Tasha is a graduate student interested in Black girls' literacies. Her coursework included work in her content area (literacy) as well as within social foundations in which she examined the ways that race, class, and gender shape educational experiences. A course on the politics of education introduced her to critical race feminism (CRF; which is an outgrowth of critical race theory), a theoretical framework that places gender and race privilege and oppression at the center of our lives. Tasha was excited because this theory provided an academic language to describe some of her life experiences. In previous courses, she had discussed what it was like to be a Black woman in the United States, speaking from personal experience. She always wondered if her professors thought she was uneducated, not well read, or speaking too much about her opinion. Yet, CRF was premised on the experiential experiences of people like Tasha. CRF spoke to Tasha. It was a theory that made sense and it was a theory she found comfort in. She realized that she had read many CRF theorists before, but she had not realized that she was actually reading CRF. This theoretical framework would allow her to center her participants' lives as Black girls. Tasha knew right away that CRF was the right theory to frame her study.

In this chapter, we discuss the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of qualitative research. Theory has a complicated place within qualitative research, as there is no consensus regarding its role (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). Many positivists who believe that research is objective think theory should be an overlay on your study. This understanding neglects the very fact that no research can ever be objective and that all research has something at stake. Some naturalistic researchers, ethnographers, and grounded theorists would say that using previous theories will bias your data or that the theory should "emerge" from the data, as if it will magically appear (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). This more-open stance on conducting research without being first informed by previous literature might have sufficed before institutional review board (IRB) regulations became so stringent and before graduate students had to defend research proposals before they could actually go into the field to collect data. Now, given current constraints of the university, including IRB regulations, students must read theory before they propose their research. Yet, even if students are not reading theory per se, they are theorizing about their research topics. *Theory* has been referred to as a map that

explains why the world is the way it is (Strauss, 1995) and as a set of "orienting ideas" (Miles & Huberman, 2013, p. 17). We agree with Merriam (1998), who cannot imagine a qualitative study without a theoretical framework. Because of this, we encourage students, such as Tasha in the opening vignette, to embrace theory in all its complexities. We believe that theory is a way of exploring someone else's mind and perceiving the world in the way they perceive it (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). When Tasha expressed that CRF spoke to her, it was her recognition that she had felt this theory all along. She had lived this theory. But she did not have the language to articulate it. This is the problem we see with a traditional understanding of theory. We are intimately connected to theory. It is part of our bodies and minds. Yet, our claim to embodied understandings of theory are often labeled as "subjective" or "anecdotal." These are not innocent claims. They come from a history of colonialism and imperialism—a history that has Othered us and distorted our versions of truth. These claims originate from a history that created "different and competing theories of knowledge" and "structures of power" (Smith, 2012, p. 45). This history worked hard to teach us to believe that our ways of knowing, being, and understanding were deficient, that they were colloquial and not scientific enough. We reject these understandings of theory outright and claim that it is time for researchers to recognize the important work being done outside of Western colonial–settler frames. This is a concern for all intersectional research and, thus, is important to consider when conducting qualitative research.

As such, we take the stance that theory is always intimately connected to research, even before you begin to collect or analyze data. Stanley and Wise (1993) have argued that we cannot separate what we experience as people versus what we experience as researchers. The two are intimately connected. And, just as we theorize about research, we also theorize about our everyday life experiences. We attempt to understand and explain what is going on in our personal lives as we do in our research. In other words, the theorizing that we do to understand our life experiences is the same theorizing we will do in our research. For us, similar to other feminist, Indigenous, and critical scholars, there is no way to separate theory from your research; this is partly because theory and experience are intermingled, and you need an understanding of both to conduct a research study. It is impossible to separate oneself from one's research. We are embodied researchers who are conducting research in particular historical, political, economic, and social moments. This matters.

Similar to Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), we argue for a "theory in the flesh." We need transformational theories because for too long we, as social justice academics and as women of color, were denied access to theories to use, to critique, and to create.

> Theory, then, is a set of knowledges. Some of these knowledges have been kept from us—entry into some professions and academia denied us. Because we are not allowed to enter discourse, because we are often disqualified and excluded from it, because what passes for theory these days is forbidden territory for us, it is vital that we occupy theorizing space, that we not allow white men and women solely to occupy it. By bringing

in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space. (p. 25)

We want you to know that theory can be useful. It can come directly from your embodied experience, which we will address more of later in this chapter. Theory is not something to fear. But theory does not have to be defined in narrow ways that make sense to only particular segments of the population. Theory can be and should be for everybody.

In the following sections, we will outline the differences between ontology, epistemology, theory, and methodology. We will discuss the ways in which these inform each other to help ground a study in a way that makes sense. We also introduce the concept of critical research with a call for all research to have critical aims. We end the chapter with a list of recommended readings.

Ontology

Qualitative research must be fundamentally concerned with the nature of reality and knowledge production. In Chapter 1, we addressed positivism and how that paradigm has been given so much power within social science research. We also illustrated that the ways we think about reality shape the type of research we are drawn to. These are ontological concerns. While we identify as methodologists over philosophers, we believe that one should not do research without considering some fundamental philosophical issues, such as the nature of reality, what it means to know, and how we come to know. *Ontology* is the study of the nature of reality or of being. In qualitative research, we have some commonly accepted assumptions about reality that align with the constructivist paradigm.

In Chapter 1, we discussed the positivist paradigm that has been contested by qualitative researchers and feminist theorists. In an attempt to shift how scientists thought of objectivity, Donna Haraway (1988) referred to the *God-trick*, which was positivism's belief in objective knowing and a knower/researcher who can attach himself (gender use intentional) from the objects under study. There is no "outside" from which we can conduct research as outside knowers and observers. She argued instead for *situated knowledge,* which was a version of feminist objectivity that insists upon embodied knowing and truth that is always situated within particular cultural, historical, and political moments. Any knowledge production—and this includes research inquiry—should be situated within the powerful social forces and institutions that shape our lives (Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 2000).

Intersectionality takes as a core claim that lived experiences are important sources of data. While examining lived experiences through the lens of race and gender are important, we also must attend to the many ways these lived experiences are mediated by power and privilege. It is not enough to say you are studying Black girls. Instead, you must study the ways all forms of oppression mediate the

lives of Black girls. Interviewing Black girls who have been adjudicated to discuss their experiences is not enough. The next step in intersectional research would be to contextualize their lives within the school-to-prison pipeline, to truly interrogate the various ways Black girls are disciplined in schools, in their communities, and even within popular culture. Black girls' bodies are not their own. Any qualitative researcher who wants to study Black girls, for example, must understand the complicated history of slavery, colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Black girls—and no one for that matter—do not live lives disconnected from power. They are implicated within power relations. This must be teased out as part of intersectional scholarship.

One of the main ontological assumptions within qualitative research is that there is not a single truth or a single reality. Postmodernists refer to Truth with a capital *T* and claim that this is an impossibility. There is no such thing as a single truth or a single reality, but we have been led to believe that there are Truths through what are called *master narratives*. These narratives rely on ideologies that masquerade as common sense. Often, the people or institutions who have the most power are the ones who get to write or determine the master narrative (Foucault, 1972). Those who have the least amount of power are the ones who are forced to accept these narratives and pay the price for that acceptance. Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have often been complicit in the telling of these master narratives (Smith, 2012) because we have been Othered in such drastic ways. We have been colonized and yet we submit to this continual colonization project every day. Before we can disrupt these master narratives, we must first identify them and call them what they are: a settler–colonial project. While we embrace the idea of multiple truths, we cannot simply relinquish the understanding that a master narrative has shaped our lives and the lives of those who came before us. We agree with Smith (2012), who states, "Our colonial experience traps us in the project of modernity. There can be no 'postmodern' for us until we have settled some business of the modern" (p. 35). What this means is that while we understand that there are multiple truths, we also know the insidious ways in which one truth gets valued over another. We cannot simply embrace the idea of multiple truths without continually recognizing that truths have different levels of acceptance by the powerful majority. We cannot pretend that this does not matter.

In order to better understand this concept, let's think about a car accident for a moment. Imagine that you have witnessed two cars crashing into each other. The reality is that an accident has occurred. Your evidence for this reality is the physical evidence you see (dents in the cars, windshield glass in the road). But the particulars of this accident will lend themselves to interpretation. For example, we know that two cars crashed into each other, but Driver A may interpret the situation as Driver B crashed into their car. In other words, the blame will be placed on Driver B and Driver A may not recognize their role in the crash.

There may be witnesses who saw what occurred. However, each will have their own vantage point. Perhaps one was sitting in a coffee shop looking out on to the street. Maybe their vision was partially blocked by a telephone pole or by

pedestrians walking by. Another witness may have been sitting at a red light and could see the two cars parallel to their position. A third witness may have been following behind one of the cars and was able to see the accident from that standpoint.

A police officer might be called to take a report. It is the officer's job to collect witness accounts as evidence of what occurred and then write an objective account of the accident. Each witness (including the drivers) will explain their vantage point and their experience of the accident. Each person contributes to truth with a small *t*—that is, their truth cannot stand in for everyone's truth. The way the coffee shop patron experienced the accident will be very different from the way the person following behind a driver involved in the accident has experienced it.

You may be wondering whether the police report then becomes a Truth with a capital *T*? You might think that because the officer has interviewed all the witnesses that the officer can then approximate what happened by including a mix of witness accounts. Yet, the officer's report is still not the whole truth. The officer interpreted the witness accounts based on their interactions with an assessment of the witnesses. Maybe the coffee shop patron was a businessperson in a suit while the driver sitting at a red light was a construction worker in jeans and steel toe boots. Perhaps because of socioeconomic bias, the officer might give the businessperson's account more weight. Or perhaps one of the drivers involved in the accident was an older woman (senior citizen) while the other driver was a middle-aged man. It is likely that, due to sexist assumptions about each driver, the officer placed the blame on the older woman. Are there other factors that could shape the officer's ultimate account of the situation? Yes. What if the businessperson was a Black woman and the construction worker was a white man? Could racial perceptions and stereotypes change the police officer's account? The point of this example is that there is no such thing as a single reality. Our perceptions of the world shape our realities. Not everyone believes this, however. For example, in a court of law, it is most likely that the police officer's account will be considered the most valid account of the accident because, by virtue of their badge, the officer is assumed to know how to take an objective view of a situation. The police report then becomes a master narrative and becomes difficult to question because it is assumed to be more valid than the personal experience of one of the accident victims. But, if the court of law really wanted to do its due diligence, it would investigate how each witness and participant came to their understandings of what occurred. This concern with how knowledge is produced and acquired leads us to an examination of epistemology.

Epistemology

Epistemology is simply how we know what we know. Our knowledges have been informed by a variety of factors, though as intersectional scholars, we give primacy to experience. Philosophically, epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. It asks, "How is knowledge constructed? How is knowledge acquired?"

You may have heard the saying that knowledge is power. From a philosophical standpoint, this means that knowledge is intimately connected to power relations (Foucault, 1972) and is produced by relations of ruling and relations of knowing (Smith, 1987). How we know is tied to our identities as well as to what knowledges have been passed on to us and what knowledges we've had access to.

Jennifer remembers learning in grade school about Rosa Parks, who had been portrayed in books and lessons as a tired seamstress. Jennifer had been taught that Parks worked all day and couldn't stand on the ride home; thus, she sat on a bus seat reserved for whites during Jim Crow segregation. Jennifer was astounded to learn in college that Parks was actually a well-trained civil rights activist and that her actions had been planned, rehearsed, and prepared for. Parks was not a lone, tired seamstress. She was networked and connected to a well-organized civil rights group who was tired of racism and injustice but also unified in that tiredness. Jennifer's knowledge about Parks and her overall understanding of the civil rights movement had been limited and constrained. Her epistemological framework had been informed by a white supremacist patriarchy that could not and did not credit Parks for being the activist that she was. Thus, this example is an illustration of how power relations inform our epistemologies. It is also an example of how master narratives become replicated. Institutions—in this case, the institution of education—plays a part in the crafting and communication of master narratives.

We are left to ask ourselves, why was Rosa Parks taught this way? Perhaps you may be thinking, "I am sure this author was in grade school many years ago and things have changed since then." Well, yes, but that is only partially true. The author attended grade school in the late 1970s and early 1980s in New York City. The surprising thing is that the author's daughter attended grade school forty years later in a different state and was *still* taught that Rosa Parks was a tired seamstress. That is not much by way of progress. We share this story with you to show how powerful master narratives are. The stories that get told again and again become knowledge. Those who want to disrupt these master narratives face a huge challenge, as the opposition is strong and so many people fear change. In an interview with Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002), she wonders how to include people in a movement for social change when they fear the very change you are fighting for. When you grow up being fed a particular narrative, it becomes difficult to accept that there might be other versions of the truth, other ways of knowing and being, and other ontological positions. If your ontology shapes how you live your life, then it stands to reason that it shapes your research project, too.

We want to draw your attention to Figure 2.1, which illustrates how your ontological standpoint shapes all aspects of the research study.

You can see from Figure 2.1 that ontology informs epistemology, which informs theory, which informs methodology, which informs methods. We will discuss each of these in further detail, but it is important to understand that, for example, the theory that you use in your study will be informed by your epistemological standpoint, which has been informed by your ontological standpoint. Some researchers will combine ontology and epistemology into one category

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Map
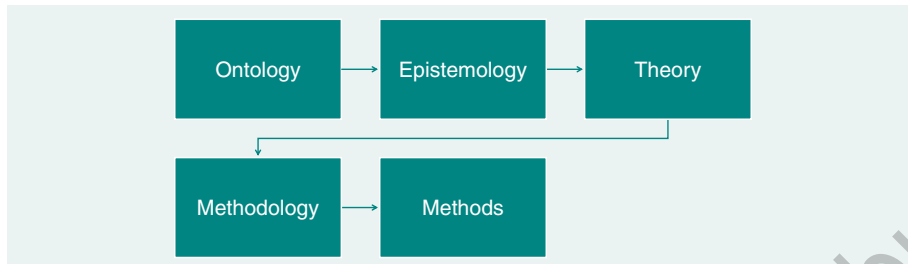
(onto-epistemological standpoint). We are okay with either, as there are many similarities between ontology and epistemology. We believe that theory, which is sandwiched between epistemology and methodology, provides the strongest framework for your study. Crotty (2013) has argued that epistemologies (or theories of knowledge) are embedded in theoretical frameworks. Let us now explore the role of theory and theoretical frameworks in qualitative research.

Theory

We began this chapter by discussing what theory is and how it has been conceptualized and transformed. We want to remind you that embodied knowing is real knowledge. We also want to remind you that there is not one way to write theory or even to "do" theory. Here is where we may differ from other qualitative researchers: We want theory to be inclusive *and* to address the needs and concerns of the most marginalized. As women of color scholars and as intersectional feminists, it is the embodied experiences of power (Ahmed, 2017) that speak to us the loudest. We are moved and we are shaken by theories that recognize our humanity, theories that privilege our experiences. We borrow a lengthy excerpt from Anzaldúa (1990), whose conceptualizations of theory make the most sense to us. She argues that what is considered theory in the academic community is not what counts as theory for many women of color academics and that there is not one way to do theory. Anzaldúa argues for a reconceptualization of *teorías*:

> Thus we need teorías that will enable us to interpret what happens in the world, that will explain how and why we relate to certain people in specific ways, that will reflect what goes on between inner, outer and peripheral "I"s within a person and between the personal "I"s and the collective "we" of our ethnic communities. Necesitamos teorías that will rewrite history using race, class, gender and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross

borders, that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods. We need theories that will point out ways to maneuver between our particular experiences and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover. We need theories that examine the implications of situations and look at what's behind them. And we need to find practical application for those theories. We need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy. (p. xxv)

Similar to Anzaldúa, we do not believe that there is a correct way to write theory. Your dissertation committee or refereed reviewers might disagree with us. However, what is important to us is that you complete research that matters to you and that matters to your communities. To do so, you might have to use theories in a new way. You might have to write your own theory because the previously cited theories in your field do not apply. Many of the commonly accepted theories in many fields became theories because friends and associates of the theorists cited their work. Yes, citational practices matter. As Ahmed (2017) said, "A citational chain is created around the theory: You become a theorist by citing other theorists that cite other theorists" (p. 8). If all the theory previously available was written by white men, guess who got to be called a theorist? It certainly wasn't women of color. We are not the first scholars to say this and we will not be the last. Just know that if you are frustrated by current theories because they seem insufficient (or, in many cases, actually harmful), there are alternatives.

Up until this point, we have not differentiated between theory in general and a theoretical framework. That is because they have the same function. A theory informs your theoretical framework, which informs your methodology. We have cited researchers who spoke of the various utilities of theory, but one thing is common: Theory provides a way to orient you forward. It is similar to using a guide on a hike that already has a set path. The guide has been there before and can help steer you away from pitfalls and dangers but you, as the hiker, will have to move yourself forward. According to Crotty (2013), the *theoretical perspective* is a philosophical stance or set of assumptions that informs the methodology and provides a context for its process. Some researchers discuss a conceptual framework sometimes in lieu of and sometimes in conjunction with a theoretical framework (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). More in line with Crotty (2013), we prefer the term *theoretical framework*. We do appreciate Ravitch and Carl's (2016) definition that a theoretical framework includes "the ways that a researcher integrates and situates the *formal theories* that contextualize and guide a study" (p. 86). We see the theoretical framework (along with the methodology) as guiding the study from its beginning to end. Schram (2003) states most succinctly what the theoretical framework guides throughout: "how you engage with a preliminary sense of problem and purpose, how you portray your involvement with study participants, the way you define key concepts, how you address assumptions within your research questions" (p. 39).

We tell our students that the theoretical framework doesn't only guide one part of the study. You should and will return to it again and again because it shapes

the entire study. The theoretical framework should be put into conversation with different aspects of your research design. For example, when you discuss methodology, you should illustrate the ways in which the theoretical framework informs the methodological framework. When you analyze data, your theoretical framework should guide both your analytic choices as well as your techniques. We want to return to the example of Tasha (who opened our chapter). Tasha's theoretical framework is CRF. As a theory, CRF is premised on five tenets (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). One of the main tenets is that CRF centers the experiences of women of color and articulates, understands, and explains their experiences with multiple forms of discrimination.

If Tasha were to use CRF as a theoretical framework, she would need to explain the tenets in depth, summarize its historical evolution and development, and detail how she would use the theory. She would also need to be clear about the ways in which the theoretical framework would shape how she designs the study and collects and analyzes the data.

It is not a secret that theories that center the experiential lives of people are best used in qualitative research projects. Since Tasha is interested in investigating Black girls' literacy practices, she would center the lives of the Black girls in her study and illustrate the ways in which race, class, and gender oppression have shaped their experiences with literacy. Since Tasha is not yet sure how she will analyze her data, the theory of CRF might assist her. If she is interested in centering the lives of her participants, she might also choose to keep their stories intact and analyze them through narrative analysis. This would be an example of the ways in which your theoretical framework shapes the methods and methodology you might choose for a study. If Tasha is interested in exploring the ways race and gender inform literacy, she would use a sociocultural analysis approach. There would be different possibilities but, as Tasha proceeds in decision making about the study, she would return to her theoretical framework for guidance.

Although we discuss how to write a literature review in more detail in Chapter 8, we will briefly introduce a literature review, since many assume it is part of the theoretical framework. A literature review analyzes and synthesizes previous research. Hart (2001) lists the following reasons for conducting a literature review: tracing the history and development of particular concepts and theories related to your research topic, illustrating the current knowledge of your topic, learning the definitions and vocabulary related to your topic, examining the range of methodologies and methods used to study your topic, conceptualizing key theories related to your topic, and identifying any gaps in the research on your topic. All of these reasons will help you craft a stronger research proposal because you will have an idea of what has come before you as well as how your topic has been conceptualized, discussed, and studied.

While a deeper understanding of your theoretical framework stems from the literature review, the terms are not synonymous. A *literature review* is a comprehensive synthesis of previous research on your topic (some of which you may not want to mimic because of its weaknesses). A *theoretical framework*, on the other hand, is

more of a guide as you design and carry out your study. It will shape all aspects of the research and is, therefore, a narrowed-down version of the theory on your topic that you think is most important and helpful. While a literature review includes many sources from the past and present, your theoretical framework will be much further refined and will include sources that you have deemed most relevant.

Now let's return to our metaphor of a theoretical framework as a guide helping you to move forward on your hike. To move forward after selecting a theory means that you must choose your methodology. In this section, we discuss what a methodology is and how it is informed by your theoretical framework. We will introduce you to specific methodologies in Chapter 4.

Methodology

Many students ask, "What comes first: your research questions or your methodology?" Before we can answer this question, we must first determine what a methodology is. There is often some confusion between *methodology* and *methods*. Crotty (2013) defines *methodology* as "the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes" (p. 3). Methodology is why you do what you do in the research project. An example of methodology might be an ethnography: It has a tradition of investigating a cultural group over a long period of time. *Methods*, on the other hand, are quite simply the procedures you use to collect and analyze data. In an ethnography, you might use observations as your primary method of data collection and you might use sociocultural analysis as the method to analyze data.

It is time to return to the initial question: What comes first: your research question or your methodology? While some qualitative researchers might have a hard-and-fast rule about this, we do not. We actually believe that the way you think about knowledge and how you come to know comes first. From there, you will be drawn to specific areas of inquiry. We see your research topic (and your research questions) as emerging alongside your methodology because the two are interconnected. Let's imagine that you have identified a problem in an assessment that is regularly used by a federally funded program. Those who take the assessment do not truly understand certain questions because the questions are culturally biased. If you are interested in investigating this topic, you would not immediately decide to pursue positivist research that might include additional assessments or surveys. Given that your purpose is to investigate a flaw in a survey (in this case, cultural bias), you would look for a way to do so. Instead of providing participants with another survey that they may not understand, you would need to talk to them about their understandings of the questions. Thus, your methodology would be naturally provided to you based on this type of inquiry. Clearly, you would have to select a methodology that allows you to talk to people. Perhaps a case study (methodology) that could involve interviews (method) regarding the assessment as well as your own document analysis (method) of it.

Critical Qualitative Research

In Chapter 1, we defined what qualitative research is and examined the history of this type of inquiry. Given that there are different kinds of qualitative research, we would like to specifically discuss critical qualitative research. Simply put, critical qualitative research critiques systemic inequalities in an ethically responsible and just manner (Denzin, 2017). When we first proposed this textbook, we wanted our book to be marketed as qualitative research in general. We did not see the need to add the qualifier *critical*. This is because we believe that there is an urgent need for *all* research to take up the issues that critical qualitative researchers are interested in. Unfortunately, our society is not yet there; many people *still* believe that research, even qualitative research, should be objective and that there are other pressing issues to research without always investigating race, class, and gender. We respectfully disagree. As Sara Ahmed (2017) stated, "So much feminist and antiracist work is the work of trying to convince others that sexism and racism have not ended; that sexism and racism are fundamental to the injustices of late capitalism; that they matter" (p. 6). We can cite statistics here to support our arguments that racism, sexism, and classism still shape a person's life. There are statistics regarding the school-to-prison pipeline, the medical industrial complex, the dismal state of education for Brown and Black children, housing discrimination, employment discrimination—the list goes on. Yet, even in the face of statistics, even in the face of hearing people's stories, those who do not want to believe that injustice is everywhere will still pretend not to see. They have the luxury and the privilege of not seeing the injustice because it is not their children who are suffering. Not noticing or recognizing racism is a privilege. And when you do not have the privilege to not notice, you must become engaged in the labor of helping others notice. We face the dismay and dehumanization of our communities every day and we cannot be silent about it. Similar to Ahmed (2017), we recognize that "if a world can be what we learn not to notice, noticing becomes a form of political labor" (p. 32). Writing this book was political labor for us. Yet, any author who writes and who makes choices about what to claim as important is engaged in political labor. We say this to share with you that all research is a political act. It is tremendously tiring to have to continuously defend the fact that our stories matter. While Ahmed speaks specifically about a feminist movement in her book, *Living a Feminist Life*, the ideas are applicable to critical qualitative researchers as well and, more importantly, to intersectional qualitative researchers. Throughout our careers, we have had to continually validate our work and our claims in front of a research community who was quick to label us as "having an agenda" or "being too involved in the research." Our stories, our histories, our traumas, and our joys matter. We should not have to continually insist that racism or sexism exists. And yet, here we are, still insisting.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the history of qualitative research, though it has been shaped by colonialism, causes many qualitative inquirers to try to be cognizant about power relations, subjectivities, and voice in ways that many positivist

researchers do not have to be. Yet, it is a reality that most of our research epistemologies and frameworks "arise out of the social history and culture of the dominant race" (Scheurich, 1997, p. 1414). This means that researchers must be purposeful about interrupting the status quo. And they must be comfortable using theories and methodologies that may not always be well accepted within the academy. This is especially true of scholars who use intersectionality, as they may be in the "margins of their disciplines" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 793) and be wary about including mainstream theories and methodologies, given that these may not be culturally situated. To truly investigate social life in all of its complexities, the critical qualitative researcher must be open to being a pioneer in our adaptations of traditional frameworks or in our creation of new, culturally situated and race- and gender-centric frameworks.

Critical qualitative research has been, unfortunately, relegated to an outside position. If the center is what some might call "traditional" qualitative research, then critical qualitative research is pushed to the margins. This marginal status means that critical qualitative research is not viewed as the norm. It is, instead, viewed as somehow deficient because of its liberatory potential.

> Together, they seek morally informed disciplines and interventions that will help people transcend and overcome the psychological despair fostered by wars, economic disaster, and divisive sexual and cultural politics. As global citizens, we are no longer called to just interpret the world, which was the mandate of traditional qualitative inquiry. Today, we are called to change the world and to change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom and full, inclusive, participatory democracy. (Denzin, 2017, p. 9)

Yet, similar to other critical qualitative researchers, we view our work as central to the project of what should be social research's main goal. No longer can we merely interpret the world (as if interpretation were not a political act). As Denzin says, as qualitative researchers, we are called upon to change the world. We heed this call, and our hope is that you do as well. Now you may be wondering what the difference is between intersectional qualitative research and critical qualitative research. While critical qualitative research may interrogate and investigate issues of power, it does not always center race and gender. Intersectional research is critical in that it always interrogates power while at the same time centering race and gender in its attempt at an analysis of and accounting for systems of oppression.

Conclusion

The theoretical and methodological framework that guides this textbook is intersectionality. The text will be infused with attention to race, class, and gender epistemologies—something that is missing from traditional qualitative textbooks. It will be grounded within intersectionality. Intersectionality is both a theory and a

methodology that recognizes that oppression cannot be understood as additive or in terms of a single axis. Single-axis methods and modes of analysis privilege one form of oppression over others and presumes that all members of one category of race, for example, will have the same experiences by virtue of being in the same group (Grzanka, 2014). These single-axis methods position racism, sexism, and classism as parallel instead of as intersecting.

Part of recognizing why research should be intersectional means, as Collins (2000) points out, that we must redefine what counts as intellectual. In doing this, by recognizing embodied theory and research as important intellectual endeavors, we can help reclaim much of the work that has been silenced in the past by being discounted as biased. As Grzanka (2014) argued, "Intersectionality imagines alternative ways of knowing and doing in the interest of forging efficacious tools for social justice" (p. xix). Given how the field has been emerging and how it has become more institutionalized, many things are being called intersectional without actually engaging in systemic critique (Cho et al., 2013). Dill and Kohlman (2011) have argued that there are actually what they term "weak" and "strong" intersectional analyses. Weak approaches include attention to difference but the methods normalize whiteness. In this way, hegemonic knowledges are reproduced. Strong approaches critique systems of oppression. We encourage qualitative researchers to be attuned to race, class, and gender epistemologies precisely because multiple oppressions shape the individual's lives under study. However, merely including BIPOC or the working poor in your study is not enough. You must go one step further in your analysis and discussion to critique how the identities that you label in your study shape the material lives of your participants. This is something we will return to in different chapters to explain how to do so in all aspects of your research project.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ●——————————

1. What is embodied theory? How does it differ from traditional conceptions of theory? Which version of theory (embodied versus traditional) are you most comfortable with and why?

2. What are the differences among ontology, epistemology, and theory?

3. The authors include a quote from Ahmed (2017): "A citational chain is created around the theory: You become a theorist by citing other theorists that cite other theorists" (p. 8). How has this pattern of citational practices impacted qualitative research? How has it impacted your field?

4. What is the purpose of a theoretical framework? What theoretical framework(s) might you use in your study? In what ways will it shape the study?

5. What are the differences between methodology and method? How will your theoretical framework impact both method and methodology?

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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Sandoval, C. (2000). *Methodology of the oppressed*. University of Minnesota Press.