

FOSTERING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

A METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

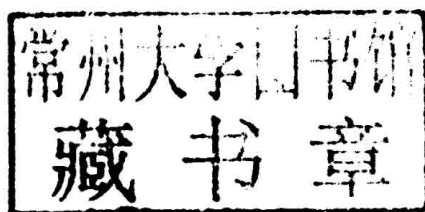
COREY W. JOHNSON AND DIANA C. PARRY, EDITORS

FOSTERING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

A METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

Corey W. Johnson
Diana C. Parry

editors



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Walnut Creek, California



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Do people still read prefaces? We *hope* so, because this is a book about *hope*. In fact, it is a book written for the hopeful. We cannot lose sight of hope, especially when it is easy to be overwhelmed by the injustice of the world. Alongside the media’s obsession with celebrity gossip, headlines tout missing planes and missing passengers, mass kidnappings, rapid climate change, military threats, national security breaches, political scandals, corporate ethics, and lingering racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism. Yet, amid these stories of crisis and concern are stories that keep us optimistic. The two-time election of a black president in the United States, the US Supreme Court’s 2013 decision to federally recognize same-sex marriage, the “Idle No More” protests that galvanized Canada’s indigenous populations, and the international Occupy movement give us hope. Research has helped the goals of social justice move forward. Take, for example, the Center of Global and Health Development (<http://www.bu.edu/cghd/>), who are attempting to understand how human rights conditions influence the spread of HIV in women living in Vietnam and Ghana.

Given our hopeful outlook, we wanted to write a text to try to convince *all* scholars that they can make a difference using qualitative research to create a more socially just world. We believe that qualitative researchers are in a unique position to add value to this endeavor. We do not argue that quantitative researchers cannot contribute to positive social change, but our definition of social justice does not include goals of reductionism, generalizability, or resting on the white, male, capitalist, elite, hegemonic values on which positivist and postpositivist notions of science were built. In short, social justice research is about more than one’s intent to *believe it can get*

better; it is bound up in questioning and dismantling power structures not encouraged or supported by other philosophical commitments. Social justice is built on a commitment and action to *make it better*!

As we set about to create this text, we were intentional in many aspects. We wanted to execute a particular vision for the book that lived somewhere between a dual-authored and edited contribution. As such, we wrote several of the early foundational chapters and the final one charting future directions. Then we set about identifying authors who would bring diversity to the text in terms of methodological expertise, disciplinary background, content area, length of time in the academy, rank, and social identity (race, age, gender, sexual identity, and class). Social workers, counseling psychologists, geographers, historians, and scholars of leisure studies, women's studies, and tourism, among others, can be found within. In addition to detailing epistemology, theory, common elements of qualitative research, and seven methodological strategies, we ground the discussions in important issues such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) identity and faith reconciliation; resilience and sexual abuse for women in South Asian communities; people living homeless in public parks; women's health and body image; and gendered family memory keeping, to name a few. Finally, we have authors who understand social justice issues, having experienced injustice related to their own identities as women, people of color, non-heterosexual, and working class (or having lived poor). We did our best to ensure that our selections matched the spirit and intent of the text; of course, full representation always falls short, but we did try. Our efforts meant making difficult decisions, sometimes not inviting close colleagues or the "expert," and also involved some risks of working with others we did not know well. We believe these decisions paid off, and we are proud of their contributions.

Finally, we learned much about ourselves and the craft of qualitative research by working with our authors and each other on this book. We hope you find it a meaningful contribution to your endeavors to create "justice to come."

Acknowledgments

Throughout the process of writing this book, a number of people helped us along the way. Thus, we owe many a debt of gratitude. First and foremost, to our husbands, Troy and Yancey, thank you both for your support, patience, encouragement, and love. We dedicate this book to you. Claire and Charlotte, thanks for making your Mummy smile and laugh throughout the writing process. A special thank you

to our contributing authors, whose inspiring chapters provide a pathway for social justice; it was our pleasure working with you. Thanks to Nuria Jaumot-Pascual and Brian Kumm for their attention to detail and impressive APA skills. To the anonymous reviewers, we appreciate your helpful feedback that undoubtedly resulted in a stronger book. We thank Stephanie Jones and Anneliese Singh (Corey's seven-year writing group) for their constant critique, review of drafts, and their encouragement to write an intellectual yet accessible book. Thanks to Bettie St. Pierre for encouraging thoughts about what comes next (postqualitative, posthumanistic inquiry) while thinking and writing about how to do what we do now, better. Thanks to Callie Spencer and Karen Paisley for creating a space for us to retreat, think, and write. We are grateful to Jobeth Allen: thanks for encouraging the writing of books. Last, but not least, thanks to Bill Stewart for always encouraging us to think of the values that underpin the process and end states of our research.

Corey W. Johnson and Diana Parry

Contextualizing Qualitative Research for Social Justice

Corey W. Johnson & Diana C. Parry

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
—Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)

Most of us come to a social justice paradigm because we have experienced injustice in our own lives and want to do something about it. For example, Diana was drawn to feminism as a result of the patriarchy she encountered in daily life as a woman. Meanwhile, Corey’s attraction to social justice was grounded in the distinct differences he felt moving through the social world as a gay man and the stereotypes and homophobia that existed around who he could love. Regardless of how one comes to the work of social justice, there is much work to still be done. Many people think we have tackled the major social identity issues of injustice and solved these social ills. However, this “color-blind” approach to viewing the world is problematic. We bet you can look at your own classroom and/or campus and easily identify issues needing attention from social justice activists. In fact, as we wrote this text, active racism and homophobia were swelling to intolerant levels at Corey’s home campus and people were taking to the streets, marching as Martin Luther King, Jr. did in his day. The local paper reported:

Hundreds of University of Georgia students and community activists marched over the Sanford Drive bridge today to call attention to racism and homophobia on campus. Caroline Bailey, a UGA student and president of the university’s Black Affairs Council, organized the march after someone posted “Why can’t you dumb dirty niggers stop stinking up the place? Let UGA be RIGHT for good WHITE Christian

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students,” to the council’s Facebook page. The message was posted anonymously using an account created in the name of a UGA student, but according to university police, someone else started the account with his name. Bailey said she was “very, very disheartened” that someone could post such a message 50 years after UGA began admitting black students. Activists [also] used the occasion to call attention to other issues [such as the state’s] policy barring undocumented immigrants from attending UGA. (Aued, 2013)

Inequities and discrimination such as classism, racism, sexism, ageism, transphobia, and heterosexism create major social problems. To address such social problems, Paisley and Dustin (2010) argue that we need to “stop ‘othering,’ treating people who are at the margins... as if they [are] somehow inferior to us.... It is time to adopt a more caring and connected attitude toward the world around us” (p. v). Caring and connection are at the heart of a social justice research paradigm that aims to make the world a better place by enacting social change for marginalized and/or oppressed groups. Charmaz (2011) explains that social justice inquiry “attends to inequities and equality, barriers and access, poverty and privilege, individual rights and the collective good, and their implications for suffering” (p. 359). To achieve this aim, the processes and outcomes of scholarship must move beyond academic discourse to benefit communities or groups that are treated unfairly in the social world (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). A social justice paradigm, therefore, is a moral, ethical, and political task that challenges traditional notions of universal truth, scientific neutrality, and researcher dispassion (Parry, Johnson, & Stewart, 2013.)

One of the underlying themes related to social justice inquiry is that the world is capable of being changed; that change can come from any direction, and especially from the bottom up. A social justice paradigm literally changes the way one thinks and views the world. Such a paradigm means that we are all capable of—and therefore responsible for—changing the world. Given this shared responsibility, it helps if the processes and outcomes of social justice research are made visible. With this goal in mind, the purpose of this textbook is fourfold: 1) to explain how using a social justice paradigm orients qualitative inquiry as a socially relevant, socially responsible, multidisciplinary, globally sensitive endeavor; 2) to document common features of social justice-oriented qualitative inquiry; 3) to detail and exemplify research methodologies frequently used in qualitative inquiry aimed to enact social justice; and finally 4) to create a proliferation of theories for social justice that speak to multiple and diverse global contexts.

The Evolution of Social Justice Research

There must exist a paradigm, a practical model for social change that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures. —bell hooks (1995)

Two decades ago, only a handful of scholars were explicitly concerned with connecting their research outcomes with issues of social justice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). These scholars conceptualized social justice as “the ability of social science to be put to policy objectives with the purpose of redressing a variety of historically reified oppressions in modern life: racism, economic injustice, the ‘hidden injuries of class,’ discrimination in the legal system, gender inequities, and the new oppressions resulting from the restructuring of the social welfare system” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 715). Since then, a large array of scholars have taken up issues of social justice in both the *process* and *products* of their research. These scholars premise social justice on an epistemology that values emotions, personal relationships, an ethic of care, political praxis, and multivocality to purposefully reveal inequities in all facets of society (Charmaz, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Epistemology questions what is the nature of knowledge? How do we come to know what we know? It will influence the way we think about what is Truth, truths, and/or the production of knowledge.

Today, scholars working within a social justice paradigm cover a wide range of topic areas including environmental issues, critical medical studies, critical management studies, animal rights, and a large field of literature on a broad range of topics connected to activist movements both contemporary and historic. This broad scope of social justice research is reflected in academic journals devoted to the topic (e.g., *Social Justice Research*, *Studies in Social Justice*) and in research centers (e.g., Southern Poverty Law Center, Canadian Centre for Social Justice) in various institutions across the globe.

Given that the purpose of this book is to outline social justice research methodologies, we will not address the historical evolution in great depth or detail. We are sensitive to the complexity that might be left out of the following overview, but would encourage you to follow up on the deep philosophical and historic roots of social justice of-