



## Critical Qualitative Methodologies

### Reconceptualizations and Emergent Construction

Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, Maggie MacLure,  
Ann Merete Otterstad, Harry Torrance, Gaile S. Cannella,  
Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, and Terrence McTier

**Abstract** Critical qualitative scholarship offers humble grounds and many unforeseen possibilities to seek and promote justice, critical global engagement, and diverse epistemologies. This dialogical and interactive paper is based on a panel session at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry that highlighted diverse areas of critical qualitative inquiry, namely justice, difference, ethics, and equity. Authors in this paper share their critical qualitative research practices and provide examples of how justice can be addressed through research foci, methods, theories, and ethical practices.

*Keywords: critical qualitative inquiry, methodology, dialogue*

At the 2015 meeting of the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, the meeting of the special interest group Coalition for Critical Qualitative Inquiry invited critical scholars to create a panel that would address goals and methodological issues related to critical qualitative inquiry. Panel members were Yvonna Lincoln, Ann Merete Otterstad, Harry Torrance, Maggie MacLure, and Norman Denzin. Panel members were provided with the following questions (most similar to those in the introduction) as talking points, but they were also allowed to choose whether/how to address these points. This article provides a transcript (with very minor edits for clarity) from each panelist's discussion. Following these discussions, we (Cannella and Koro-Ljungberg) provide an epilogue related to our introduction and the various articles in this issue, as well as the diversity represented by the panelists. Terrence McTier has collaborated with us in preparing this manuscript and its content.

## Discussion Questions

1. How do we study in ways that speak to our critical research goals and collaborations around justice, difference, ethics, and equity?

2. What does all this have to do with our definitions of, and tools/strategies/practices used within, critical qualitative inquiry?
3. How might traditional methodologies be modified and used in critical ways?
4. How can we break free from neopositivist, colonizing, and/or oversimplified methodological practices, as well as uncritical forms of interpretation?
5. How do critical scholars avoid creating researcher power for themselves as the more “advanced/progressive” voice for justice, equity, and decolonization whether using traditional, reconceptualized, or “new” methodologies?
6. How do these critical methodologies address contemporary power contexts/material circumstances/lives and the immediate need for just transformations?

## Yvonna

I'd like to address the last three questions. The first is how can we break free from neopositivist colonizing and oversimplified methodological practices? Incidentally, my initial answer to all of these questions is I don't know. But, I have some suggestions, and I think one of the things that I've tried to do when I'm teaching is to teach about the conflicts rather than teach simply about interviewing, or observation, or focus groups, or whatever. What I have been trying to do is teach about the latest arguments that are coming up about interviewing, or that are coming up about voice, or that have arisen as a result of conjuring about reflexivity. So, I try to make my own students aware of the fact that these things are not simple. They are not direct. You can *teach* people something about how to interview, but making them aware that it is not an unproblematic exercise, it seems to me, is the best way to go about it. It seems to me that it's the *only* way that you can ultimately break free, and maybe I can't break free. Maybe what I need to do is help my students break free so that the next generation does not go into this thinking it's interviewing à la 1965.

How do critical scholars avoid creating research power for themselves as the more advanced or progressive voice for justice, equity, and decolonization? Once again, I don't know. My new theory is that power relations always exist, that probably the best thing you could do is make yourself aware of the facts, of the ways in which you end up creating power for yourself, even if you don't mean to do that in a research situation, and to make that a part of the reflexive exercise. Once again, my notion is it may not be all that easy for us, that maybe one of the things that we as teachers need to do is to make our students aware of the various ways in which power gets enacted. It is enacted along all the axes that we generally talk about as part of colonizing or oppressive forces: gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality, linguistic

boundaries, that sort of thing. It seems to me that we need to constantly interrogate in what ways am I behaving or teaching that imply that I'm the more powerful person or that go about creating the illusion or the reality of power. I'm not sure that we could ever escape it. We talk about abjuring power as though somehow we can finally free ourselves of it. I don't think we can. I think the only thing that we can do is keep talking about it and the ways in which it either empowers or oppresses people.

How could critical methodologies address power, material circumstances, and the immediate need for transformation? My answer to that is very different probably from anybody's around the table. I think qualitative researchers need to rethink what they're doing and start reaching outside the community of qualitative research. It is true that we can engage in some critical transformation at the local level. I think we need to start moving into policy arenas. And, this is going to be heresy, but I'm going to say it anyway. I really think that whatever our internal arguments, disagreements, conflicts, disjunctures, whatever as a community, that we need to think about ways to talk in policy circles that let people know that our work is systematic and disciplined.

If we're really going to engage in transformative work, we're going to need to address some policy issues particularly in an era of what Michelle Fine is now calling "*punitive* accountability and neoliberalism." So I think that there has to be a counter push, a kind of resistance that would create a space in which some of us who might be interested in it can actually address issues at the state and national level utilizing our qualitative research. That means that we have to be absolutely impressive, we have to make people understand that this is serious social science. So, I think we have to get outside this community, and I think it doesn't matter whether we're talking about education, mental health policy, public health, social welfare, etc. I really think we need to engage the policy folks because I sometimes don't think that they're operating from the most informed position, and we frequently are. We frequently have better information than they do. So I think that that's how we can address some of the power issues and some of the transformational issues. But, it will mean that we have to reach outside of this community.

## **Ann Merete**

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I will start with the afterword. When I received the e-mail from Gaile Cannella and Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, I immediately started to unpack the circulating concepts learned by Professor Rhedding-Jones creating creative potential for this presentation. My own story has given possibilities for becoming, not as fixed thinking, but as following my research connections. I have tried to combine your concepts (in this

question), reconceptualize strategies, concepts, materials, examples of rethinking differently critical qualitative research, collaboration, justice, ethics, equity beyond neopositivistic interpretations, and so on, and try to avoid dichotomous thinking. These concepts are circulating and working everywhere, and pedagogy is a normative field. I am from early childhood education that is filled with ethical questions and choices. I am not sure if new methodologies are new, but I am sure that ongoing movements and experimenting that ask critical, ethical, and epistemological questions are pushing research into other directions—beyond those directions that normative science is moving to.

This kind of research is not about validity, reliability, measurement, treatment, control groups, random selections, pre- and posttesting, dependent and independent variables which are travelling between countries and geopolitical locations making new universal laws and statistical orders. These deductive accounts are (re)producing scientific language and are becoming more and more accepted, nearly taken for granted. Universal collective movement is there already. Academics are supporting each other, being part of communities, publishing articles, spreading new thinking, meeting, and including students into new ideas and sharing each other's stories. Knowledge is nothing to be found out there. Thinking gives options to life itself, opening for the not-yet possible. Philosophy is creating thinking and formulating new questions. And then I am starting.

I start by thinking about the concept *transversality* and *transfer* as terms for disrupting binary structural oppositions. These concepts are inspired by Félix Guattari, and he used them to explore what is going on in life on a psychiatric clinic especially between the patients and the analyst, between individual and group consciousness, between mental illness and normativity. Transversality, he argued, would allow patients to take up speech and achieve a sense of collective power that would go from being subjected groups to subject groups and, as such, the authority of the analyst would be questioned. Another way of thinking with the concept of transversality might also be to elaborate on the terms *zig-zagging* and *thinking-feeling*, which Massumi and Deleuze open up. For me this is critical thinking, a way of critiquing these moments which are transporting early childhood concepts from years ago.

Being here in the U.S., I have desire to say something about the background because it gives some sort of other ideas beyond the grand narratives which many of you (U.S. nationals) are embedded in. We come from different traditions and also from different research traditions. So when I connect writing and thinking now with my institutional relational story back to 1960, when 2% of children in Norway were attending full-day care center. At that time my sister and I started our institutional

full-time life because my mother had divorced and was a working woman. Without any education, my mother started full-time office work, and we as children had to adjust and adopt institutional life, living in the working-class area in the middle of Oslo. I can feel differences. I wanted to be another and not. Striving to catch up language beyond what I was used to. I am here thinking about anthropologist Heath. So what was transversing? I had a strong body—I won all athletic competitions—I was fast runner—I could throw a ball long distances—my body gave me possibilities. Living a working-class girl life was also a privilege. I did not have to live up to specific academic expectation regimes or follow behaviors of royalties, which also were there. As the first generation attending higher education, I chose to become a preschool teacher. So traditional! Why? Because I did not know about all the possibilities, things I could have chosen or not.

In the fifth grade of primary, I had been passionate about maps, reading about all the possible places I could travel. I learned most of the capitals around the world, and I can still memorize the mappings of the rivers, all the rivers located from east to west in Russia. And, an uplifting desire to connect with others out there sat Guattari's transversality into motion. Exploring solidarity, politics, equal rights for everyone started to transverse. Baradian timespace matterings became tools for critical questioning, activating a sort of collective powerwork. During normal institutional life educated as a preschool teacher, feminist, 23-year-old, joining Marxist Leninist camps in the summer doing traditional early childhood studies in Norway did not produce much new thinking—becoming mother and starting new hobby at the university studying proper critical pedagogy part time. Education in Norway is free. New events opened doors and created new language that I had never expressed before. Why had I resisted neoliberal conversations asking for learning outcomes? I was on my line of flight searching for new theoretical lenses. Always already interested in politics, social justice, attending demonstrations, and giving ethical support for civil rights had made me an intercollective supporter for oppressed groups. Norway had shut their borders in 1975. No one without refugee status defined by U.N. was allowed to enter the country. Territory was and is limiting. I am not saying anything more now, but I am coming back.

## Harry

I decided to answer the first question. And I didn't get any further than that, though my answer links to the last question concerning material circumstances. I thought it was a very interesting question: How do we study in ways that speak to our critical

research goals? It made me think about what I do for a living. How do we *work* in ways that speak to our critical research goals? This prompted me to think about the job I do, what it's for, what it's trying to achieve really. I'm going to hang a couple of comments off that basic position. The question implies that our context of study can be assumed, that the material conditions of our work do not intersect with our work. But my argument would be that we have to reproduce the material conditions of our work as well as thinking critically about our work.

I'm director of the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University. We're interested in trying to work in the field of applied social research. What does it mean to do good applied social research, informed by theory certainly, but also interrogating and advancing theory through the practical applied research projects that we engage in? We try to process this iteration through our activities. This is the intellectual project. However, it's a jobbing research center, which means we're absolutely in the center of this neoliberal economy that we all decry. It's part and parcel of, certainly, my working life. We get funding from government, but through competitive activities. They evaluate the quality of our work and its social and economic impact. We win funds competitively through bids for individual grants, tenders, and contracts and so forth. And, we recruit and supervise research students. So there is some core funding, but there is also an awful lot of soft money that has to be won in order to keep the overall activity on the road.

So if one thinks about the discussion around critical qualitative inquiry, one question revolves around how to sustain it, how to develop it, how to sustain and develop critical work in these *very* difficult times. From my opening remarks you'll understand that as how to fund it, how to make sure that we can continue to do it, but also to think about its legitimacy. How do we argue its legitimacy in these times that are really driven by notions of scientifically based research and evidence-based policy. One issue for me is that all our methodological debates are realized in action in these material contexts. The material context immediately and inevitably frames what we do. So we're always going to be in a dialogue about how to move in a particular direction, at a particular point in time, and maybe when to retreat as well on occasions.

I was struck by some of the discussion this morning which revolved around, in a sense, somehow trying to refuse the present, to refuse neoliberalism and its intensity, to refuse the internationalization of policy—of international comparisons of educational achievement, the apparently universal move to evidence-based policy, and so forth. In addition to refusing those activities, there was a concurrent discussion around privileging empathy, emotion, cultural, local meanings, trying to produce more stillness in our research instead of frenetic activity, less frenetic activity.

I'm very sympathetic to the goals, absolutely, but I'm not sure that these are either/or choices.

We're almost inevitably doing all or most of these things, at one and the same time, busy trying to win funding and trying to privilege culturally local meanings. To take another example from this morning's discussion, it was around the idea of normal science and the development of a sort of international universal normal science. I think it's important that we engage in both challenging methodological activity and, also, engage with others in ways that construct a space for methodological innovation in the broader scientific community. So, I don't think it's feasible to ride only one horse rather than trying to ride both, I suppose if I might put it like that. We need to engage with these activities in order to both argue for our place within them and also argue for our particular view of what an appropriate approach to certain problems would be. So I guess the issue that I would highlight focuses on how to do this sort of combinatory, combination type work, when to engage, and when not to engage, when to live with the everyday realities of the processes that we have to engage in, and when to try to resist them. The issue is how we see an opportunity to make a difference and move in a slightly different direction, when indeed to do normal science because it seems like an appropriate project to engage in at a particular point in time for a particular purpose, and when not to, and when to try and do something completely different, and indeed propose to do something completely different to potential sponsors and engage the conversation about the limitations of normal science in a particular context.

I suppose in the end, the activities for me are to try and tip the balance in one direction rather than another, rather than assume that one is going to have some sort of complete movement in one direction or another. I guess one of the interesting things for me underpinning all of these issues of balance and movement is also trying to reclaim the idea of science, reclaim the idea of normal science as a more open and curious endeavor. It seems that, certainly in educational research, normal science seems to have been complexly captured by the logic of randomized control trials, but that's a very, very limited element of an overall scientific project. It's a very narrow element of the sorts of activities that one would engage in over a program of scientific endeavor. So we need to think about reclaiming the importance of curiosity and understanding in the context of science, not definitive proof, which comprises a very narrow definition of what the activity is about.

Having said all that, I don't think this can be done individually. It's a project that has to be engaged in collaboratively both in an individual institution such as the one in Manchester, where 20–30 people try and work on different things at different

times, but, never the less, we strive to maintain an overall balanced portfolio of activities. Also, this has to be engaged in [and] across institutions, in a critical coalition such as this, different people contributing to the conversation so that we get different takes on the issues that confront us at the present time. The sort of task I've announced is not one that an individual researcher can take on their own shoulders. It has to be done collaboratively within institutions, across institutions, and across international contexts of the sort that we're discussing here.

## Maggie

I'm what Althusser might have called a bad subject because I have opted not to subject myself to the discipline of the questions. This is not just because of my Scottish resistance; it's actually because I've become interested in something that makes it difficult to respond to the questions in the way that they are posed. In short, I've been revisiting the notion of *critique itself*. Of course, critique is in the DNA, as it were, of this group and of qualitative inquiry more generally. And I have to say upfront, so as not to be seen as too much of a thorn in the flesh of my own previous work: it's not that I want to abandon the projects that critique takes on. To the extent that critical inquiry involves tackling inequality, working for social justice, challenging the misadventures of power, and so on, I continue to believe that these are worthy and necessary tasks.

But, I have been forced to rethink the whole notion of critique and criticality—how it works and what it does—as a result of my adventures and encounters with the so-called *new materialisms*. This term covers (not without dispute) a loose array of theories that challenge the dominance of cultural explanations of the world in order to engage the materiality of a world that is always more than human. New materialist approaches might include work based on the philosophies of Deleuze and Barad, posthumanism, and affect theory. Indigenous philosophies and ethics are also strongly materialist in their recognition of the agency of matter, though this debt has not always been acknowledged. Anyway, as I became more acquainted with new materialist writing, it came to me as something of a surprise to learn that critique was not generally loved. Here's a typically provocative statement from Karen Barad (2012), one of the founding spokespersons and developers of new materialism: "I'm not interested in critique. In my opinion critique is overrated, over emphasized and over utilized" (p. 49). I just wanted to say a few words today about critique, a few very preliminary tentative words, because I don't really know myself the possible end points of these forms of thought.



So, why has critique become a problem for materially engaged work, let's call it that, for work that is trying to go beyond the hegemony of discourse and culture that has prevailed in critical theorizing for many years? Many new materialist scholars feel that this privileging of culture has been at the expense of matter and nature. So, the first reason why critique has become a problem is that it is deeply associated with the kind of human prerogative that new materialism sees as built into Western forms of thought. Materialist theories explore the possibility that intentionality, and agency, and consciousness might not actually be uniquely human prerogatives, and that we can think of ways of being in and with the world that would accord those sorts of capacities to the more than human. So, the new materialisms would be against a notion of critique that is taken to mean something like the exercise of decisive judgment and interpretive capability by exclusively human subjects.

I think there's a particular concern about critique if it's seen as being synonymous with, or similar to, activities like unmasking ideology, exposing error, or dispelling illusion. This point does in fact go directly to the fourth question that was posed to our panel, which is about creating research power through the claiming of a more "advanced" or "progressive" voice. Very often there is in that notion of critique what some new materialists, after Alfred North Whitehead, would call a "bifurcation of nature" (Stengers, 2011), in other words, a distinction, and not an equal distinction, between those who know and those who are known, between dumb or lifeless matter and the lively agency of culture, and so on. So within a new materialist framework, there's no way of having a notion of critical distance as this might be conceived in conventional terms. Rather, critique would always have to be *immanent*. We can't escape from the fact that we are immersed in the assemblages that we claim to master, that we're produced in those very "agential cuts," as Karen Barad (2007, p. 175) puts it, that actually make us critics while making the rest of the world that we criticize.

The second materialist critique of the work of critique would be that often, as it is practiced, it is predominantly a backward-looking business. It looks at what is and measures this against some preexisting set of standards, whether covert or overt, as to what would count as good or bad, sound or ineffective, and so on. So the problem for materialist critics is that this kind of critique doesn't orient itself as well as it might to the future, to nextness, to what comes next, in a field where what comes next must always be in some fundamental way unknowable.

This takes us directly to the third problem with critique, which is that it has a very poor record in actually changing the world. Bruno Latour (2004), in a very scathing critique (which I have some problems with, but can't elaborate here) likened

academic critics to those mechanical toys, such as the battery bunny or Duracell bunny, who make the same repetitive gesture while the world around them changes. So there's an argument that, if critique conventionally means "debunking," we need something else as well. "Debunking" is Brian Massumi's phrase for the traditional work of critique as unmasking or unveiling. What we need, he argues, is to *foster* as well as debunk. We do not need to depart from the notion of the critical project therefore. Rather, it's "a question of dosage" (Massumi, 2002, p. 13), of deciding where there might be openings for the new, in and amongst the equally serious demand for responsibility to the present and to the past.

So winding up very quickly now: For me, a materialist critique would demand both a kind of care and a kind of recklessness. I think, taking off from what Harry was saying in his contribution to the discussion, the care would come from a kind of dogged and respectful attention to the claims of the world and the objects of analysis. Together with that, I think, that you would have to think of an immanent critique as involving some kind of embrace of the ontological insecurity that comes from always being in the middle of things, always being, as Ann Merete said, obliged both to think and to feel in ways that are not necessarily separate.

## Norman

I come at this from a different framework, and my head has been mostly in the space of critical pedagogy and performance studies for the last decade or so. That leaves me to have a different set of concepts, a different set of concerns from all of my fellow panelists and where they're taking research. So, I'm going in a different direction, but we are all in the same space. The strength of the congress, of course, is it is a big tent and there's no single discourse. This is a space for multiple discourses, so here is another discourse, this multiplicity of discourses.

I began by drawing a line or an eraser through the very title of the session. Rather than calling it critical qualitative methodology, I have no idea what the word *methodology* refers to. It's a moral discourse if it's anything, so this is about a moral discourse, a critical moral discourse. All moral discourse is critical, so we only need one word about moral discourse; it is itself a performative, so this is about performing moral discourse, or what I call critical performative pedagogy. In that space, then, my project is to create a space where I can insert myself as a performer in the very site that I wish to perform or critique, so that I can become an agent of the kind of transformation that I want to be a part of. Or, as Marx says, the goal is not to interpret history but to change it. If you're a critical pedagogy person in the performative space,

you are the agent of the change of the very thing that you are trying to change. The dilemma is—which is beyond what I can talk about in five minutes—how to find a space for myself in that space. Words fail, so I go to my little text here—words fail—nothing holds—there is no center any longer—terms slip and slide fall over on another—critical embodiment—transformative dialogic—reflexive—participatory—emancipatory forms of resistance—plateaus—plains of composition—assemblages—affects—nomadic inquiry—rhizomatic love, loss, praxis—writing as a way of being in the world—writing framed around acts of activism and resistance. How do we move forward? What is the role of critical qualitative research in a historical moment when the need for social justice has never been greater?

Since I'm in this performance space, I have been going back to the origins of second-generation performance studies. If you're in that space you go back to Dwight Conquergood, founding father of performance ethnography, [who] told us that we could no longer privilege the written text over performance, over the expressive moving body, because to do so obscures the body's place in culture. Performance becomes a lever for displacing an earlier generation of ethnographic textualism, textualism that produced books like *writing culture*, a textualism that produces books that use the methods of inscription and thick description which we worshipped, that I worshipped. I wrote worshipable phases about writing culture and thick description, textual models that turned culture into an ensemble of written words. I was an ethnographer reading culture over the shoulders of the "Natives" that we were studying. This textualism privileges distance, detachment, the said, not the saying, the done, or the doing.

A critical performative pedagogy rejects that textualism. Context replaces text, verbs replace nouns, structure becomes processes. It's a whole language now, just like Maggie has a language, I have a language, okay. That's the only criticism that I'm going to make. The emphasis [is] on change, contingency, locality, motion, improvisation, struggle, situationally specific practices, and articulations. In the performance of context and the privileging of struggle, the ethnographer takes a stand; the dividing line between text and context falls away. Texts now are inseparable from context and processes by which they are made, understood, or deployed. In turn context cannot be separated from cultural practices, which are themselves performances. Performances become the site where context, agency, praxis, history, and subjectivity intersect, and [an] improvisatory politics of resistance then is anchored in this space where the doing and the done collide.

Now, no scholar has done more than maybe Madison to advance our understanding of the intersections between performance ethnography, politics, and praxis.

The cognitive framework consists of a series of triads, which I have tried to explore and rework myself, which locate performance within larger moral political frameworks. This triad consists of the I's, the imagination, inquiry, intervention; the A's, artistry, analysis, activism, so a work should be artistic and activist at the same time; and the C's, a creativity that advances critical discourse on citizenship. The I's, the A's, the C's fit in this grid. A performance work fits into this grid. These three triads challenge us to use language creatively. To view inquiry as intervention is always shaped by social justice concerns. Further, fieldwork should be presented artistically in stage performances, in public spaces, where audiences are encouraged to think and act critically. This triad of triads is a template for producing works which enact a politics of possibility or acts of activism at the local level as in this scene, right now, today. The performance of possibilities then creates a structure that links performance ethnographers with subjects and audiences. It combines intervention with activism and citizenship. Several questions are raised. How will subjects benefit from this performance? Will the performance contribute to an enlightened and involved citizenship? Will the performance disrupt structures that limit freedom and possibility? Will the performance leave performers and ethnographers to rethink the very questions of identity representation and fairness? Plus these three triads are joined in a critical discourse where performance, autoethnography, and praxis reflexively intertwine.

Performance becomes the method of change, the site of praxis. The performative then is always understood to be pedagogical, always already political, and always already an intervention in a search for a politics of hope. We seek a way of connecting outwardly and inwardly to the worlds we inhabit, a way of exerting influence in a bewilderingly complex world that often seems to be entirely out of control. Under such circumstances, performance is for me the only salvation.

## Epilogue

The panelists, and the discussion that followed, provide us with visions, contemporary and future practices, diverse perspectives, and perhaps, most importantly, ethical commitments to engage with research that can result in critical change. From visioning attempts to reach outside the community of scholars to take seriously actions related to policy (Lincoln); to continuing to unpack circulating concepts (Otterstad); to riding two horses at once, therefore determining when to resist and be critical, and when to do "normal" science in ways that tip the balance toward the critical (Torrance); to recognizing the need for reconceptualizing critique (MacLure); to

expanding and placing at the center critical moral discourses (Denzin); the panelists have generated important and needed futures. The futures carry traces of history with them while they are simultaneously shaped by responsibility to meet the other and the unknown. Further, the range of ideas and possibilities generated in their attempts to respond to questions as well as their diverse visions lead us to additional questions with which to leave the reader.

## **Could Critical Qualitative Inquiry Be Accompanied by Forms of Anarchism?**

Is it possible for critical qualitative researchers to work alongside anarchists? The diversity of panelists' perspectives creates an avenue for this possibility. What could critical qualitative inquiry learn from a potentially more radical brother such as natural anarchism? Jones (2009) proposed some "ground rules" for natural anarchism (an interesting combination of extreme critical theory and new materialism and posthumanism) where everything happens somewhere, where spatiality and happening and activity matter, states are places, borders are more than marks on maps, states are places claimed as property, where and when cannot be separated, and anarchy exists (e.g., in the forms of bringing down governments by making them irrelevant). Similarly, Schostak and Schostak (2008) conceptualized radical research as a process of staying open to difference while building a community of support for difference. This critical postdisciplinary research approach fuels from the irresolvable tension between perspectives, ontologies, and worldviews. It builds from contradictions, always already present tensions, political and ideological differences.

Critical qualitative inquiry often functions as a form of political resistance influenced by various complex power relations and discourses of injustice of various kinds. From this perspective, critical qualitative inquiry works as a provocation, as illustrated in the articles by Saavedra and Pérez and Ritchie in this issue. As Schostak and Schostak (2008) note, "it is a hysterical moment in that the voice of authority has to account for itself, just as spaces for marginal, excluded and alternative accounts are set alongside those who habitually command" (p. 235). Perhaps inquiring into how to support the traditionally marginalized as/in the center (whether marginalized knowledge, lives, or even the nonhuman) is a critical act of anarchy. Giving up our authority, privilege, centering as researchers, even as centered human beings (traditionally and especially over nonhuman life), is likely entirely chaotic and revolutionary for many of us.

## Can We Think More Diverse Practices and Conceptualizations That Generate Critical Qualitative Inquiry?

Alternatives are many, and special issues such as this could, in the future, take various directions. In this special issue we encouraged critical qualitative scholars to address and explore the epistemological, ontological, theoretical, methodological, and political difference in their work. For instance, the notion of difference in methodology and “postqualitative” methodologies can represent practices without strict boundaries or normative structures, methodologies that diversify, that may begin anywhere anytime but by doing so can create a sense of not-knowing and uncertainty. These types of epistemological, ontological, and methodological “becomings,” diversifying, and emerging critical research practices are illustrated in three articles authored by Ulmer, Huckaby, and Baker-Bell, Paris, and Jackson in this issue. Additionally, for those who remain within the boundaries of human exploration, Somerville’s work illustrates the in-between that critical scholars may inhabit as they attempt to move away from the center, continuing to place human beings (children) at the center but exploring ways to learn from children about how to center the material world (water). Embedded within historical awareness of traditional boundaries and difference, this type of work brings about methodological challenges and examples that might push current research practices and question rigid methodological traditions, especially toward more relational and nonhuman spaces.

Further, critical qualitative scholars can approach difference as an *anticategorical* approach to thinking about interrelatedness and intersectionality whereby the very categories and ontological frames, most traditionally used in difference research practices, are interrogated and threatened under erasure. A corollary of such critique is to (re)imagine existing, and envision alternative, forms of research practice in revising claims to knowing. Innovative and critical ontologies call for methodological movement, accidents, conceptual leaps, and slips as well as theoretical arrests (Koro-Ljungberg, 2016; Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009). In addition, theories and accompanying interconnected methodological moves can be seen as political moves against normative science (as, for example, with postcolonial critique), especially among those scholars interested in emergent and experimental ontologies and surprising and failing methodologies. Carlson and Koro-Ljungberg, as well as Andersen in this issue, demonstrate this reimagining. Similarly, when methodologies are seen as emergent, imminent, and “becoming” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994), carrying elements of the unknown and unanticipated, research practices seem to draw scholars closer to open-endedness and creativity. Perhaps critical qualitative

inquiry (to actually be critical) embodies emergence and unthought/unlimited possibilities.

## What Are Our Ethical Questions and Responsibilities as Critical Qualitative Researchers?

After all this thought, engagement, and reading, we return to the first topic presented in the introduction of this special issue, perhaps the most important for critical qualitative researchers. Even from critical perspectives that would always already challenge foundationalisms, the ethical and moral agendas that generate the field of critical qualitative inquiry, however diverse and multidirectional, remain. Even though diverse scholars may define values and ethics differently, critical scholarship must engage with the moral and take responsibility. Why do we choose to conduct research? Do our theoretical perspectives, the interconnected methodologies, and the uses of our work result in change and increased justice (even if this change is incremental and resists narrow constructions of measurement)? How do we continue, as critical scholars (whether individually or collectively), to challenge our biases, fixed assumptions, linearities, and privileges as we work toward change? Certainly if we continue to share, discuss, inquire, and act, our multiple and diverse ethical agendas will take a flight toward all directions at once and will result in rhizomatic connections, and sometimes merge together as we move toward increased equity, justice, and possibility.

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## About the Authors

Norman K. Denzin (PhD, University of Iowa) is distinguished professor of communications, College of Media scholar, and research professor of communications, sociology, and humanities at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His most recent book is *Indians in Color: Native Art, Identity, and Performance in the New West* (2015).

Dr. Yvonna S. Lincoln received her EdD in higher education from Indiana University. Dr. Lincoln joined the Educational Administration and Human Resource Development Department at Texas A&M as a professor in 1991. Dr. Lincoln teaches graduate courses in qualitative research methods, the foundations of American higher education, proposal preparation, and organizational theory. Dr. Lincoln's research focuses on neoliberal and corporatization shifts in faculty worklife, university administration, and qualitative methods.

Maggie MacLure is professor of education within the Centre for Cultural Studies of Children and Childhood at the Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Her research interests include theory and methodology in applied social research, art-informed research, discourse analysis, childhoods, language and literacy, and affect.

Ann Merete Otterstad is docent in early childhood pedagogy and cultural diversity at the Department of Early Childhood, Oslo, and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway. She works with discursive and material theories and methodologies, focusing politics of methods, what and when is data, entwined with "always becoming another uncertain researcher," as well as unpacking constructions of lifelong learning, quality, and equity in official policy documents.

Harry Torrance is professor of education and director of the Education and Social Research Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. He is also associate dean for research in the Faculty of Education at MMU. He has published widely in his substantive field of student assessment and program evaluation and also on issues of qualitative research, research policy, and research governance.

Gaile S. Cannella (EdD, University of Georgia) is an independent scholar who has served as a tenured full professor at Texas A&M University and Arizona State University, as well as the Velma Schmidt Endowed Chair of Education at the University of North Texas. Dr. Cannella's



scholarship focuses on diverse constructions of critical qualitative inquiry, reconceptualist childhood studies and education, and justice broadly including environmental studies and the more than human.

Mirka Koro-Ljungberg (PhD, University of Helsinki) is a professor of qualitative research at the Arizona State University. Her scholarship operates in the intersection of methodology, philosophy, and sociocultural critique, and her work aims to contribute to methodological knowledge, experimentation, and theoretical development across various traditions associated with qualitative research.

Terrence McTier Jr. is pursuing his doctoral degree in educational policy and evaluation at Arizona State University. He is passionate about diversity and equity access, inmates, ex-offenders and formerly incarcerated individuals pursuing or interested in higher education. McTier has worked with the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) through the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Lancaster County Department of Corrections as a teacher and correctional officer, and he currently volunteers with various community organizations.