REFLEXIVITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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How does the researcher prevent personal bias from influencing the study?

By being upfront about the researcher’s own beliefs, values, background, etc.
Reflexivity is...

The conscious revelation of the role of the beliefs and values held by researchers in the selection of research methodology for the generation of knowledge and its production as a research account.

- Shacklock and Smyth (1998)

A consideration of the practice of research, our place within it and the construction of our fields of inquiry themselves.

- May (2001, p.44)

- Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practice under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge.

Reflexivity and Positionality
Epistemological Reflexivity

- Attempts to identify the foundations of knowledge and the implications of any findings.

How has the research question defined and/or limited what can be 'found' (Does this limit what we look for or what we assume)?

How has the design of the study and the method of analysis influenced the data and the findings (Does this limit what we see/hear/conclude)?
Personal Reflexivity

- How has my personal history led to my interest in this topic?
  - Do I have a personal “truth” about the topic I am studying?
  - Will my research suffer from self serving bias?

- How does my gender / social class / ethnicity / culture influence my positioning in relation to this topic and my informants?
  - Will social identity play a role in my interactions in the study?
  - What are my personal stereotypes regarding the group I am studying?
Some examples...

My research with children

How children are positioned in the researchers’ minds can inhibit or encourage children’s expressions during the interview. Therefore, researchers should first ‘identify their positionality and to be aware of how this can influence the nature of the material they collect and how it is analysed’ (Carr, 2011, p. 175).
My declaration...

“Asian child-rearing patterns are characterized by authority, obedience and respect for elders (Chao, 1996; Gorman, 1998). As an Asian herself, the researcher understands that these characteristics are inherent during adult-child relationships and communication in everyday Asian society. Therefore, it would not be uncommon to expect the three Asian interviewers in the first phase of the study to have exerted subtle strictness and governance over the children (Russell, Crockett, & Chao, 2010), be this consciously or unconsciously.”
‘You don’t like papaya? Papaya is good! Why don’t you like papaya?’
Motherhood as an epistemological element?

- Epistemology is a framework for knowledge generation and in the research process, one of the key epistemological considerations is the intellectual autobiography of the researcher (Stanley, 1993).

“The researcher as instrument can be the greatest threat to trustworthiness in qualitative research if considerable time is not spent on preparation of the field [and the] reflexivity of the researcher” - Poggenpoel and Myburgh (2003)
Karun’s reflexivity

• The Impact of Masculinities in Researcher-Respondent Relationship: A Socio-Historical Perspective
Sam’s work

- Black on Brown: Research paradoxes for black scholars working in ethnic communities
The Ethics of Excellence in Tourism Research: A Reflexive Analysis and Implications for Early Career Researchers

The author has written a brave and honest personal reflection on current academic behaviours and practices. Wow! That was an incredibly powerful article! First, thank you for writing it! It read amazingly but I can also see the difficulty in writing such a powerful piece!
## Mixed Methods?

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Your thoughts?