process. This research design in effect blurs the distinction between researcher and participants, creating an ideally democratic inquiry process to collaboratively question practice, make changes, and evaluate the impact of those changes (Stringer & Aragon, 2021). Action research is based on the assumption that all stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the problem under study, should be involved in the research process in order to inform understanding and subsequent action, and the research takes place by actively engaging people who have previously been the “subjects” of research to collectively and collaboratively investigate and reconcile their own situation. This type of research is especially valuable to those involved in professional, organizational, educational, and community research, with a focus on engaging stakeholders in collaborative relationships and working on developing localized solutions and sharing the lessons learned with each other. Many work settings have embraced action research as a collaborative form of continual organizational learning.

Emergence of a Critical Agenda in Action Research.

There are currently various different strands of action research, each with its own set of methods and applications. One strand of action research is PAR which strives to transform power relationships inherent in the research process itself (Chevalier & Buckles, 2019). PAR assumes that people in a particular context seek to study themselves and their practices with the goal of achieving change and improvement, thereby breaking down the traditional distinction between objective researchers and their research participants (Mertler, 2020; Stringer & Aragon, 2021).

One form of PAR, known as Critical participatory Inquiry (CPI), is specifically guided by the emancipatory roots of post-colonialism and post structuralism to deconstruct inequitable conditions and practices (Call-Cummings et al., 2024). Emphasis is placed on the political possibilities and ramifications of the research and emphasizes the empowerment of those with little power in their communities and society. The word *critical* signifies the addition of an ideological element to the research, striving for immediate social change by emancipating the oppressed and increasing social justice. CPI studies typically include attempts at “consciousness-raising.” In the field of education, an early proponent of this approach was Paulo Freire, who attempted to use education to free the disadvantaged from what he saw as educational oppression through his landmark text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968/1970). This participatory approach often involves co-developing research questions, analyzing data together, and using findings to inform advocacy efforts. CPI thus moves beyond traditional PAR with its strong emphasis on the political possibilities of action research and the empowerment of those who are oppressed, marginalized, or disadvantaged.

Critical Qualitative Research Across Designs: A Synthesis

As you can see from this overview, the various qualitative research designs differ in terms of their key philosophical underpinnings and characteristic applications. Recent trends, however, indicate that qualitative research includes a strong activist and educational agenda, thereby intentionally facilitating transformative and equity-oriented possibilities; often referred to as “the critical turn” (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). Overall, there is an increasingly greater emphasis across all qualitative designs regarding facilitating social change by taking an active critical stance toward oppressive social structures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Denzin et al., 2024). The motivation to adopt a critical approach is that qualitative inquiry has the potential to highlight inequities and inequality, barriers and access, poverty and privilege, and the implications of suffering from injustice. Adopting a critical approach means asking questions about the historical forces that shape societal patterns as well as the fundamental issues and dilemmas of power, positionality, policy, and domination in institutions, including their role in reproducing and reinforcing inequity and social injustice. Critical research is an appropriate approach when you are seeking to conduct a study with the purpose of promoting equity, inclusion, transformation, and social change for marginalized individuals and groups. Understanding the logic behind a research design will ensure that your study is well positioned within the parameters of the chosen research design, so

that all the research components are well aligned and lay a strong foundation for supporting your study's findings. Your decision to conduct critical qualitative research should ultimately be guided by your topic, research problem, and worldview (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026; Cheek & Oby, 2023).

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF CRITICAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The Context

Oppressive Social Structures

Critical research is rooted in the assumption that we live and work within a power-laden context, with a focus on the complexities inherent in power relationships and the social, historical, and ideological forces that serve to constrain knowledge-building, thereby limiting access and success (Call-Cummings, et al., 2024; Cannella et al., 2015; Chilisa, 2020; Darder, 2019; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Farrington, 2020; Lahman, 2025; Kovach, 2021; Sleeter, 2024; Smith, 2021). The Critical Race Theory lens, for example, is often used to examine how systemic inequities and racial dynamics shape marginalized students' experiences in education, highlighting slow change, the preservation of inequality, and the silencing of marginalized voices (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2021). Critical researchers are wary of notions of absolute truth and dominant ideologies and are concerned with historical inequities produced by rigid views of knowledge or “grand narratives”, with the goal of deconstructing these. The quest is to uncover dominant points of view and ideologies that seem to be “disguised as universal truths”, and to disrupt these in order to create spaces for resistive knowledge-production that challenges the oppressive or privileged status quo in order to enhance access and community-building. Deconstruction of grand narratives is seen as contributing to radical change or emancipation from oppressive social structures, either through sustained critique or through direct advocacy and action taken by the researcher in collaboration with research participants. The researcher and “the researched” are not considered separate entities; through interpretation, their emergent constructed meanings become interwoven (Darder, 2019).

Marginalization and Colonization

Marginalization refers to systemic inequities impacting groups including institutional oppression or “colonization”, lack of recognition, social privilege, all of

which sustain disproportionalities. In colonized systems, equity is often framed as providing equal access to existing structures, which perpetuate colonial knowledge and practices (Patel, 2016; Smith, 2021). The concept of inclusion emphasizes equal access to environments where diverse populations are welcomed, valued, and empowered to reach their full potential. However, inclusion demands more than equal access, requiring a commitment to addressing historical inequities and critically examining systemic barriers to create safe environments that genuinely reflect the diversity and potential of all (Patel, 2016). Critical Race Theory and Indigenous perspectives embrace the effects of marginalization by countering it with self-determination (Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Indigenous communities, for example, have begun to actively resist hegemonic research and to reinvent new research methodologies in an effort to achieve the “decolonization of research methods” and reclaim control over Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Smith, 2021). Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) provide tangible ways to incorporate decolonial learning into research methodology, and propose four practices that can be used by qualitative researchers working with populations oppressed by colonial legacies: (1) exercising critical reflexivity, (2) reciprocity and respect for self-determination, (3) embracing “Other(ed)” ways of knowing, and (4) embodying a transformative praxis; that is, for those who undertake emancipatory research, the purpose of doing research with oppressed communities stems from an intent to bring to light historically silenced voices and present their experiences in authentic ways. Similarly, Sumida and Martin (2020) promote authenticity through research by affirming Indigenous voices and cultural knowledge. This edited volume includes issues of power, representation, and accountability through exploring decolonizing and decolonial methodological paradigms, honoring Indigenous knowledge systems, and calling for interdisciplinary collaboration toward Indigenous self-determination.

Power Dynamics

Critical research is rooted in the assumption that we live and work within a power-laden context, and that it is important to understand the various and complex ways that power operates to dominate and shape consciousness (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2024). The focus of critical research is on the complexities inherent in power relationships and the social, historical, and ideological forces that serve to constrain knowledge building. Moreover, aligned with the ethics of traditionally underrepresented groups, a critical qualitative stance rejects the notion that one group can “know” and define (or even represent) “others.”

(Cannella & Lincoln, 2024). It is increasingly argued that research involves issues of power, and that traditionally conducted social science research has silenced, marginalized, and oppressed groups in society by making them the passive objects of inquiry. Postmodernism views the world as complex and is skeptical of narratives, viewing these as containing power-laden discourses developed for the maintenance of dominant ideas or the power of individuals, institutions, or theories. In recognition of the socially constructed nature of the world, meaning rather than knowledge is sought because knowledge is seen as constrained by the discourses that were developed to protect powerful interests. Deconstruction of grand narratives is viewed as an important way of removing their power (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Just as power is embedded within societal structures, power dynamics are also inherent in the research process.

The broader social and cultural context is duplicated within the research context. Playing the role of researcher reproduces the inherent hierarchical power structures that privilege some, silence some, and deny the existence of others. To be attentive to issues of diversity and inclusion, it is important to highlight the ways research participants who identify as minorities or underrepresented or marginalized groups will feel as they engage with a researcher. It is clear that human interactions within the context of research do not occur on a neutral stage, but rather parallel to the real world of hierarchical power relations (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). Power is an important consideration in qualitative research because it influences every phase of the research process, from the way the research problem, purpose and questions are initially constructed, the way the study is designed, who is invited or recruited to participate (who is being included and who is being excluded), the selection of the research site/s, the choice of data collection methods, how data are analyzed and interpreted, what types of conclusions and recommendations are provided, and finally the ways in which outcomes and findings are disseminated and published.

Positionality

All aspects of our identities are shaped by socially constructed positions which are embedded in society as a system (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022). Positionality is thus determined by where one stands in relation to “the other”, and so who we are and what roles we assume in our research will translate into issues of power. Because the broader social context is duplicated within the research context, enacting the role of the researcher will reproduce the inherent hierarchical power structures that privilege some, silence some, and deny the existence of

others. Qualitative research considers the positionality of both the researcher and the researched as core aspects of inquiry to understand how knowledge and experience are situated, co-constructed, and historically and socially located. Reflexivity does not just allow for richer data, but also requires researchers to consider power within and surrounding the research process and to employ an ethic of care for their subjects and for the overall work of qualitative research (Reich, 2021).

In order to be attentive to issues of diversity and inclusion in our research, it is critically important to highlight the ways research participants who identify as minorities or underrepresented or marginalized groups might feel as they engage with a researcher. Researchers must be cognizant of the power dynamics especially with vulnerable populations and be cognizant of a potential power differential. There is an oppressive nature associated with much of research that has been conducted *on* Indigenous communities or groups, with research being seen as a “colonial tool”. It is therefore particularly significant to pay attention to positionality and power relations when conducting international research where fieldwork involves being attentive to histories of colonialism and local realities, and to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination, control, and Western biases (Sultana, 2015). Failure to account for unexpected power dynamics between participants and the researcher can lead some participants feeling pressured to disclose personal details that they are not comfortable talking about, or feel silenced, preventing them from sharing the fullness of their experience. In such cases, participants can be inadvertently harmed and data quality can suffer. A heightened focus on these systems of marginalization and **hierarchical** power imbalances further highlights the centrality of researcher positionality as we strive for equity and inclusion in our research.

The Researcher

“Researcher-as-Instrument”

An underlying assumption of qualitative research is that rich data that is nested in real context can be captured only by way of the interactive process between the researcher and the participants. As such, research becomes a dialogic process with the subjective lenses that both the researcher and research participants bring to a qualitative study that are part of the context for the findings (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). Collaborative, participatory, and critical research designs such as action research and cooperative inquiry highlight positioning and

representation within research accounts by including participants' responses to the researcher's findings and analyses. Participants thus play a significant role in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, emphasizing their voices and value. These concepts connect with specific qualitative research paradigms to provide a unique perspective for the researcher's role in the study. Important, too, are representational issues—that is, how the other will be represented—which brings to the fore the issue of insider–outsider status, especially as this pertains to vulnerable and marginal groups (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017; Shaw et al., 2020). Because the researcher strives to describe the meaning of the findings from the perspective of the research participants, to achieve this goal, data are gathered directly from the participants. This conversation between researcher and participants' perspectives enables better understanding of the complexities of positionality, power, privilege, ownership, and interpretive authority in the qualitative research process (Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2017).

Because description, understanding, interpretation, and communication are the primary goals of qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Whereas in quantitative research the impact of researcher subjectivity is considered a limitation that needs to be controlled for, in qualitative studies, explored subjectivities are an asset that indeed enrich and enhance the work, providing an additional level of credibility. Hence, the subjective nature embraces an introspective approach to capture an additional depth of analysis. However, researcher-as-instrument raises important ethical, accountability, and social justice issues. Literature on researcher-as-instrument has illustrated that this concept has been examined in different ways by focusing on the qualitative researcher's reflexivity, positionality, and identity during the research process, particularly in terms of the interpretation and presentation of research findings (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). Importantly, the reflexive researcher understands that all research is value-bound and that a reflective stance is therefore imperative, that is, the explicit self-consciousness on the part of the researcher, including social, political, and value positions. As such, reflexivity has become one of the key markers indicating the trustworthiness, rigor, and ethical integrity of the research. In any research study, ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of vital concern. As researchers, we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimizes potential harm to all of those involved in the study. The central issue with respect to protecting research participants is the ways in which information is treated and disseminated, and the conduct of research with human participants, including how issues of confidentiality and anonymity are addressed,

as laid out in the Belmont Report (NCPHSBRR, 1979) of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research.

Worldview

As the researcher, you actively create the link among problem, purpose, and design through a process of reflecting on problem and purpose, focusing on researchable questions, and considering how to best address these questions by way of an appropriate research design. Thinking along these lines affords a research study “methodological congruence” and alignment. The components of the design process (e.g., the theoretical framework, research problem and purpose, and methods of data collection and data analysis) will be aligned with and reflect the principles and features that characterize the design you have selected. Qualitative research designs are informed by a researcher’s worldview which is tied to a specific research paradigm. As explained in detail in Bloomberg (2023, 2026) there are essentially four core inquiry paradigms that inform qualitative research and that identify how worldviews shape the conceptualization, practice, and nature of research. These paradigms are positivism, postpositivism, pragmatism, social constructivism (or interpretivism) and critical theory; the latter two forming the basis of qualitative research. As a researcher your research topic, problem, and research design will all align with the worldview and inquiry paradigm that you identify with.

It is recommended that a researcher understands each qualitative design as rigorous in its own right to address its methodological typicality and uniqueness (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). Different research designs and methods are employed based on the topic, the research problem, and the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Clarity of choice is necessary to develop a viable and feasible study. Making selections about how to set up a study and plan a course of action to collect and analyze data is not random or haphazard. The choices that researchers make must be thoughtful and systematic to maintain alignment and methodological congruence throughout the research process. Alignment among design and methods is a key consideration in qualitative research to ensure that all the different components of the study fit together as an “integrated whole.” As such, reflexive consideration and acknowledgment of all the choices and decisions that have been made in setting up a study is an important step in justifying the researcher’s choice of research design.

Intersectionality

Positionality applies to a researcher's role, social location, and identity with regard to the complex relationships that play out within the context of the research. Researcher positionality can impact all aspects and stages of the research process because the researcher is essentially in a position of power in conducting their research. The researcher's positionality and status as an insider/outsider has implications for the topics we choose to study, the way we conduct research, engage with our research participants, how we analyze our data, and how we communicate our findings (Shaw et al., 2020). As such, systematic assessment of researcher identity, assumptions, biases, power and positionality must occur because addressing power and positionality is central to credible and trustworthy research.

Positionality is *multidimensional and fluid*, and as the researcher it is imperative to consider the ways in which your race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic class, disability status, age, or other social or cultural factors *intersect* and impact how you “show up” and relate to and communicate with your research participants. That said, in addressing positionality we must also address *intersectionality* in research which is described by Lahman (2025) as “the interwoven nature of the social identities of research participants and researchers, with an emphasis on how these identities have been a focus area for disadvantage or undue advantage” (p. 23). In addition, intersectionality in research calls for attention to the interplay between the research participant's and the researcher's identities which includes an increased understanding of how and in what ways we integrate our identities, how these identities change and shift contextually, and the impact these identities may have on you as a researcher and on your research. Research represents a shared space that is shaped by both researcher and the research participants, and so the “intersecting identities” of both researcher and participants have the potential to profoundly impact the research process (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). Identities come into play via our perceptions not only of others but also of the ways in which we expect others will perceive us. Issues of positionality and power apply not only to the relationship between researcher and research participants but also to the subject matter of the research itself (Mason-Bish, 2019). As such, it is important to acknowledge the delicate context of the research topic which is very much shaped by the identity and positionality of everyone involved in the study (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026; Saldana, 2018).

Subjectivity

Qualitative research is not value free; the categories of political affiliation, religious faith, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disabilities, race, and others create relational power dynamics that influence and shape what is researched, why it is researched, how it is researched, and how the study's findings are represented. Neutrality is not considered part of qualitative research. Subjectivity is inherent in all aspects of qualitative research, and the researcher does not strive for objectivity. Instead, the qualitative researcher acknowledges inherent subjectivity. Qualitative researchers seek conscious and intentional tracking of subjectivities that are at play in the research process and must account for these to the extent possible. The goal is to make subjectivities (assumptions, biases, stereotypes, prejudices) as transparent and open as possible.

Considering the prominence of the qualitative researcher as a primary instrument of the research has significant implications in all the ways that the subjectivity of the researcher profoundly shapes the research process (Bourke, 2014; Dean et al., 2018; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021; Holmes, 2020; Sultana, 2015). Related to subjectivity is the expression of voice that results in the reporting of the research findings. Through this voice, the researcher leaves their own signature or “footprint” on the study. An understanding of positionality and reflexive practice is a direct support to ethical research practices. Reflexive practice allows you to remain alert to power dynamics and ensure you do not unintentionally exploit or marginalize participants during data collection and analysis. Qualitative analysis consists of two related concepts: the ways in which the researcher accounts for the experiences of the research participants, and the ways in which participants themselves make meaning of their experiences. At its core, qualitative research is about sharing, respecting, and most importantly *authentically and ethically representing diverse participant voices*. This becomes especially pertinent when conducting critical qualitative research where “representation of the other” and “giving voice to our research participants” is central to the research endeavor (Cannella et al., 2015; Chilisa, 2020; Darder, 2019; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2022; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2021).

Reflexivity

To ensure rigor and ethics in qualitative research implies ongoing self-reflection on the part of the researcher. Reflexivity is the active, ongoing process of examining oneself as a researcher and remaining aware of how one's assumptions,

biases, and preconceptions affect our research decisions. Reflexivity is a central construct in qualitative research and goes hand in hand with research ethics in allowing us to challenge ourselves to continually grow and deepen our ethical intent and practice (Lahman, 2025). Reflexivity prepares researchers for many “ethically important moments” that will emerge as they plan for, conduct, and finally write up their study. To ensure credibility, critical reflectivity is important at all stages of the research process. This includes data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and representation. Reflective journaling throughout the research process is an ongoing opportunity to develop a research habit to deepen your thinking around critical and key issues and processes. This benefits the development of a chronology of your thoughts, questions, assumptions, and ideas. Reflection also provides information that can be drawn upon for analysis and interpretation of research findings.

Soedirgo and Glas (2020) explain that one means of recognizing and responding to positionality in practice: a posture of “active reflexivity.” These authors outline how researchers can become actively reflexive by adopting a disposition toward both ongoing reflection about their own social location and ongoing reflection on their assumptions regarding others’ perceptions. Incorporating peer or colleague feedback to uncover researcher blind spots can help researchers revise and improve their research strategies and pursue better working relationships, leading to new insights (Soedirgo & Glas, 2020). Every researcher has personal biases; however, through reflexive practices, the researcher can work toward reducing the impact of personal bias on the outcomes of their study (Folkes, 2023). Reflexivity is the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcomes. Strunk and Locke (2019) expand the definition of reflexivity as “an analysis of researchers’ positionalities within a study. They interrogate their social positioning and social location, especially in relation to the purpose of the study and their participants” (p. 303). As such, reflexivity can be considered as introspective internal dialogue that can reveal and unravel “uncomfortable realities” (Woodley & Smith, 2020, p. 2). Moreover, in reflecting on our role as qualitative researchers, it is critical to pay attention to positionality, the production of knowledge, and the power relations that are inherent in research process in order to undertake ethical research, especially in international field research contexts (Sultana, 2015).

The Research

Trustworthiness and Credibility

An essential caveat of qualitative research is its highly subjective nature because the research is based to a large degree on reflection and interpretation. Although researchers strive to mitigate their biases and uphold impartiality, the inherent interpretative character of qualitative research implies that the researcher's perspective might still impact the findings. This is because the *researcher-as-instrument* brings their own experiences and perspectives to the research. Qualitative research does not purport to be objective, nor is this a goal. However, to be rigorous, qualitative research does strive to be transparent with the qualitative researcher openly and clearly documenting and communicating all decisions that were made throughout the research process. In quantitative research, the standards that are most frequently used for good and convincing (rigorous) research are validity and reliability. If research is valid, it clearly reflects the world being described. If work is reliable, then two researchers studying the same phenomenon will come up with compatible observations. Criteria for evaluating qualitative research differ significantly from those used in quantitative research in that the focus is on how well the researcher has provided evidence that their descriptions and analysis *authentically represent the reality* of the situations and individuals studied (Guba & Lincoln 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1982, 1985). Ethical practice, rigor, and reflexivity are the primary means to achieve this, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. Ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research means that other researchers and scholars will trust the researcher's analysis and interpretation, thereby supporting the credibility of the study's findings.

Credibility, one aspect of trustworthiness in qualitative research, is the degree to which the findings accurately reflect the reality that your research participants experienced and is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). Credibility is developed by engaging with research participants to acquire comprehensive insights while keeping an open-minded attitude, recognizing personal biases, and practicing reflexivity throughout the research process. Moreover, the utilization of triangulation, which involves the integration of many data sources or methods, helps enhance the credibility of your study. Credibility is especially relevant to critical qualitative research because it refers to whether the research participants' perceptions match with the researcher's portrayal of them. Toward this end, it is essential that readers' have confidence in the truth of the

research findings with the belief that the researcher has accurately and authentically represented what the participants think and say. While the pursuit of trustworthiness in qualitative research is a methodological imperative, it is also a *moral imperative* for research that respects, represents, and authentically portrays the lives and experiences of others (Bloomberg 2023, 2026). Ultimately, establishing the rigor and credibility of your research, including the interpretations you made and the conclusions you reached, is fundamentally linked to the idea of establishing the trustworthiness of the research (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026).

Transparency

Ongoing and intentional transparency is key to ensuring trustworthiness. Toward this end, as a qualitative researcher you will need to ensure that you are thinking more deeply about the potential impact of all the choices you make regarding your study's design, including identification, justification, and limitations for all methodological choices and what might be your underlying (explicit and implicit) biases and (Bloomberg, 2023; Stahl & King, 2020). There are many significant issues to consider when formally writing up qualitative research, including how to make informed decisions about the purposes and focus of the study; choosing which data to incorporate; deciding whose voice is heard, and participant representation and portrayal. The power inherent in qualitative research cannot be ignored, and the representation of research participants, their contexts, and aspects of their experiences; all calling for respectful, authentic, and ethical representations of individuals, groups, and communities. Researcher positionality--and hence researcher reflexivity--intersects across all the processes inherent in qualitative research, including determining analytical strategies, making interpretations, and thinking about representation and voice. The centrality of considering ethical issues at each stage of the research process right from sample selection through data analysis and writing up the study's findings, therefore cannot be underscored. It is an ethical responsibility to examine our roles as qualitative researchers on an ongoing basis, and to challenge our implicit epistemologies, biases and assumptions. It is through structured reflexive practices and dialogic engagement that you can attempt to more closely examine—and therefore acknowledge--the many complex implications regarding the role of the qualitative researcher. Ravitch and Mittenfelner Carl (2020) explain that the power inherent in qualitative research becomes even more profound when you begin to write up your research findings since this is what takes the personal, the political, and the contextual from your data and transforms it into a message shared with the world.

Cultural Integrity

Qualitative research is essentially about sharing, respecting, and most importantly *authentically and ethically representing diverse voices*. As critical researchers we take on an added responsibility to produce something that is experienced as relevant for those being studied (Alvesson & Deetz, 2021). Culturally responsive research not only recognizes but is sensitive to culture as central to the research process and uses the cultural standpoints of both the researcher and the research participants as a framework for research design, data collection and data interpretation (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026; Lahman, 2025). Especially when researchers are engaged in research that has a cross-cultural dimension, they are obliged to explain what they did, how they did it, and why they did it, with respect to sociocultural and political dimensions to ensure the study has cultural credibility. The conventional notion of credibility in qualitative research is certainly useful, provided it is adapted and applied in a culturally meaningful way, leading to establishing *cultural integrity* in qualitative research (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026).

Ensuring the rigor and trustworthiness of any study is essential to ensuring the credible and meaningful application of its findings. When studies include a cross-cultural dimension, however, extra vigilance is required. This is because the rigor and trustworthiness of a qualitative study investigating an issue that has a cross-cultural dimension cannot be achieved without adapting and applying research methods in a culturally meaningful way. This becomes particularly evident as critical qualitative designs are grounded in theories that assume society is structured by class, status, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation in order to maintain the oppression of marginalized groups. A critical approach asks questions about the historical forces that shape societal patterns as well as the fundamental issues and dilemmas of power, positionality, policy, and domination in institutions, including their role in reproducing and reinforcing inequity and social injustice. Indigenous research, one strand of critical qualitative research, draws on postcolonial theory and perspectives. Critical theories are a natural fit for culturally responsive research since theorists in these areas share goals of creating change, dismantling power, advocating for social justice, sharing power with research participants, and crafting democratic research (Lahman, 2025).

Authentic Cultural Representation

Qualitative researchers are increasingly engaged in conducting studies that pose challenges in terms of ensuring that both the conduct of the studies in

question and their findings are culturally appropriate and meaningful. There are also key ethical issues to take into account with regard transcribing and translating data, and so the question arises as to how you ethically represent your participants' words and accurately convey their full meaning. The ethical issues that arise in transcribing and translating others' words center on how we represent our research participants, and how we demonstrate respect for them in transposing their spoken words into text that we then manipulate through analysis and then write up as findings. These issues center on respect for our participants that becomes more salient when we transform their words into analyzed categories or themes and represent them publicly (Marshall et al., 2022).

Aligned with the ethics of traditionally marginalized and underrepresented groups, a critical qualitative science can no longer accept the notion that one group can “know” and define (or even represent) “others” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2024). Because the self-representation and positionality of researchers can evoke stereotypes that influence the feelings and opinions of the respondents, it is important for qualitative researchers to know how to situate and position themselves within the research setting. Culturally Responsive Research Ethics (CRRE), is an aspirational research ethics stance developed by Lahman (2025). CRRE acknowledges that researchers will not be able to fully understand the perspective of the varied cultures with whom we interact but seeks to explore ethical issues from the perspective of the research participants. CRRE researchers are focused on creating research environments that best meet the participants where they are and allow for new ways to understand and co-construct knowledge. In contexts where researchers lack in-depth knowledge and understanding of the sociocultural and political dynamics of the research setting, there is a risk of inadvertently imposing their own beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior upon the cultural settings and participants of the study being conducted. Without appropriate cultural sensitivity and conscious attention, researchers can indeed risk misinterpreting or misrepresenting the data, thereby not achieving the goal of establishing “cultural integrity” (Bloomberg, 2023, 2026). In this regard, conducting member checks during and after data collection serves to build respectful relationships with your research participants. This involves, quite literally, checking with participants regarding various dimensions of your study, including your analysis and interpretation, and asking for their input and confirmation. The benefits of doing so are to mitigate researcher bias, and promote respectful representation of local contexts, customs, and traditions; all of which serves to enhance the trustworthiness of your findings. If you allow the participants' voices to speak in your research, you have moved one step forward to being able to address biases!

TOP 10 TIPS FOR PRACTICAL APPLICATION TO DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Following are some of the important questions you may be asking as a qualitative researcher embarking on a dissertation study:

1. You may be asking why decide to conduct critical qualitative research?

Your decision to conduct critical qualitative research for your dissertation study should be guided by your topic, research problem, and worldview. Critical research is appropriate when a researcher seeks to conduct a study with the purpose of promoting equity, inclusion, transformation, and social change for marginalized individuals and groups by uncovering and highlighting oppressive and hegemonic points of view and ideologies. Critical research typically includes a powerful and empowering advocacy and educational components. Critical qualitative research, which spans a number of research designs, is concerned primarily with examining and changing economic, social, racial, cultural, and gendered relations of power. To appropriately and meaningfully position your proposed study, this would also entail a deep understanding of critical theory and the various qualitative research designs that fall under the larger umbrella of critical research.

Critical researchers dig into their positionality to become aware of their own personal and/or professional needs to conduct the research, and an important outcome of reflexivity is unearthing power dynamics and acknowledging and respecting the boundaries between researchers and research participants. This outcome is the product of both data analysis and interpretation. With all qualitative research designs a key goal to keep in mind when analyzing and interpreting the findings of your study is to respect the experiences of your research participants and to authentically convey their voices. To achieve IRB approval, your dissertation research will need to address the highest ethical standards that are required when working with vulnerable populations including those that are historically underserved economically or educationally.

2. You may be asking with all the different options, how do I go about choosing the most appropriate qualitative research design for my study?

To achieve alignment and methodological congruence in your dissertation research you are obliged to appropriately match the research design with your

study's research problem, research purpose, and research questions and consider how these components will reflect the principles and features that characterize the chosen qualitative design. The outcome of qualitative research is the product of both data analysis and authentic interpretation of the research findings. Because the process of data analysis and interpretation vary greatly and are undertaken differently depending on the qualitative research design that is selected, methodological congruence and alignment are key to achieving a rigorous study. As such, careful review of your chosen research design will make clear the analytic approach or strategy that is to be closely followed and will reflect the principles and features that characterize the design you have selected.

Rather than feel you have to decide on a design upfront, you should realize that your study's research problem and purpose will, of necessity, determine or dictate the appropriate qualitative design. A research problem should not be modified to fit a particular research approach, nor can you assume a particular qualitative design regardless of your research problem. Once you have determined that your study fits best with qualitative methodology, the next step is to determine what type of research design will be most suitable by reviewing all the current designs so that you are familiar with the key tenets of each in order to make an informed choice. For example, **Case study** is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the richness and complexity of a bounded social phenomenon (or multiple phenomena), be this a social unit or system such as a program, event, institution, organization, or community. Whereas case studies focus on exploring the case or event to gain a better understanding of the case itself, **Phenomenology** focuses on studying individuals to better understand the core *essence of their lived experiences*. **Ethnography** is rooted in cultural anthropology that is focused on discovering and describing the culture of a group of people from the perspectives of the members themselves. **Narrative inquiry** is centered on how individuals assign meaning to their experiences through the stories they tell, which are chronologically recorded and interpreted. **Action research** is a systematic, collaborative, and democratic orientation toward inquiry that seeks effective solutions to complex problems that people confront in their communities and organizations. Research incorporates iterative cycles of action and reflection which extends the time needed to conduct the study. The purpose of **Grounded theory** is to inductively generate theory that is grounded in and inductively derived from the data. The goal is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the research participants. In addition to making an informed methodological choice, whatever design you select for your dissertation study, both the time frame involved and the skill level of the researcher

required to complete the dissertation must be taken into account and considered carefully at the outset to determine the feasibility of your potential study.

3. You may be asking how can I ensure that I am ethically performing the role of “researcher-as-instrument”

In any research study, ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of vital concern. As researchers, we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimizes potential harm to all of those involved in the study. The central issue with respect to protecting research participants is the ways in which information is treated and disseminated, and the conduct of research with human participants, including how issues of confidentiality and anonymity are addressed. Because ethical issues can arise in all phases of the research process (including data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of findings) it must also be evident that the *researcher-as-instrument* continues to address ethical issues throughout the research process and has acknowledged their subjectivity and adopted a reflexive stance.

Because understanding is the primary goal, the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis, and the subjective lenses that *both* the researcher and research participants *together* bring to a qualitative study form the context for the findings. The closeness of the researcher to the research participants means that the researcher is expected to be fully transparent about their worldview and positionality, as this will significantly shape the research process from design and choice of methods through data analysis and presentation of the study’s findings. Addressing this ethical responsibility requires an ongoing reflexive approach as you conduct your research and write up the dissertation study. This includes developing and maintaining a commitment to openness, and to ensuring the authentic, ethical, and culturally sensitive representation of your research participants; their voices, their contexts, and the multiple aspects of their experiences that they share with you as the researcher.

4. You may be asking how do I maintain a reflexive stance throughout the research process?

Reflexivity implies recognizing and acknowledging the integral part you play throughout the research process; in the construction of and contribution to the

content and process of your research throughout its conceptualization, development, enactment, and write-up. Toward this end, it is a useful practice to keep a research journal, as this provides an ongoing structured opportunity to develop a research habit that can serve to deepen your thinking around critical issues and processes by creating a space for intentional and ongoing reflection. As we dig further into our own positionality, we explore and uncover our own personal and/or professional needs to conduct the research, our social and cultural background as well as political and ideological assumptions that will ultimately shape the entire research process. An important outcome of reflexivity is unearthing power dynamics and coming to know, acknowledge, and respect the boundaries between ourselves as researchers and our research participants. Open and transparent disclosure and articulation of positionality in your dissertation serves to explain how and in what ways you, as the researcher, acknowledge that you have influenced your research. In turn, the reader will be able to make an informed judgment as to how and in what ways your own perspective and stance might have shaped the research process and outcomes, and to what extent the research can be considered ethical, rigorous, and trustworthy.

Awareness of bias can help the researcher to limit interpreting data to reflect their expected findings based upon their own experiences or predispositions. The key value to take away is self-awareness. As the researcher, the instrument for data collection and analysis, and the one who will tell the story of the participants and the findings drawn from them, it is important to be aware of your values, beliefs, thoughts, bias, culture, and position, and how all those personal factors can potentially influence your research. So, for example to be fully transparent throughout the dissertation process you will engage in reflexivity by way of journaling and dialogue with colleagues whereby you explore the decisions and choices made throughout the research process.

5. You may be asking how do I account for and declare my positionality?

Accounting for your own “position” which may have influenced your study’s findings includes acknowledging biases in sampling and ongoing critical reflection of methods to ensure sufficient depth and relevance of data collection; demonstrating clarity in terms of thought processes during data analysis and subsequent interpretations; meticulous record keeping and maintaining a clear decision trail to ensure that interpretations are consistent and transparent; constant seeking out similarities and differences to ensure that different

perspectives are represented; and engaging in dialogue with other researchers to reduce any underlying bias. Through critical memo writing and journaling, qualitative researchers explore how and in what ways their positionality impacts on the data they collect and how they view and interpret the data, thereby enabling them to be reflexive about their positionality and their related impact on the research process. Both data collection and data analysis are ongoing and reflective in practice. Given the very personal nature of data collection and analysis, the use of memos and/or journaling will provide a space to capture the ways in which you understand and experience your identity and positionality that may impact the study, thereby providing rich material when you come to craft your positionality statement. Ultimately, recognizing, acknowledging, and articulating your own positionality and relations of power with regard to your research participants, will indeed be a critical/important step in enhancing the credibility of your study and the quality of your dissertation overall. Reflexively addressing the concepts of *researcher-as-instrument* and positionality within your dissertation will promote a more ethical study, as well as contribute to the study's rigor and credibility, by ensuring researcher transparency and accountability, demonstrating respect for your research participants, contributing to building rapport with participants, minimizing potential harm to participants by acknowledging power imbalances and differentials and promoting data integrity.

6. You may be asking what is the purpose and value of including a positionality statement?

Addressing researcher-as-instrument and positionality is central to your role and responsibilities in upholding ethical standards in qualitative research. Researcher-as-instrument endorses the fact that ethical qualitative research requires that you actively manage any biases to avoid power imbalances that could unintentionally reinforce partialities or compromise the integrity of the research. Transparency about your positionality refers to openly acknowledging how your background and subjectivity shape your views and potentially influence the research process. Critical self-examination ensures that research findings authentically represent the experiences and viewpoints of participants, free from the overlay of the researcher's preconceived ideas. Open and transparent disclosure and articulation of positionality, which always remains fluid and complex, serves to explain how and in what ways the researcher believes they have influenced their research. In turn, the reader should then be able to make an

informed judgment as to the researcher's influence on the research process and to what extent the research can be considered trustworthy.

Qualitative research is based on exploration and discovery with the goal of giving "voice" to the research participants. The strongest influence on the research process, including participant reactivity as well as the study's outcomes, starts and ends with the researcher. It is therefore imperative to consider the ways in which your positionality impacts the research process, and this could occur on multiple levels. As a qualitative researcher who has completed an extensive study, and who has certainly engaged in deep and critical thinking along the way, your reflections are thus greatly encouraged, and this must be evident in your dissertation.

7. You may be asking what are the qualitative researcher's role and responsibility in ensuring transparency in reporting findings?

What you share and display in your findings chapter are essentially the multiple perspectives supported by the different quotations that your research yields in direct response to the study's research questions. The goal is to provide rich descriptions, often referred to as "thick description", which is an essential aspect of qualitative research. Verbatim quotations play an important role in grounding complex analyses in the participants' own accounts. There are a number of issues, however, in relation to how quotations are used, how participants are represented, and whether they are consulted both regarding how they are represented as well as their views about analytic interpretations. Writing up findings is not a neutral process because all decisions are tied to the subjectivity and positionality of the researcher. Thinking critically about writing your findings, and the ways in which you will be representing the site or setting and the research participants, involves asking key questions such as: "For whom do I speak?" "With what voice?" and "Toward what end?" It is indeed an ethical responsibility to examine our roles as researchers and to challenge our biases, assumptions, and epistemologies. The final qualitative dissertation should reflect these examinations.

As a general rule, the findings that you present in your dissertation should be represented *without speculation*—that is, free from researcher bias to the extent possible. The presentation of findings also is extremely important. Your presentation will hopefully lead your readers to understand your findings as clearly as you do. If the findings chapter of your dissertation is well organized, the analysis chapter that follows, where you move forward and interpret your findings, will be much more easily accomplished. By way of mapping, for example, you can make

your analysis and findings more transparent, thereby strengthening the trustworthiness of your study. There are two key issues for consideration in addressing the role and responsibility of a qualitative researcher; transparency and criticality. Maintaining transparency throughout your study, and critically confronting and engaging with your interpretations and the biases that shape these is a key consideration in presenting qualitative research findings that will be considered rigorous and trustworthy. This becomes a key consideration in evaluating the quality, trustworthiness, and rigor of your dissertation.

8. You may be asking how do I maintain trustworthiness throughout the research process?

One of the critical components in evaluating the rigor and quality of a qualitative dissertation is the extent to which trustworthiness was acknowledged and addressed. The *thoughtful and actionable strategies* you employ to enhance trustworthiness aid in reducing bias and strengthening the value of your research findings, thereby ensuring qualitative rigor. Moreover, the implementation of these strategies encourages transparency, which in turn facilitates critical evaluation by the scholarly community. In your dissertation you will be required to describe each of the four trustworthiness criteria and also clarify explicitly how you accounted for trustworthiness by explaining the actual steps taken to address or mitigate each of these criteria.

Credibility is the confidence in the authenticity of the findings, requiring that the study be believable to readers and approved by those providing the information in the study, that is, your research participants. Evidence in support of the credibility of your study can take several forms, and the actionable strategies to enhance credibility include the following:

- Clarify the biases that you, as the researcher, bring to the study, and continually reflect on your own subjectivity by keeping a journal throughout the research process. Despite the reflective practices a researcher engages in, qualitative research will always be subject to bias and cannot be completely free of some form of bias or subjectivity. However, engaging in reflexivity can allow for bias reduction.
- Discuss how you engaged in repeated and substantial involvement in the field. Prolonged engagement facilitates an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon under study and lends credibility to your analysis and interpretation.

In conducting research and writing your dissertation, trustworthiness cannot be an afterthought! Be intentional in your approach! What is most important is that the trustworthiness strategies you thoughtfully employ will individually and collectively enhance the robustness and rigor of your research, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are both meaningful and *authentically reflect the experiences* of your research participants.

9. You may be asking how do I ensure and address cultural integrity and authentic cultural representation in my research?

When it comes to data collection in qualitative research, developing acute **cultural awareness** includes becoming knowledgeable about preferred data collection methods used by researchers in the location where research is to be conducted. Additionally, you will need to develop an understanding of policy platforms that may influence research agendas thereby leading to the need to appropriately tailor your research design. One way to build cultural awareness is to participate in cultural competency training, which may include working with interpreters, paying close attention to cross-cultural communication, and developing a deeper appreciation of the intricacies of conducting research within a specific context, setting, or location. Researchers will need to understand what topics or issues might be highly sensitive or even off limits prior to establishing a research agenda, and to carefully reconsider those topics that can be sensitive for various reasons. Collaborating with local communities and researchers and studying country-specific journals are helpful as you embark on your dissertation research. As researchers we must also ensure that people who are not proficient in the respective country's majority language are given the opportunity to express themselves in their own language as respected research partners. In remaining attentive to issues of diversity and inclusion, it is important to highlight the ways research participants who identify as minorities or underrepresented or marginalized groups can feel as they engage with a researcher. Think critically about writing your findings, and the ways in which you will represent the site/setting, and research participants. Ultimately, it is an ethical responsibility to examine our roles as researchers, and to challenge our own implicit and explicit biases and assumptions.

10. Finally, you may be asking as critical qualitative researcher what questions should I be asking myself throughout the research process?

Key concepts in conducting critical qualitative research include the following:

- **Positioning:** Understanding how individuals are positioned within social structures and how this affects their experiences.
- **Intersubjectivity:** Recognizing the role of social interaction and shared experiences in shaping our understanding of the world.
- **Decolonization:** Critically examining the ways in which colonial structures and ideologies have shaped our understanding of the world.
- **Openness to Possibilities:** Critical qualitative research reveals an openness to the world through description.
- **Self-consideration:** emphasis is on reflexive self-consideration.

To ensure ethics, rigor, and trustworthiness of your study, critical self-reflection, or “reflexivity” is central to the role of the qualitative researcher. In reflecting on the credibility of your dissertation research, there are many questions you can ask yourself regarding what strategies you can implement to ensure and enhance the credibility (trustworthiness) of your research:

- In what ways does my positionality and/or power impact aspects of my research design, including selection of site and research participants, and my choices regarding data collection and data analysis?
- Since qualitative research employs purposeful sampling, what should I consider when selecting a research site and research sample?
- Who is being included or excluded in my study? Why?
- What assumptions underlie my data collection methods?
- What assumptions underlie my data analysis and presentational approach?
- Do my study’s findings accurately and respectfully represent the authentic voices of the research participants?

Reflexivity bolsters methodological rigor and transparency, providing detailed insights into the researcher’s journey throughout the study, including all methodological choices made along the way. This level of transparency fortifies the credibility of the dissertation finding. This lays a strong foundation for an ethically grounded and scholarly rigorous qualitative dissertation research. As you proceed with your research, continue to dialogue and critically reflect with peers and colleagues around all of the important issues raised by these important questions!

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Pedagogical Aids

The additional materials provided below include research cases, teaching datasets, videos, journal articles, and podcasts to support students and researchers with the knowledge and skills to design and conduct research that is both critical and inclusive. These resources showcase a range of experiences and approaches from marginalized, under-represented, and vulnerable communities, with a focus on decolonial perspectives and indigenous research methods. This set of additional materials is an important pedagogical aid for dissertation students in preparing a literature review and considering ways to set to and design their critical qualitative dissertation study. These materials will also appeal particularly to those with audio and visual learning style preferences.

Video

[Contemplative Inquiry in Qualitative Research: Understanding Critical Self-Reflection](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)

- **Original publication date:** 2023
- **Length:** 00:18:33

Abstract: Anna Cohenmiller explores contemplative inquiry in teaching, learning, and practice in qualitative research. The focus is on understanding critical self-reflection as a teaching and learning tool. The author delves into thinking about the potentials for qualitative research practice, addressing [Qualitative measures](#), [Contemplative inquiry](#), [Researcher skills](#)

[Overcoming Hegemonic Gateways: Writing Workshops in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)

- **Original publication date:**2024
- **Length:** 00:25:32

Abstract: Matt Smith describes his collaborative efforts to decolonize publishing practices in educational technology research, focusing on supporting researchers from marginalized areas, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, in navigating the colonial structures and biases embedded in global publishing systems and helping them amplify their voices.

[Fostering Healthy Identities & Resilience Lab \(FHIRE Lab\)](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:**2024
- **Length:** 00:43:05

Abstract: Seanna Leath, PhD, assistant professor, Washington University, discusses current research projects of Black parents, parenting practices, and raising healthy children undertaken at the Fostering Healthy Identities and Resilience Lab (FHIRE Lab), including research methods used, data collection, challenges faced, frameworks adhered to, and historical power dynamics that have influenced research.

[Gender and Ethnicity: Gender Studies Through a Feminist Lens](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:31:53
- **Methods:** [Feminism](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Chin Ju Lin, PhD, professor, Kaohsiung Medical University, discusses gender studies through a feminist lens, including conducting decolonizing gender methodologies in Indigenous communities, research methods, and ethical considerations.

[Examining Race Relations: Challenges of Second Generation South Asian Immigrants](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:35:47

Abstract: Radha Modi, PhD, associate professor, Florida State University, discusses challenges of second generation South Asian immigrants in a race relations case study, including research methods used, democratizing research, and decolonizing research practices.

[Community Based Approaches to Research: Kichwa Community Planning](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:**2024
- **Length:** 00:56:16
- **Methods:** [Community-based research](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Alexandra Lamina, PhD candidate, University of Texas, discusses a case study of Kichwa community planning as an example of community-based approaches to research, including the collective and collaborative nature of the recruitment process, data collection, and ethical considerations.

[Land Based Research: Understanding Self Determination in the Context of Language and Land](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:22:28
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Dawn Smith, PhD, assistant professor, University of Victoria, discusses land-based research and understanding self-determination in the context of language and land, including family and community response, balancing obligations, and capacity for systemic change.

[Physics to Law via Decolonial Space: Developing a Transdisciplinary Research Methodology](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:25:45

Abstract: Mukesh Chiman Bhatt discusses decolonization in legal systems and scientific knowledge production, emphasizing the importance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives while acknowledging the challenges of such an approach.

[Native American Indigenous Literature: Stories of Kinship in Relation to the Ocean](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:20:59
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Wendah Alvarez, PhD candidate at UC Davis, discusses Native American Indigenous literature and stories of kinship in relation to the ocean, including cultural and historical significance of research methods used, story collection, and challenges faced

[Community Based Research in Urban Planning](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:47:00
- **Methods:** [Community-based research](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Carolina Sarmiento, PhD, associate professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison, discusses community-based research in urban planning, including data collection, research methods, and decolonizing research practices.

[Narrative Methodology in Indigenous Autonomy](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:20:55
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Amrah Salomon, PhD, an assistant professor at the University of California, discusses narrative methodology in Indigenous autonomy, including research methods used, participant recruitment, and challenges faced.

[Striations of Empire in Social Science Research: Decolonizing Methodologies in Geography and Education](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:46:48

Abstract: Dr. Steven Puttick critiques the historical narratives surrounding social science research, geography, and education, arguing that they are often rooted in colonialism and overlook the work of non-European thinkers, explorers, and cultures.

[Intersectional Reading, Social Justice & Literary Activism \(INTERACT\)](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:22:57

Abstract: Kaiju Harinen, PhD, postdoctoral researcher, University of Turku, discusses the INTERACT project on intersectional reading, social justice, and literary activism, including research methods used, data collection, and historical power dynamics.

[Conducting 'De-colonial' Work in Neo-Liberal Universities](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:43:06

Abstract: Dr. Saba Hussain and Dr. Arinola Adefila discuss how decolonization efforts in neoliberal universities are limited by a lack of resources and commitment, and call for a focus on rehumanizing the university through collaboration and ethical practices.

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:36:07
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Ramona Elke, PhD student, Simon Fraser University, discusses arts-based education and Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing, including research methods used, data collection, and influential power dynamics.

Community Based Collaborative Approaches to Justice

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:29:25
- **Methods:** [Collaborative research](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Vicki Chartrand, PhD, associate professor, Bishop's University, discusses community-based collaborative approaches to justice, including community reaction, data collection, and historical and cultural significance of research methods used.

Ethics and Pedagogy in Cultural Research and Indigenization

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:36:32
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Swapna Padmanabha, lecturer and PhD student, University of Saskatchewan, discusses ethics and pedagogy in cultural research and indigenization, including pan-cultural dimensions explored, the cultural and historical significance of research methods, and the decolonization of research methods.

Storytelling as Remembrance: Cosmological Creation Narratives

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:29:24
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Kevin White, PhD, assistant professor, University of Toronto, discusses storytelling as remembrance and cosmological creation narratives, including research methods used, data collection, and engaging with decolonization.

[Indigenous Methodologies](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:31:23
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Pablo Millalen, PhD student, Texas University, discusses a case study of Indigenous resistance in Chile to illustrate Indigenous methodologies, including cultural and historical significance of methods used, data collection, and participant recruitment.

[Unangax Subsistence Performances and Sustainability Protocols: Interventions to the Ongoing Climate Crisis](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:37:54
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Haliehana Stepetin, PhD, assistant professor, University of Alaska, discusses interventions to the ongoing climate crisis using Unangax subsistence performances and sustainability protocols, including research development, data collection, and research methods used compared to westernized methods.

[Philosophy of Education: Ancestral Knowledge in Contemporary Education](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:24:44
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Kiera Brant-Birioukov, PhD, assistant professor, York University, discusses philosophy of education and ancestral knowledge in contemporary education, including cultural and historical significance of research methods used, data collection, and pre-existing frameworks.

Community Based Research in Education

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:20:50
- **Methods:** [Community-based research](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Jennifer Markides, PhD, assistant professor, University of Calgary, discusses community-based research in education, including data collection, methods used, and ethical considerations.

Disability & Queerness in Research Methodology

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:21:53
- **Methods:** [Intersectionality](#)

Abstract: Mara Pieri, PhD, researcher, University of Coimbra, discusses disability and queerness in research methodology, including research methods used, ethical considerations, and how to decolonize research practices.

Participatory Action Research: Bridging Design and Autonomy

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:29:36

Abstract: Andrea Navarrete Rigo discusses participatory action research (PAR) as a method to bridge the gap between design and autonomy, particularly for vulnerable communities in the Global South.

[Writing the Fragmented Self From the Margin: Decolonizing Autoethnography Within Contexts of Displacement](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:20:20

Abstract: Lina Fadel, a displaced scholar, discusses how autoethnography, a research methodology that centers personal experience, can be a powerful tool for challenging traditional research methods and decolonizing academia, especially when used by marginalized voices.

[Indigenous Protocols: Working With Customary Law Governing Pueblos on the Land and in Diaspora](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:24:19
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Brenda Nicolas, PhD, an assistant professor at UC Irvine, discusses Indigenous protocols and working with customary law governing pueblos on the land and in diaspora, including research methods used, the renewed interest of the Zapotec diaspora in participating in research, and data collection.

[Participatory Mapping as a Decolonial Tool to Re-Story the City as an Indigenous Place](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:42:41
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Marie-Eve Drouin, PhD, a professor at INRS, and Alicia Ibarra, a masters student at University of Concordia, discuss participatory mapping as a decolonial tool to re-story the city as an Indigenous place, including personal obligations, ethical considerations, and unexpected outcomes.

[Empowered from Below: Learning from African Descendant Decolonial and Anti-Racist Struggles](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:21:38

Abstract: Dr. William Ackah speaks on the importance of activism informing academic research, suggests scholars should be more critical about how decolonial methods are utilized, and emphasizes the need for research to be closely connected to the struggles of marginalized communities.

[Decolonizing Social Science Research in Europe](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:20:38

Abstract: Doina Gavrilov, PhD, researcher, Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Journal Collection, discusses decolonizing social science research in Europe, including data collection, ethical considerations, and methodologies to decolonize research.

[Participatory Research Methods: Some Critical Reflections](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:22:38
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Shannon Sahni critiques the concept of empowerment within participatory research methods, explaining that traditional participatory research methods present simplistic views of power dynamics and colonization, often portraying researchers as liberators and the researched communities as powerless.

[The Ground Between Us](#)

- **Publisher:** [Bayview Entertainment](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 01:02:01
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Public lands debates are shown alongside the day-to-day realities of three families who hold vastly different connections and perspectives on public lands. In a divided America, public lands can be a uniting factor.

[Humble Lodge: Rites of Passage for Two-Spirit Youth](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:24:04
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Lana Whiskeyjack, PhD, a professor at the University of Alberta, discusses rites of passage for two-spirit youth at Humble Lodge, including cultural and historical significance of research methods, data collection, and official bodies consulted.

[Is Unpaid Work a Burden? Decolonising Discourses Around Women's Reproductive Roles](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:21:13

Abstract: Sonia Hoque explains that current discourse sees unpaid work done by women in the Global South as a burden, and proposes to use more interpretive methodologies to understand how these women actually experience this work, decolonising the discourse by incorporating their own voices.

[I Am My Sistah: Introducing Sistah Circles to Qualitative Inquiry](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:19:54

Abstract: Rachel Odufuwa proposes using "sistah circles," a culturally-specific method for group discussions among Black women, to explore how Black women in the UK perceive diversity and decolonization agendas in universities.

[The Decolonial Turn of Feminist Theory](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:27:19

Abstract: Suzanne Persard, PhD, assistant professor, American University, discusses a case study on the decolonial turn of feminist theory, including research methods used, data collection, participant recruitment, power dynamics and future research.

[Race, Ethnicity and Diversity in Social Work](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:13:09
- **Methods:** [Intersectionality](#)

Abstract: Erick da Luz Scherf, PhD student, University of Alabama, discusses race, ethnicity, and diversity in social work, including participant recruitment, research methods used, and ethical considerations.

[Reclaiming the Land: Community Based Research in Land Back](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024

- **Length:** 00:20:24
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Kimberly Morales Johnson, PhD student at UC Davis, discusses reclaiming the land and community-based research in land back, including data collection, historical and cultural significance of research methods, and ethical considerations

[Media & Identity](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:28:46

Abstract: Arthur Soto-Vasquez, PhD, assistant professor, Texas A&M International University, discusses media and identity, including research methods, data collection, and decolonizing and diversifying research practices.

[Haitian Lakou as Method: Exploring Emerging Spaces](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:31:55
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Beaudelaine Pierre, PhD, post-doctoral fellow, University of Bloomington, discusses exploring emerging spaces using the Haitian Lakou method, including concrete steps or methodologies to decolonize research practices, challenges faced, and research interest.

[Shining Path: Indigenous Resistance in Peru](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:38:48
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Renzo Aroni, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Columbia, discusses Indigenous resistance in Peru, including cultural and historical significance of research methods used, personal responsibility to participants, and pre-existing frameworks adhered to.

[The Questions We Ask, the Voices We Use](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:24:50

Abstract: Dr. Gillian Stokes explains how decolonization of research methods requires more Black academics in leadership positions and collaboration with allies to challenge the status quo and include diverse perspectives.

[The Strength of our Ancestors: Exploring Indigenous Identity in Urbanized Communities](#)

- **Publisher:** [SAGE Publications, Ltd](#)
- **Original publication date:** 2024
- **Length:** 00:24:16
- **Methods:** [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract: Gabrielle Legault, PhD, assistant professor, University of British Columbia, discusses exploring Indigenous identity in urbanized communities and the power of ancestors, including the historical and cultural significance of talking circles, data collection, and preexisting frameworks or official institutional bodies consulted.

[Understanding Interventions in BIPOC Youth Mental Health](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)

Series: [Educational and Child Psychology Research](#)

Original publication date: 2025

Length: 00:36:11

Methods:

[Randomized controlled trials](#), [Intervention studies](#), [Educational research](#), [Sequential design](#), [Community-based research](#)

Abstract: Amy West, PhD, professor, University of Southern California, discusses understanding interventions in BIPOC youth mental health, including research methods used, and research methods-related advice.

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Journal Articles

[Decolonizing the “Decolonizing” Work of Non-Indigenous Collaboration](#)

Author: [Sandra Yellowhorse](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Collaborative research](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract:

This case study explores the challenges Indigenous researchers face when engaging in non-Indigenous collaboration. As an Indigenous researcher, I am particularly interested in the language of decolonization employed in academic discourse and the challenges of actually hammering out decolonizing methodologies within research collaboration. More important, how do claims of decolonizing research match the decolonizing work done in every day (i.e., unraveling unequal power relations)? Although much has been written about this topic in the compelling work of Decolonizing methodologies by Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, there is still an astounding amount of evidence that some researchers have missed the memo. This case study isn't necessarily for those researchers because much has already been written about ethical collaboration. This case study is for Indigenous and People of Color (POC) researchers. There isn't a large body of scholarship on how we as Indigenous and POC researchers can navigate what the university often considers “gray areas” in research practice between policy and relational ethical accountability. I argue that these areas are not gray areas within ethical relational understandings rooted in Indigenous research practice. Rather, they are ongoing sites of power that continue to enact colonization through multiple fronts within research collaboration with non-Indigenous researchers. This case study reflects on my experiences and lessons learned in creating healthy and safe parameters in collaborative research practice.

[Go to case](#)

[Negotiating Power Dynamics and Cultural Sensitivity: A Case Study on Conducting Elite Interviews in a Politically Fragile Context](#)

Authors:

[Ecem Karlidağ-Dennis](#)

[Zeynep Temiz](#)

[Melis Cin](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Elite interviews](#), [Gender difference](#)

Abstract:

This case study investigates the practical and methodological challenges associated with conducting interviews with high-ranking public figures (“elites”) in politically fragile environments, with a particular focus on education and gender issues in Turkey. The original research utilized a qualitative methodology, emphasizing an immersive, in-depth interview process. The study presents insights into accessing elite participants, understanding unique cultural nuances in securing informed consent, and reflecting on the methodological implications of context-specific interview protocols. Furthermore, it draws attention to the ethical concerns linked with conducting research in politically sensitive contexts. By engaging with this case study, readers will gain nuanced knowledge of qualitative research techniques in similar challenging settings. They will further learn how to adapt and apply these insights to their research, enhancing their capacity to negotiate ethical, practical, and methodological complexities when interacting with elites in volatile socio-political climates.

[Go to case](#)

[Developing a Research Project on the Discrimination of People with Disabilities in Higher Education from Personal Experiences of Academic Ableism](#)

Author: [Petra Watzke](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Personal experience](#), [Critique](#), [Social model of disability](#)

Abstract:

This case study is based on my research into the consequences of ableism in higher education and focuses on the postsecondary German-language classroom. For this project, I drew from my personal experiences of ableism as a disabled faculty member and educator and supported my experiences with relevant concepts from disability studies. This project explores how academia fails students and faculty with disabilities with barely accessible infrastructure, ableist expectations about

performance, and narrow pedagogy approaches that ignore the needs of disabled and neurodivergent stakeholders in higher education. In a second step, the project offers ideas for improving the status quo through critical pedagogy. Focusing on German studies, this project identifies German-language textbooks that often cater to only one type of learner and the lack of awareness of critical pedagogy in graduate student pedagogy training as the biggest barriers to improving access and awareness of the needs of students and faculty with disabilities in the discipline. It also examines the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a critical pedagogy teaching framework with the promise of improving learning for all by starting the course design with the needs of students with disabilities. This case study exemplifies how to create research that investigates systemic disparities in academia and specifically demonstrates the importance of framing the concerns of students and faculty members with disabilities as concerns of social justice and not as isolated medical issues. Readers learn how reconceptualizing disability as a social justice concern is of vital importance for creating more equity.

[Go to case](#)

[Decolonizing Qualitative Research: A TribalCrit Approach to the Study of Native American and Indigenous Students at an MSI](#)

Authors:

[Veneice Guillory-Lacy](#)

[Jodie Warren](#)

[Elisa Aquino](#)

[Kerri J. Malloy](#)

[Soma de Bourbon](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Thematic analysis](#), [Focus groups](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract:

In this critical qualitative study, five Indigenous interdisciplinary scholar activists reflect on the decolonization methodology and TribalCrit (tribal critical race theory) framework they adopted to research the experience of Native American and Indigenous (NAI) students at San José State University (SJSU). The study addresses the challenges experienced by NAI students navigating an unreceptive Western higher education institution. The research identified a need to shift university culture to serve NAI students better. The study explores the concept of constructive criticism, analysis, and recommendations concerning the lack of holistic support for NAI students at a university that has been designated a Minority Serving

Institution (MSI), Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI), and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The researchers provide a succinct summary of critical self-reflections, common themes, results of the study, and the launching of the university's first-ever Native American Indigenous Student Success Center. Moreover, this study offers critical learnings that may be helpful for the student success communities to consider as they seek to actualize collaborative projects of anti-oppressive movement building.

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[Open Studios: Using Better Stories and Personas to Develop Inclusive Solutions to Reduce Inequalities](#)

Authors:

[Alain Denis](#)

[Sofia Strid](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Narrative analysis](#), [Narrative research](#), [Case study research](#), [Vulnerable groups](#)

Abstract:

This case study describes a method to create solutions in the form of operational recommendations, pilot actions, and new research agendas to address social and economic inequalities and existing research problems. It takes as point of departure that inequalities are gendered and intersectional and aims to find solutions to reduce these inequalities. It is based on the method of Open Studios, as applied in RESISTIRÉ, an EU Horizon 2020 research project on the impact of COVID-19 societal and policy responses on inequalities. The Open Studios are two-day multi-stakeholder co-creation workshops to develop solutions to reduce inequalities. To feed the co-creation process, research results were translated into “better stories” and “personas.” Both are based on qualitative research results and are used to stimulate Open Studio participants. Better stories are examples of practices that can inspire workshop participants when developing new solutions. Personas are archetypes of real persons and built on a large number of individual narratives. They are used to ensure the developed solutions take into account the specific needs, interests, and situations of vulnerable people. The case is based on a total of twelve Open Studios, which took place from 2021 to 2023 and resulted in various outputs, including nine pilot projects of social innovations, implemented by civil society in different European countries, policy recommendations, and research agendas. The method described can be applied by all levels of research.

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[Implementing Focus Groups and a Diary-Interview Method in Black Feminist Research](#)

Author: [Crystal L. Edwards](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Feminist research](#), [Focus groups](#), [Diary methods](#), [Womanism](#)

Abstract:

This study uses qualitative methods to explore the subjective experience of Black girls within the formal educational context. Placing two theoretical approaches in conversation, this study applies a decolonial Black feminist epistemological framework to provide a narrative account of the experience of Black girls in their own words. Recognizing the significance of dialogue, as asserted by Patricia Hill Collins and the Black feminist tradition, the focus groups and follow-up interviews allowed for the girls to explore and exchange their experiences and provide a narrative of their reality in their own words. In a similar vein, solicited diaries with follow-up interviews ensured that the participants discussed their realities with a level of self-prioritization, allowing them to exercise agency. Data for this research study were collected in three formats and analyzed using thematic coding and inductive content analysis. The findings of this research project reveal the challenges from both peers and teachers/administration/staff that prevent schools from being a safe and beneficial space for Black middle school girls. Additionally, the findings uncover the coping strategies Black girls developed to combat the volatility of the environment. This case study highlights the inextricable connection between theory and praxis by outlining the process and considerations of a research project grounded in the principles of Black feminist epistemology, reflected explicitly in question design, prioritization of participants' experience, and reciprocity in the research process.

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[Making the Case for Critical Feminist Discourse Analysis of Policy: Decolonizing Educational Research for Critical, Social and Heuristic Purposes](#)

Author:

[Geraldine Mooney Simmie](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Critical discourse analysis](#), [Educational research](#), [Policy evaluation](#), [Womanism](#)

Abstract:

The key problem under interrogation in this case study is how to conduct decolonizing research in education policy in a fast-globalising world where inequalities and injustices are experiencing rapid and exponential growth. I will argue that for research to be decolonizing it needs to be in the direction of emancipation and human freedom and not domestication and neutralization. It needs to critically and reflexively question who benefits. I will make the case for Critical Feminist Discourse Analysis as a decolonizing theory and method to interrogate policies in affirmative ways that hold complexities in play as they foreground issues of justice and intersectionality and at the same time, offer new and alterative framings (e.g. social class, gender, race, disability). I draw from critical pedagogy and feminist theories, to show the explanatory power of this research strategy and to connect with the third wave of feminism concerned with interrogating the framing (representation) of the education problem. I call on a recent research study to show how I used a Critical Feminist Discourse Analysis of policy documents in teacher education in Ireland to make new knowledge, to achieve a rigorous methodology with data trustworthiness, and to advocate for education policy as a cultural endeavor of public interest values that needs to be emancipatory and transformative. My aim here is to provide useful signposts for postgraduate researchers grappling with similar issues, seeking to justify a research design that aligns with their key research questions and that reflects their ethical values and principles.

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[Using Historical Narrative Analysis to Determine Language Choices in Postcolonial Education Contexts](#)

Authors:

[Mary dos Santos](#)

[Wendy Cumming-Potvin](#)

[Elizabeth Jackson-Barrett](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Narrative analysis](#), [Narrative research](#), [Historical research](#), [Ethnohistory](#)

Abstract:

This case study is based on research conducted within the plurilingual context of Vanuatu, formerly a condominium colony of Britain and France. A surfeit of heritage languages exists within this context, alongside the European languages of English and French and the national language of Bislama, an English-lexifier pidgin. With the existence of between 106 and 138 vernaculars, classroom language use is complex and exacerbated by a government policy that stipulates English and French as the

official languages of education, while the use of heritage languages in the first 3 years of school is encouraged. Language use in Vanuatu education is confined within the parameters of the nation's history, government policy, and the language preference of educators. Colonial history and globalization, which have privileged English as a world language, have created a dilemma demanding examination through the experiences of the past, current trends, and future needs. This case study addresses the pragmatics of a narrative historical approach that integrates historical understanding, conversational interviews, and analysis of educational policy documents. This methodologic framework enables researchers to gain insight into colonial accounts of the past and make comparisons with Indigenous accounts of history and the cultures, values, and languages in existence today. The research for this case study was conducted at the height of COVID-19 travel restrictions, making the use of technology necessary for conversation. Although face-to-face computer platforms elevate Western technology and function counter to the decolonizing practice of relationship-based yarning, the need for COVID-safe protocols and the desire of participants to ...

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[Action Research—A Tool for Empowerment in a Context of Inclusion: Improving the Writing Skills of Disadvantaged Background and First-Generation Immigrant Students](#)

Author: [Mirela Moldoveanu](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Action research](#), [Data collection](#), [Collaborative research](#)

Abstract:

This case study describes an action research project aimed at improving the writing skills of disadvantaged background students and first-generation immigrants at the elementary-school level. This research was based on the hypothesis that poor writing skills may have negative effects on the academic outcomes for disadvantaged background students and first-generation immigrants. This limitation, in turn, would lead to a high dropout rate. Knowledge co-construction and differentiated instruction appeared to be interesting ways for teachers to improve the writing skills of students from the aforementioned backgrounds. We conducted collaborative action research with six elementary school teachers and 126 students. The research goals were achieved through an iterative research approach that entailed holding meetings for the purpose of knowledge co-construction and other various forms of collaboration (practices, activities of exploration of the relationship to the writing of students, co-development of

practices rooted in the reality of the class, and taking into account the needs expressed by the students). This case study describes the way this research approach was implemented, illustrating the potential of action research in contributing to the empowerment of vulnerable school populations. Several practical questions are discussed: What are the ways to earn the trust of disadvantaged and minority communities as research participants? What research designs can specifically be tailored to the unique situations of these communities? How can we collect data in a way that is respectful to these communities while making research inclusive and empowering?

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[Rethinking Photovoice as a Pedagogical Tool in Indigenous Land-Based Pedagogy](#)

Author: [Jimena Marquez](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Photo elicitation](#), [Photovoice](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract:

Photovoice is a recognized art-based qualitative research method used in participatory action research. Photovoice's critical and pedagogical potential has made it a prevalent method in decolonizing research conducted with Indigenous youth. In June of 2023, the McGill Indigenous Studies Program (Montreal, Quebec, Canada) offered a land-based pedagogies course; as a pedagogical experiment, an adapted version of photovoice was used as a learning assessment tool for this course. Using photovoice, students documented their relationship with nature and how it evolved as a result of the land-based practices they engaged with. The main outcome of this pedagogical exercise was confirmation that an adaptation of photovoice can be an engaging and creative method to stimulate the dormant "metaphoric mind" of young adults. Using this method with a small group of university students confirmed photovoice's malleability and its capacity to capture both relational and affective understandings of the subjective reality. Finally, photovoice was successful in giving students, especially Indigenous students, a sense of having a "voice," as it created a safe space for sharing stories about land dispossession and healing.

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[Positioning and Authenticity in Data Collection: Researching Racism in Education Contexts](#)

Authors:

[Zahra Kemiche](#)

[Christian Beighton](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Data collection](#), [Educational research](#)

Abstract:

This case study examines the challenges of researching one of the most sensitive topics in education contexts: racism. Based on a research project that critically examined the culture in a U.K. university, data were collected using participant observation and in-depth interviews with participants from an underrepresented group. The data were then analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. In this case study, we show how approaching a case study from both an emic and etic perspective by flexibly positioning oneself as both an insider and an outsider can play a significant role in gaining access to the studied group and producing rich, authentic data. We show how, if treated rigorously and responsibly, research can successfully undertake a range of critical tasks: providing a platform for marginalized participants in a complex social context, establishing a voice that both amplifies these marginalized perspectives and communicates challenging messages to a wider audience, and challenging and renewing critical concepts that can both illuminate complex, qualitative findings and provide conceptual tools for further research.

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[Realizations of Indigenous Educational Sovereignty and Decolonization Through the Lens of Autoethnography](#)

Author: [Leola Tsinnajinnie Paquin](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications Ltd](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Case study research](#), [Autoethnography](#), [Indigenous research](#)

Abstract:

This case study reflects upon practices of community-engaged scholarship and teaching as autoethnography research rooted in Indigenous educational sovereignty and decolonization. In this case study, readers are invited to contemplate how their positionalities, and practices in their respective fields, could be framed into active research. Readers will be able to consider how their responsibilities and energies are woven into contributions toward calls to action. The author shares reflective details, motivations, and realizations that shaped what

became an autoethnography. This piece is especially written for postgraduate Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) academics who are interested in finding strategies on how to remain centered in their identities as they navigate the academy.

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Legault, G., Darnay, K., Wilson, S., & Hutchinson, P. (2024). Decolonizing Methodologies Through Dialogue: A Relational Literature Review on Urban Indigenous Health. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004241298923>

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10778004241298923>

Abstract

This article responds to Tynan and Bishop's call for relational engagement in literature reviews, employing Indigenous epistemologies and a relational, conversational approach to examine trends in urban Indigenous health research. Reflecting on a comprehensive literature review, we highlight shifts in research focus, authorship, and methodologies. The analysis, guided by Indigenous scholars with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, centers on current and emerging trends, while addressing the impact of funding priorities and sociopolitical contexts on research. Despite growing recognition of Indigenous scholarship and community engagement, our discussions reveal challenges in maintaining authenticity in community-driven methodologies. We emphasize the need to further decolonize research approaches, highlighting the role of relational methodologies that honor Indigenous epistemologies. By integrating oral traditions, community-based sources, and relational citation practices, this article advocates for a paradigm shift in literature reviews, urging scholars to prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing and strengthen the relational dynamics within research processes to better address urban Indigenous health and well-being.

Bagley, C., & Castro-Salazar, R. (2024). Whose Side Are We On? Toward an Emancipatory Ethic in Critical Arts-Based Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004241288600>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10778004241288600>

Abstract

The renowned U.S. sociologist Howard S. Becker, writing in 1969, posed the ethical question: Whose side are we on? In the context of continued structural inequalities in the distribution of power and wealth and individual and institutional oppression, in terms of class, race, gender, disability, and sexual orientation, this question remains as important as ever. The article, in advocating a robustly partisan approach, offers an emancipatory ethical framework continuum and an empirical example, from the authors' critical arts-based research with undocumented Mexican Americans, to support and inform critical researchers, committed to working with oppressed groups against discrimination and for social justice.

Farinde-Wu, A., Butler, B. R., & Williams, D. (2024). She-Search: The Fertile Ground of Black Indigenous Methods (BIM) in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004241269997>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/10778004241269997>

Abstract

Educational research methodologies are often situated in the onto-epistemologies of patriarchal whiteness. Lacking critical emotionality, these designs repress human instinct for the fallacy of scientific objectivity. The life-giving methods and methodologies employed by many Black women educational researchers oppose these positivist designs. In this context guided by our collective “she-searches,” we conceptualize Black indigenous methods (BIMs). Engaging in the Black feminist tradition of storytelling, we recount our application of Black indigenous interview method by “she-telling” our lived raced and gendered experiences with our communities. Thus, we unearth the fertile ground of BIM and offer insight into our methodological sense-making for researchers.

Mario, B., & Kilty, J. (2024). A Right to Know? Using Access to Information as Method in Critical Criminological Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004241256140>
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/10778004241256140>

Abstract

Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) requests are becoming an increasingly common method of qualitative inquiry, particularly for critical criminologists in Canada who face barriers in accessing Canadian prisons to conduct research. This article explores the politics of institutional gatekeeping and highlights the ongoing policing of critical criminological knowledge, necessitating the use of ATIP as a data collection method. Two case studies describe the strategies that the authors mobilized to acquire records from the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) when

their applications to conduct research inside prisons were denied. The authors argue that while access to information legislation is promoted as allowing for increased accountability and transparency of the government, real transparency is a public myth. This lack of transparency is linked to the ascendancy of administrative criminology in Canada, which ultimately devalues critical research and inhibits information flows in and out of carceral spaces.

Vytiniorgu, R., Makita, M., Sixsmith, J., & Fang, M. L. (2025). I Come From: Using Collaborative Auto/Biographical Poetry to Foster Transdisciplinarity and Build Inclusion. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004241310179>

Abstract

Transdisciplinarity refers to ways of working that bring together people from different backgrounds—academic and nonacademic—to address real-world challenges. This article explores how team members on the IncludeAge project, funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council, enabled transdisciplinary ways of working to build inclusion in the project, by designing and facilitating a collaborative auto/biography poetry activity for transdisciplinary team members. The article demonstrates the potential for using collaborative creative writing to foster transdisciplinarity and build inclusion within the context of a research project with multiple team members from different backgrounds. The article aims to contribute to methodological discussions on transdisciplinary ways of working in research, particularly with seldom-heard populations, and how creative methods such as auto/biography and collaborative poetry writing may contribute to these.

Podcasts

[Reflexivity in Intersectional Qualitative Research Practices](#)

Interviewer: [Stacy Penna](#)

Speaker: [Marisela Velazquez](#)

Publisher: [Lumivero](#)

Series: [NVivo Podcast Between the Data](#)

Original publication date: 2025

Methods: [Reflexivity](#), [Innovative methods](#)

Abstract:

Qualitative research has the power to positively impact people's lives. Join Dr. Stacy Penna, NVivo Community Director, as she talks to qualitative researchers to discover their innovative research methods, applied practices and passionate insights. Whether you are a student, new to qualitative methods or a published qualitative researcher, this is the podcast for you. Join us for an enlightening

conversation with Dr. Marisela Velazquez, a distinguished Sociology lecturer from California State University, Dominguez Hills. Dr. Velazquez takes us through her academic journey across continents and how these experiences have honed her critical and intersectional approach to research. We delve into her exploration of race, class, gender, structural bias, and systemic racism, emphasizing the qualitative methods she employs to capture the richness of human experiences. From interviews and observations to the subtle power of nonverbal communication, Dr. Velazquez provides a comprehensive look at the tools that shape her groundbreaking work.

[Fostering Social Justice Through Qualitative Inquiry](#)

Interviewer: [Stacy Penna](#)

Speaker: [Corey Johnson](#)

Publisher: [Lumivero](#)

Series: [NVivo Podcast Between the Data](#)

Original publication date: 2024

Methods: [Innovative methods](#)

Abstract:

Qualitative research has the power to positively impact people's lives. Join Dr. Stacy Penna, NVivo Community Director, as she talks to qualitative researchers to discover their innovative research methods, applied practices, and passionate insights. Whether you are a student, new to qualitative methods, or a published qualitative researcher, this is the podcast for you. In this podcast episode, Dr. Corey Johnson, who collaborates with Dr. Diana Parry, both professors in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, discusses the importance of social justice in qualitative inquiry in the second edition of their book *Fostering Social Justice Through Qualitative Inquiry: A Methodological Guide*, published by Routledge.

[Iris Bohnet on Discrimination and Design](#)

Interviewers:

[David Edmonds](#)

[Nigel Warburton](#)

Speaker: [Iris Bohnet](#)

Publisher: [SAGE Publications, Ltd.](#)

Series: [Social Science Bites](#)

Original publication date: 2016

Length:

00:17:01

Methods:

[Gender difference](#)

Abstract:

In contemporary society intentional bias and discrimination is widely rejected. But how does unintentional, or implicit, bias operate and how can we as a society address it? Implicit bias is held unconsciously and can affect our understandings, decisions, and actions toward individuals and groups based upon stereotypes and attitudes. These implicit stereotypes and attitudes toward others may be based on factors such as race, sex, or body type. Individuals and institutions can unknowingly introduce bias into processes, to the extent that the subjects of implicit bias sometimes even discriminate against themselves. In this podcast Iris Bohnet, a behavioral economist at Harvard Kennedy School, talks about discrimination and design, and introduces some of the famous studies in this area of research. Bohnet goes on to discuss that little evidence shows that structural remedies such as diversity training programs within organizations have been effective in reducing bias. She advocates alternative effective and proven solutions that work to “de-bias” the organizational world.

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All suggestions and comments you have are more than welcome! You can send these to me at my academic e-mail (lbloomberg@nu.edu) or my personal e-mail (lindalanta@gmail.com). Many thanks!

Linda Bloomberg

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