Meaning and Interpretation in Research:

Nuance, Objectivity and the Ethics of Reason

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub
 https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5735-305X

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

IGI Global
Scientific Publishing
Publishing Tomorrow's Research Today

Table of Contents

Section 1
Consciousness and Intentionality

Section 2
Hermeneutics and Understanding

Section 3
Ethics and Rationality

Section 4
Pragmatism and Participatory Research

Section 5
AI, Participation, and the Subject-Object Divide

Section 6
Interdisciplinarity

Detailed Table of Contents

Section 1
Consciousness and Intentionality

Chapter 1

  Emil Joseph, St. Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru, India
  Muktha Kumar, St. Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru, India

This chapter critically examines the interplay between researcher reflexivity, non-traditional data sources, and ethical considerations in qualitative research. It highlights how reflexivity fosters trust and equity in researcher-participant dynamics, leading to richer data collection and interpretation. The chapter emphasizes the value of integrating artifacts and narratives as innovative data sources that provide deeper insights into participants' lived experiences. Additionally, it addresses the ethical challenges inherent in cross-cultural research, advocating for culturally sensitive methodologies that respect the rights of participants. Ultimately, the chapter calls for a commitment to reflexivity and ethical engagement to enhance the rigor and relevance of qualitative inquiry.

Section 2
Hermeneutics and Understanding

Chapter 2

  Naureen Farhan, Ravensbourne University, London, UK

This chapter examines ethical issues across research methods and frames interpretation itself as an inherently ethical act. Traditional safeguards like informed consent and confidentiality are important yet are insufficient for addressing the moral complexities of meaning-making in research. Drawing on hermeneutic traditions, the chapter introduces 'ethical hermeneutics,' viewing interpretation as shaped by subjectivity, power, and responsibility. It offers a critique of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed

methods, and demonstrates how each approach can embed ethical safeguards into the construction of knowledge, representation of participants, and truth claims. Since interpretation is never neutral, being mediated by the researcher's assumptions, lived experience, and cultural context, the chapter recommends practices such as reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding. These strategies promote accountability, mitigate bias, and more accurately represent participant voices.

Chapter 3

Daniel Oladiran, Ravensbourne University, London, UK

This chapter examines the presumed opposition between nuance and objectivity in qualitative research and argues that the binary is based on outdated positivist assumptions. Drawing on hermeneutic philosophy, particularly the works of Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricœur, the chapter demonstrates that nuance and objectivity can be reconciled through interpretive rigour and ethical responsibility. Hermeneutics reframes objectivity not as detachment, but as a disciplined practice of reflexivity, coherence, and openness to critique. A practical illustration shows how nuanced interpretation can produce findings that are contextually rich yet systematically credible. Objectivity is thus reconceived as an ethics of interpretation, grounded in fairness, transparency, and accountability. The chapter concludes by outlining implications for qualitative methodology, pedagogy, and evaluation, highlighting how a hermeneutic resolution enables researchers to embrace complexity while maintaining credibility and producing knowledge that is both rigorous and practically relevant.

Chapter 4

Christina Kalaitsidou, Liverpool John Moores University, UK & Oryx University, Qatar
Sein Tin, Ravensbourne University, London, UK

For a long time, quantitative research methods have been recognised for their empirical rigour and apparent objectivity, serving as a cornerstone of evidence-based strategy in business management. Yet these methods are not free from the effects of semantic interpretation. This chapter examines lexical semantics—the study of word meanings—and logical semantics—the study of argument meanings—within quantitative research design, implementation, and interpretation. It argues that semantically informed interventions enhance accuracy, consistency, and practical relevance of outcomes. Moreover, attention to semantics reconciles the presumed objectivity of statistical methods with the interpretive sophistication demanded by

business practice. Anchored in theoretical discussion and case studies, the chapter proposes a framework that balances semantic subjectivity with methodological objectivity, equipping scholars and practitioners with tools to strengthen the ethical and substantive reliability of research findings.

Section 3
Ethics and Rationality

Chapter 5

Hassiba Fadli, Anglia Ruskin University, UK
Maryam Khodaviren, Ravensbourne University, London, UK

This chapter reflects on the ethical and methodological challenges that arise when carrying out qualitative research in higher education, particularly from the perspective of a doctoral researcher. It describes how ethics approval, negotiations with gatekeepers, and power relationships can influence the way a study is designed and conducted. Attention is given to strategies that help maintain trust and credibility, such as keeping an audit trail, using triangulation, and engaging participants in meaning-making. Rather than treating interviews as neutral tools, the chapter frames them as spaces where knowledge is co-constructed. Practical lessons are shared, including the value of documenting decisions, being flexible when plans shift, and seeing misalignment as an opportunity for deeper analysis. By combining reflection with methodological guidance, the chapter aims to support doctoral students and higher education scholars as they navigate institutional constraints while safeguarding the credibility and ethical grounding of their research.

Section 4
Pragmatism and Participatory Research

Chapter 6

Chris A. Jones, Ravensbourne University, London, UK

This chapter positions pragmatism as a global, consequence-driven philosophy of inquiry, tracing its evolution from Peirce, James, and Dewey to contemporary mixed-methods, design-based, and participatory research. It outlines pragmatism's core commitments fallibilism, pluralism, and consequentialism and shows how these enable methodological flexibility across complex, real-world settings. Integrating African relational ethics, Caribbean adaptive creativity, Indigenous ecological holism, Asian practical reasoning, and Latin American praxis, the chapter demonstrates pragmatism's resonance across diverse epistemologies. Reframing objectivity as intersubjective accountability and truth as practice-tested belief, it argues that

pragmatism offers a rigorous, socially grounded framework for research amid digital disruption, misinformation, and inequality. Case examples from education, entrepreneurship, management, healthcare, and policy illustrate its applied power. A Pragmatist Researcher's Toolkit is also included for practical applications

This chapter examines the philosophical foundations and methodological benefits of incorporating mixed methods within Participatory Action Research. Mixed methods research combines qualitative insights with quantitative findings, thus providing a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation. While Participatory Action Research involves research participants in all stages of the research process, combining both methods broadens perspectives beyond the scope of any single research methodology. The chapter contributes to the field by helping doctoral researchers who have employed Participatory Action Research and mixed methods in their research understand how to craft and discuss their philosophical stance.

Section 5
AI, Participation, and the Subject-Object Divide

This chapter examines artificial intelligence's (AI's) transformation of the creative industries, particularly the way professionals work, conduct research, and collaborate. Positioned within the broader discussion of Meaning and Interpretation in Research: Nuance, Objectivity, and the Ethics of Reason, it interrogates the interpretive tensions that arise when human creativity intersects with algorithmic systems. The chapter explores AI both as a technical tool and active collaborator whose outputs require critical evaluation, contextual understanding, and ethical scrutiny. With examples from contemporary creative practice it considers how AI can enhance productivity, expand aesthetic possibilities, and support more inclusive and informed research processes. Ultimately, this chapter argues for an ethically grounded, nuanced approach to integrating AI in creative workflows. One that preserves human interpretive agency while using the technological capacities that increasingly shape the cultural landscape.

This chapter examines the challenges to meaning objectivity faced by text-based
researchers. It considers how the subject-object divide interferes with the validity
and reliability of research claims. With a mixed methods approach, the chapter
shows that subjectivity has a significant impact on the meaning and interpretation
of text, and that external influences on subjectivity can be, but are not enough, to
stabilise meaning. It argues that researchers working with words should, as part of
the fundamental research, establish a base line of meaning among their participants.
Taking this approach would enhance research axiology. Accordingly, this chapter
proposes a signification grammatology, the SOPHIC (Subject-Object Participation in
Hermeneutical Interpretation and Conceptualisation) framework, for the instantiation
of participation and ethical reasoning in text-based research. This framework aims
to provoke and stimulate evaluation and legitimation of text-based research claims.

Section 6
Interdisciplinarity

This chapter explores the interpretive potential of spatial data, moving beyond its
traditional technical and cartographic functions to highlight its role in meaning-
making and knowledge creation. By situating spatial data within philosophical debates
on space and place, and examining its connections to cognition, culture, and lived
experience, the chapter demonstrates how spatial methods, such as interpretive GIS,
participatory mapping, and spatial ethnography, illuminate the interplay between
environment, identity, and social dynamics. Positioned as an epistemological bridge,
spatial data links the measurable with the meaningful, integrating quantitative
precision with qualitative depth. Looking ahead, advances in geospatial technologies,
narrative mapping, and participatory approaches open pathways for more inclusive,
transformative, and socially engaged place-based research, with implications for
scholarship, policy, and community empowerment.

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub, Ravensbourne University, London, UK
Augustin Bado, Univesitat Ramon Llull, Spain & Université Saint
Thomas d'Aquin, Burkina Faso

This chapter offers the five philosophical branches as the quintessential paradigms for interdisciplinary research. Specifically, interdisciplinary research seeking a poiesis of sorts. That is, through investigation and study, by bringing new knowledge into existence. In a researcher's chapter, philosophy serves to justify the value and relevance of the study described. In interdisciplinary research, where multiple disciplines tackle often highly complex problems, the identification and subsequent operation within a chosen paradigm can be problematic. Yet, getting it right facilities both the elevation of research quality and the poiesis of research. Mobilising a Gadamerian hermeneutic methodology, this chapter offers a how-to guide to the philosophies that interdisciplinary researchers may want to consider especially with a view to pushing disciplinary boundaries and bringing forth an ecstasis of meaning and interpretation that is transformative.

Preface

Interpretation significantly impacts research validity and reliability and therefore its *meaning*. The word 'meaning' is itself fecund: it generates notions of what is meant (by words, texts, actions), their overt or insinuated senses, importance or worth, and in adjectival form, their intended or indirect expressions. Utterances like, 'What did you mean when you said that?' 'What were s/he/they talking about?' 'I'm not sure I understand.' 'What is that supposed to mean?' are all too familiar indications of the pertinency of interpretation in numerous intersubjective contexts – from learning sessions to work or social settings, from personal to intimate relationships. In research, this pertinence is merely heightened; and precisely because the meaning (worth and value) of the research is fundamentally dependent on the appropriateness of the interpretative lens applied by the researcher.

Meaning and Interpretation in Research: Nuance, Objectivity and the Ethics of Reason serves as an in-depth exploration of the ways in which research claims can be validated or invalidated by approaches to meaning and interpretation during the research process. As a collection of chapters by academics actively engaged in research across a variety of disciplines, the book is intended as a reference guide for doctoral, early to senior career and interdisciplinary researchers wanting to explore new ways of grounding the axiology of their research, the value of knowledge claims, more clearly in their effective, ethical and transparent manoeuvring between nuance and objectivity. In this space where reality is a rationally negotiated conversation between researchers and participants, their objects and subjectivities – conversations often influenced by hermeneutics, philosophically defined paradigms, and AI-powered data analysis software with inherent cultural, racial, and gender biases – researchers' oversight on word usage and semantics become all-important. Consequently, this book may also be used as a textbook and practical guide for both advanced researchers and novice dissertation students who find themselves as captivated as the book's contributors by the immense power and flexibility (consider e.g., contronyms) of words.

Indeed, researchers working in text-based contexts are often stymied and challenged by the fact that word, phrase or syntax meaning, although emerging from an objective shared language system, can often be skewed by the subjective experiences and socio-cultural contexts of the individuals using them. Therefore, that among their responsibilities as researchers is openness to the possible fluidity of meaning and how that fluidity has been mitigated and stabilised within their work. Accordingly, this book lays the foundation for the theoretical exploration of (often philosophical) debates in meaning and interpretation within textual contexts and their implications for researchers wanting to enhance the real-world value of their research.

Contributors, using practical examples relevant to their own fields (e.g., education, science, computing, business management, film; ethics, sustainability, and philosophy) explore and offer guidelines for how to approach nuance and objectivity within research contexts through considerations of consciousness, intentionality, knowledge, and truth as they pertain to qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research. They propose recontextualisations of established frameworks and methodologies and, wanting to contribute more meaningfully, put forward new ones that they call other researchers to test, adapt and refine.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Chapter 1: *Consciousness, Intentionality and the Ethics of Meaning-Making in Qualitative Research* argues that reflexivity and ethical practice and engagement in view of aspects of consciousness and intentionality, aids and enhances the relevance of qualitative research, especially with regards to its capacity for meaning-making.

Chapter 2: *The Ethics of Understanding: Selecting a Research Methodology in Social Sciences* offers a reconceptualization of both objectivity and hermeneutics. With emphasis on ethical and responsible practice, the argument is that by increasing transparency over the biases and assumptions that might hinder interpretative neutrality, researchers move more stridently towards objectivity.

Chapter 3: *Rethinking Nuance and Objectivity in Qualitative Research: A Hermeneutic Resolution* offers arguments against the notion that nuance and objectivity are dichotomous and opposed. Seeing them as reconcilable, the argument presented is that knowledge can be rigorously obtained through an appropriately founded hermeneutic that utilises and understands their interdependence.

Chapter 4: *Exploring the Role of Lexical and Logical Semantics in Quantitative Research within Business Management* tackles the complex field of lexical and logical semantics and its relevance for business management research. The nuance-objectivity opposition is again called into question and, in light of case study explorations, a reframing of both is proposed.

Chapter 5: *Ethics, Power, and Data Validity in Management Education Research: A Practical Guide for HE Scholars* offers a first-person perspective on the doctoral research process with reference to the hegemonic dynamics between students, doctoral researchers, and gatekeepers/supervisors. Its personal reflections and subsequent analyses cohere into a guide for those researching or supervising research in management education.

Chapter 6: *Pragmatism as Practical Philosophy* presents a comprehensive and expansive overview of pragmatism and its utility in mixed methods research. Mobilising global epistemologies – from Africa, Caribbean, Indigenous groups, Asia, and Latin America – the chapter argues for pragmatism's enduring resonance for applied and practical research especially in the fields of education and entrepreneurism.

Chapter 7: *Philosophical Considerations in Combining Mixed Methods and Participatory Action Research* operates within participatory action research and, in this context, offers doctoral researchers a guide to the ontological and epistemological vicissitudes that they should be aware of when deciding on qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approaches, particularly as they make clear or muddy the meaning drawn from the research.

Chapter 8: *AI in the Creative Industries: Enhancing Work, Research and Collaboration* offers a review and critique of the use of AI within the creative industries. It calls for greater judiciousness in AI use within creative industries: these typically being so roused and reliant on the human experience. The chapter proposes a hybrid form of human-AI collaboration that responsibly recognizes and mitigates the Western/Eurocentric biases in AI outputs.

Chapter 9: *Participation and Ethical Reasoning in Text-Based Research: Crossing the Great Subject-Object Divide from Interpretation to Meaning* brings the above debates squarely into text-based contexts by examining how ethical reasoning, applied to the use and cognitive processing of words during research, enhances research axiology. The chapter instantiates a signification grammatology (the SOPHIC-framework) for subject-object participation that is predicated on empirical findings and on cohered characteristics from key literature on the interpretative process.

Chapter 10: *From Coordinates to Consciousness: The Interpretive Power of Spatial Data in Research* is a philosophically led examination of spatial data's hermeneutical and knowledge creation capacities. It argues, via lived experience, culture and cognition, that spatial methods can be illuminatory approaches to the interplay between environment, identity and social dynamics.

Chapter 11: Following the above explorations of the usefulness of philosophical theories *Poiesis and the Emergence of New Knowledge: Pushing Paradigmatical Boundaries for Interdisciplinary Research* goes a step further to propose all five philosophical fields as the appropriate paradigm for interdisciplinary text-based research. With reference to hypothetical interdisciplinary research on sustainability in

Africa, the chapter also offers *poeisis* as the all-encapsulating evaluative tool for research outcomes, and specifically in terms of the research's ability to bring forth an *ecstasis* of meaning and interpretation that is transformative.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the book's key features and therefore its contributions, are in its:

Thematic Organisation: The book's structure is useful for doctoral students and early career researchers who might be less familiar with research's rootedness in philosophy. The book begins with the abstract and highly complex notions of consciousness and intentionality and their implications for researchers' knowledge and meaning-making/discovery. It progresses to researchers' ethical responsibilities in pursuit of 'objective' (viz. shared and/or reasonably validated or evidenced) understanding and meaning. It then considers these themes in light of doctoral dissertations or research reports before progressing onto explorations of meaning and interpretation in view of paradigmatic shifts, assumptions and/or established methodological approaches. Finally, the book offers new considerations of research value in interdisciplinary contexts after first critiquing perceptions of the objectivity of AI-powered knowledge and meaning and offering suggestions for human oversight in creative collaborations with AI/inanimate unembodied tools, and new ways of evaluating and validating research claims in view of the existence of human and machine biases in knowledge production. Importantly, these themes are, and should be understood as, interrelated not mutually exclusive.

Global/International Perspectives: The book offers a diverse perspective and should therefore be appealing to a global audience. Its seventeen contributors are from a combined ten academic institutions across eight countries. Their contributions are contextualised to the wide-ranging fields mentioned above. As such the book constitutes variety and diversity of perspectives on meaning and interpretation. Nonetheless, and what is most interesting, is that while there are the stated differences, there are clear agreements in the debates that contributors consider pertinent. The more prominent and recurring one being the need for a reconceptualization of both nuance and objectivity. These notions, contributors appear to agree, need not be diametrically opposed: indeed, the one informs, illuminates, mediates, and even facilitates the other. However, the fact that geographically dispersed contributors agreed on this aspect is itself a testament to the possibility of observable aspects to a world that is shared even if complex; that simultaneously does not always 'give' itself; a world that is also in many ways unobservable.

Practical Examples: Contributors offer real-world practical illustrations, case study instantiations, frameworks, guides, and toolkits for researchers also attuned to

the book's themes and concerns. Such offerings alongside proposals for new frameworks and new ways of conceiving meaning and interpretation in research, should enable researchers (established or otherwise, discipline-focused or interdisciplinary) to utilise the book as either a textbook or reference guide, especially because of its careful explication of the myriad philosophies that can animate, legitimate and push (text-based or other) research across and beyond restrictive frontiers.

Interdisciplinary: The above areas highlight and cement this book as inherently interdisciplinary. Many contributors have valiantly engaged with wide-ranging philosophically-rooted ideas. They have done so because these ideas enable them to effectively address the implications of the subject-object problem – e.g., how to limit or control equivocality and indeterminacy - in meaning, interpretation, and ethical conduct in research contexts. Accordingly, the book is truly a love-letter to the enduring usefulness of the humanities: specifically, philosophy and its capacity for provoking criticality and new thinking on contemporary issues despite the perennialism of many of its concepts and its deference to thinkers who have long passed; yet whose corpuses continue to enlighten and inspire those working in fields that valorise state of the art.

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub

Acknowledgement

Editorial Advisory Board

Section 1
Consciousness and Intentionality

Chapter 1
Consciousness, Intentionality, and the Ethics of Meaning–Making in Qualitative Research

Emil Joseph

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0479-6929

St. Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru, India

Muktha Kumar

iD https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5882-354X

St. Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter critically examines the interplay between researcher reflexivity, non-traditional data sources, and ethical considerations in qualitative research. It highlights how reflexivity fosters trust and equity in researcher-participant dynamics, leading to richer data collection and interpretation. The chapter emphasizes the value of integrating artifacts and narratives as innovative data sources that provide deeper insights into participants' lived experiences. Additionally, it addresses the ethical challenges inherent in cross-cultural research, advocating for culturally sensitive methodologies that respect the rights of participants. Ultimately, the chapter calls for a commitment to reflexivity and ethical engagement to enhance the rigor and relevance of qualitative inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

In qualitative research, the themes of consciousness and intentionality have been of fundamental importance for the process of interpretation and meaning-making. This chapter, "Consciousness, Intentionality, and the Ethics of Meaning-Making in Qualitative Research," explores the interaction of these three concepts and, drawing on this, examines the ethical implications of qualitative research. The goal here is to resist the dominant postmodern perspective that suggests that one's subjectivity contaminates the objectivity of research. However, it is maintained that intentionality, being understood as a principled, ethical attention to data, can help rather than inhibit quality in qualitative interpretations. This view is consistent with philosophical traditions that revolve around the need for researcher reflexivity and ethical argument to provide evidence of valid qualitative work (Chen et al., 2024).

Intentionality and consciousness in the construction of meaning-making processes in qualitative research are the focus of this chapter. It makes an important distinction between meaning finding, which involves identifying existing structures in the data, and meaning imposition, where the researcher imposes their interpretation on the data. This is crucial for understanding the effects of subjectivity in research. By promoting an ethical hermeneutic, the chapter seeks to strike a balance between the discipline of rationality and the subjectivity of researchers, thereby prioritising ethical interpretation over interpretive approaches.

In addition, the chapter examines the primary criticisms of the subjectivist-objectivist dichotomy in relation to qualitative research. Critics have also trivialised qualitative results as "merely subjective," as being researcher-biased. However, that ability is value-laden: it is not an abstract epistemological shortcoming if individuals have subjectivity; instead, subjectivity is an indispensable, structured form of interaction that every interpreting subject must have. Philosophers such as Husserl, with the concept of phenomenological reduction, and Gadamer, through the concept of fusion of horizons, demonstrate that consciousness acts as a mediating arm in comprehending and interpreting qualitative data (Joseph, E. 2025).

The ethical implications of 'intentionality' are also considered, along with some methodological devices for enhancing the interpretive soundness and resisting the extremes of relativism and absolutism. This is important as it moves qualitative research out of the realms of invalid knowledge production and into a context that privileges intersubjectivity and epistemic rigour. In conclusion, by shifting the centre of focus and the oppositions of consciousness and intentionality in qualitative research, new and different ways of making contributions contribute to the rigour of the research and the ethical grounding of research practice (Sonck-Rautio et al., 2024).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS, INTENTIONALITY, AND ETHICAL MEANING-MAKING IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The need to engage with a nuanced understanding of consciousness and intentionality in qualitative research has become ever more important in current academic discussions. The increasing popularity of qualitative designs among various disciplines, and the simultaneous expectation of research rigour and credibility, have left researchers in a quandary about how to combine subjective experience with scientific knowledge claims effectively (Riedler et al., 2025) . Traditionally, the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity has led to the dismissal of qualitative research as unscientific, although it appears that such a dichotomy is too simplistic. By integrating consciousness and intentionality as integral to the research process, scholars can offer an expansive frame that reflects the rich complexity of human life, with methodological rigour.

What makes this work interesting is that it may inform and further develop the ethical dimension of qualitative inquiry. While engaging in the lived experience of participants, researchers need to engage their interpretations with a reflexive knowledge of their assumptions and presuppositions. Intentionality, as an ethical engagement with data, fosters a greater appreciation for participant voices and supports a shared construction of meaning. This method not only contributes to a qualitative interpretation of findings but is also an ethical approach, allowing the participant's voice to remain strong within the research. By recognising that consciousness and intentionality are inherent in qualitative inquiry, researchers are prompted to deliver even more in-depth insights, yet maintain the ethical rigour required of true and authentic scholarship (Shannonhouse et al., 2024).

THE SUBJECTIVITY-OBJECTIVITY DEBATE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The subjective-objective divide has long defined the field of qualitative research, often obscuring the fertile possibilities presented by qualitative methods. Qualitative results are often dismissed as "what appear to be subjective representations" with critics arguing that the interpretive bias of researchers contaminates their findings. Such a view not only "reduces" the philosophical aspects of qualitative research to manageable, simplistic forms, but also takes for granted the systematic character of subjectivity as a vehicle in doing research. This chapter seeks to challenge the

notion that subjectivity is an epistemological weakness, instead arguing that it is an essential component in illuminating human experience.

The relevance of recognising subjectivity as a resource rather than an obstacle has also been brought to the fore recently. For example, qualitative scholars such as further assert that the identity, lived experiences, and position of the researcher can enhance the research encounter, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding and interpretation. This view is supported by the two philosophers Husserl's phenomenological reduction and Gadamer's merging of horizons, in which consciousness is not thought to be a distorting filter but an essential function in interpretation. By attending to consciousness and intentionality in qualitative research, researchers can foster a deeper understanding of the process of meaning-making and its interpretation.

Consciousness and Intentionality in Research

In Husserl's phenomenological reduction, it is crucial to set aside presuppositions and become open to investigating the data. It promotes a reflexive consideration of biases and assumptions, ultimately strengthening the validity of the findings. Within this, consciousness operates as a technique that can actually encourage closer reading of data to reveal its more profound meanings. Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology also contributes to this perspective by emphasising the merger of horizons, in which the researcher's perception and that of the participant's come together as a means of achieving a deeper understanding of the topic (Ahmadi et al., 2022).

This distinction between meaning-finding and meaning-making is central to this discussion. In making you mean: the objectivizing mode: This is the process in which researchers try to find inherent meaning in the data; In making meaning: the subjectivising mode: This is where researchers actively place meaning. Such a twoness begs questions of the knowledge-value in qualitative research: can one really 'find' meaning in it, or does one always already 'make' it? There is increasing evidence that the two processes are inextricably linked, as they form a dialogue between the researcher and the data, informed by their backgrounds and previous experiences.

Ethical Implications of Subjectivity

The moral implications of accepting subjectivity are significant. As scientists navigate the complexities of human experience, they should remain vigilant about the ethical implications of their interpretations. Reflexivity then becomes a methodological necessity, requiring researchers to consider their positionality and influence in the research process. This reflexive approach not only enhances the interpretative

trustworthiness of qualitative results but also aligns with ethical research strategies that value participants' own accounts and perspectives.

Furthermore, the application of a speech act theory model in qualitative research provides a framework for considering the ethics of representation. By acknowledging that language does not merely represent but also constructs reality, scholars can approach their readings more critically. This view emphasises the importance of ethical attention, with researchers being mindful of the implications of their research for participants and communities.

Toward a Responsible Hermeneutic

As a conclusion, it is axiomatic that dislodging subjectivity from its status as a contaminant and recognising it as an organised, ethical engagement alters the qualitative research landscape incontrovertibly. By defending a disciplined objectivity, qualitative inquiry can be restored as a rigorous truth-seeking enterprise. This chapter argues that disciplined, ethical consciousness, far from distorting meaning, makes it possible for us to interpret responsibly. As qualitative researchers further investigate the layers of human experience, the integration of the subjectivity and objectivity duality offers the potential for a more complex and meaningful knowledge that enriches both academic knowledge and social life (Truijens et al., 2023).

THE CRISIS OF INTERPRETATION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The crisis of representation in qualitative research has been the subject of much debate, however, particularly in the wake of postmodern criticisms of hegemonic concepts of objectivity and truth. These criticisms suggest that qualitative inquiry is inherently subjective, reducing its value to personal bias rather than a legitimate source of knowledge about the way our social world operates. However, phenomenological apologists have an opposing position which underlines the constitutive importance of consciousness in shaping comprehension and meaning. Through references to such figures, this discussion makes a point about how intentionality and reflexivity inform qualitative inquiry, intended partly as the idea that subjectivity can be strategically used rather than regarded as a restriction.

Postmodern scepticism, however, is oftentimes a stance toward objective knowledge claims that "they are pure conventions of language and should not be interpreted as discoveries about the world". This view is consistent with the argument that researchers have their own interpretive accounts of data and can never be objective. Such criticisms highlight the struggle to achieve objectivity, raising doubts about the 'truth' associated with the outcomes produced by qualitative methods. However,

phenomenology offers a nuanced response, suggesting that consciousness is not merely a distorting lens but also the necessary medium through which meaning is generated. The notion of phenomenological reduction, i.e., the act of bracketing all predisposed meanings and interpretations, enables us to approach the data in a way that is focused on the participants' lived experiences. This bracketing process does not eliminate subjectivity, but rather it recognises, handles and uses it to deepen understanding (Joseph, E. 2025).

Furthermore, Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy emphasises the merging of horizons, that is, the intersection of the research participant's and the researcher's horizons of understanding. This interplay is essential in understanding the content within qualitative data. By acknowledging that interpretation is a joint activity, scientists can form richer understandings of the meaning that underlies the phenomenon being investigated. It is in the interview talk between the researcher and the participants that the meaning of the content will be intensively investigated, indicating that subjective aspects can actually add value to qualitative research. This view of life is also underpinned by Ricoeur's theory of narrative identity, which suggests that individuals develop an understanding of themselves through stories; therefore, any researcher's interpretation of participants' narratives is informed by (Narayanan et al., 2022).

The 'consciousness' referred to here is not limited to, and is unable by itself to involve only a recognition of bias; it also involves a responsibility to an ethical level of engagement with participants' stories. Authors have an ethical responsibility to be aware of their positionality so that their identities, experiences, and perspectives are transparent throughout the research process. The importance of this recognition for achieving a trusted and transparent, evidence-based approach that generates richer, more nuanced findings is crucial in qualitative research, particularly in terms of presentation and interpretation.: Researchers can make their positionality explicit, which may encourage reflection on how their history informs their interpretations, thereby increasing the credibility of the findings.

Another important ethical stance is having an iterative reflexivity process, as proposed in Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory. Reflexivity is an ongoing process of critically evaluating how a researcher's preconceptions and experiences shape her interpretations. This recursive process serves to add depth to our analysis, as well as to meet ethical considerations that prioritise the voices of study participants. As they reflexively consider their evolving understanding, they adjust their approach and interpretation of data in ways that keep them responsive to the nuances of the data.

The dichotomy between immanent meaning—the meaning inherent in the data—and imposed meaning—the meaning imposed by the researcher — further serves to highlight the ethical nature of qualitative research. Those that emerge

organically from the data are called immanent meanings; those that are derived from our biases and perspective are called imposed meanings. This differentiation is important to the preservation of qualitative research. Researchers should work on shedding light on the meanings carried in the data, while maintaining that it is they themselves who interpret it. This dual awareness enables a richer, more ethically sensitive qualitative inquiry.

The dialectic of meaning-finding and meaning-making lies at the heart of this conversation. Critics of qualitative methodologies argue that researchers can never truly discover meaning; instead, they create (through interpretation) the meaning they attribute to it . This standpoint has profound implications for the concept of knowledge in qualitative research. Is it actually possible for researchers to distinguish real intrinsic meanings of data as opposed to having to filter all interpretations through the researchers' subjective scope? The chapter argues that these two processes are interwoven. As researchers, we engage in meaning discovery by recognising patterns and themes in the data, and also in meaning-making by using interpretive frameworks. The two-way relationship implies that bias is not just a 'problem' in qualitative research but a dynamic and complex endeavour of sense-making (Spezzacatena et al., 2024).

The stakes of these discussions are great. Scientists must navigate the complex landscape of interpretation, establishing standards of ethical reasoning . In the wake of the researcher's pragmatic idealism, the chapter argues that in qualitative research, truthfulness is the question; it is not a matter of denying subjectivity, but of regulating it through ethical conduct. This entails the clarity of one's position, positions that are put on the rack through what refers to as dialectical justification by holding the various interpretations up to scrutiny with alternative readings, and, in addition, putative findings under the glare of community validation (peer and participatory critique). These approaches themselves provide a stronger interpretation of the data, while also respecting ethical considerations.

The theoretical framework of speech-act theory, incorporated into qualitative research, also sheds light on the ethics of representation. Language does not just describe reality; it constructs it. Whether researchers can truly choose not to play the game depends on their awareness of the kinds of power in language and representation that require attention. By being aware of these, they can at least play the game in an informed manner. This consciousness compels researchers to think more critically about the implications of their interpretations for participants and communities, thereby contributing to a more ethical and socially responsible research practice.

In this sense, the crisis of interpretation in qualitative research necessitates a reconsideration of the role of subjectivity and consciousness. Postmodernity's criticisms focus on these tensions regarding objectivity, whereas phenomenology's defences emphasise the possibilities for intentionality and reflexivity to be produc-

tive in qualitative inquiry. By conceptualising subjectivity as an organised, ethical involvement, rather than contamination, qualitative researchers can re-colonise their research as itself a vigorous project to make an illuminating sense of the complexities of experience. In the sense of this chapter, consciousness so disciplined is not alien to meaning but makes its responsible interpretation possible. With a commitment to reflexive, transparent, and ethical stances, qualitative researchers can navigate interpretation challenges and make meaningful contributions to human understanding of the social world(Frei-Landau et al., 2023).

In the ongoing development of qualitative research, incorporating this method of interpretation will be crucial in advancing the understanding of phenomena in social science research. From this perspective, the chapter reiterates the crucial role of intentionality and ethical interpretation in qualitative research, encouraging researchers to be active, conscientized readers of data and to approach their tasks as interpreters responsibly and with integrity. In this way, qualitative researchers can make a substantial contribution to discourse on the nature of knowledge and the place of interpretation in making sense of the world.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND INTENTIONALITY: HUSSERL TO RICOEUR

The discussion of consciousness and intentionality provides sensitivity to the qualitative research methods. Central to this discussion is the concept of phenomenological reduction, which involves suspending assumptions. This is a methodological requirement for researchers who genuinely engage with their participants' lives. Through temporarily suspending pre-understanding and prejudices, researchers have access to understandings that become immanent in the data, and this gives rise to a highly true-to-life understanding of subjects' experiences. This process of bracketing does not imply the removal of oneself from one's own consciousness, but rather encourages disciplined interaction with the data, where researchers acknowledge their biases while attempting to interpret the experiences presented to them (Joseph. E, 2025).

Husserl's phenomenological reduction forms the 'cornerstone' in this line of work, insofar as it is a method that leads investigators to explicitly focus on the essence of phenomena as experienced by persons. By this simplification, then, the scientists can isolate the deliberate activities of consciousness—how human beings focus their thoughts on their objects of experience. This intentionality is an active engagement with the real, constructing knowledge rather than just mirroring it. The implementation of phenomenological reduction by researchers involves a profound immersion in the data, providing comprehensive attention and a critical examination

of one's own premises or beliefs, thereby building a platform on which to reveal the voice of the other in clearer terms. Reflexivity has recently emerged in qualitative literature, with calls for researchers to consider how their own positionality influences the research process (Popa et al., 2022).

With the application of the hermeneutic circle in moving from phenomenology to hermeneutics, dependence for iteration of understanding has been adduced. Turning to levels of engaging with a text or data suggests that the process of comprehension is cyclical, rather than linear, with the interpreter repeatedly travelling between parts and the whole. This feedback loop illustrates that understanding is a product of comparing preconceptions with the new ideas learned from confronting the information. Researchers need to move back and forth between their initial readings and the meanings generated during data processing, being aware that each time they encounter the data, they may find new interpretations. As this conversation continues, we come to an ever-greater unfolding, respectful of the subtleties of the human condition.

The cyclical process of interpretive understanding underscores the significance of context in qualitative inquiry. Every stratum of interpretation deepens the analysis, metaphorically allowing the researchers to weave tales that represent the complexity of human existence. This argument is consistent with view on narrative identity, in which we are narrative selves, as we construct ourselves through the stories we tell. This framework enables researchers to comprehend how historical, cultural, and situational factors impact the experiences of participants and the researchers' interpretations.

In qualitative research, the interplay between meaning-discovery and meaning-making is essential. Critics frequently argue that qualitative researchers can never truly 'find' meaning because any interpretation is ultimately grounded in the researcher's lens . This criticism implies that qualitative research is constructivist in nature and that the researcher's position cannot be considered "value-free" or objective, as the research is more qualitative in its meaning rather than in uncovering meaning. However, it is also crucial to recognise that such a binary distinction oversimplifies the complexities of qualitative research. Certainly, researchers interpret the data within the context of their frameworks of understanding; however, patterns and themes in the data can also emerge. The difficulty lies in finding a balance between these two processes, so that interpretations are still grounded in the participants' experiences while also incorporating the researchers' analytical input.

To overcome this difficulty, this article suggests embracing an ethical hermeneutics, a method that can mitigate the subjective aspect of the researcher by aligning it with disciplined rationality. Building on the pragmatic idealism of the chapter, it argues that validity in qualitative inquiry should not aim to banish subjectivity, but rather to control it through ethical reasoning. It consists of several moving parts:

transparency, dialectical justification, and communal validation. Transparency demands that researchers make their standpoint explicit and acknowledge that their identities and experience influence how they interpret. Dialectical justification hints at trial interpretations against counter-readings of a text and thereby makes a reference to the data fruitful. Collective validation emphasises the importance of peer and participant criticism in securing findings that are scrutinised and improved through collaborative means (Sokhi et al., 2021).

The ethics of interpretation spread into language and depiction. explains in his speech-act theory that language is not just a tool for communicating but a force that constructs reality. In qualitative research, 'for a researcher to address the power relations at stake in language' and 'to think about how the interpretations they have in relation to participants and communities they work with might have implications and consequences' are paramount. Through involvement with speech acts, researchers may become more aware of the ways they frame their interpretations of what participants do, initiating a consciousness-raising process around how narratives about participants are constructed and thus promoting more responsible and ethical research. As qualitative inquiry develops, agreeing that understanding is an iterative process will be a critical step in knowledge development in the social sciences. Active and reflective engagement with their data is recommended as a means to remind researchers that their analyses are partial co-productions, in the sense that meaning-making is an intentional and co-constructed process. Not only does this open engagement serve to enhance the results, but it also adheres to the ethical obligations inherent in qualitative research, whereby participants' voices are respected and the complexity of their experiences is carefully depicted (Pendergast et al., 2021).

THE IMPACT OF RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY ON DATA INTERPRETATION

The effect of the researcher's reflexivity on data interpretation is a crucial aspect of examining qualitative research, highlighting that a researcher's reflection on their own biases, assumptions, and position in relation to the topic influences the evaluation of qualitative data. Reflexivity requires researchers to think actively and continuously about how their backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences shape their interpretation and analysis of the data they gather. This reflexivity is necessary to enhance the credibility of the findings and ensure that interpretations align with the participants' reality. In recent qualitative studies, reflexivity is more likely to be treated as a methodological preference rather than an afterthought. For example, researchers are advised to keep a reflexive journal during the research, writing down

thoughts about how their identity and life history could shape their interpretation of data. It not only contributes to transparency but also provides opportunities for more immersive engagements with the material and for the researchers to reflect on any biases that might cloud their findings.

Researcher positionality has been identified as an influential factor in the production of qualitative findings in recent studies. For instance, an exploration of lesbian and gay participants' stories of being stigmatised and oppressed elucidated how the researchers' own identity – including class status – guided their readings of participants' narratives (Butler et al. Similarities in the researchers' backgrounds to those of the study participants also appeared to connect the researchers to the experiences being shared, encouraging deeper interpretations. Conversely, they believe that people who have not shared similar experiences may never fully understand the nuances of the participants' stories, resulting in interpretations that might inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or misconstrue the realities of the participants. Given this, researchers must reflexively negotiate their positionality and understand its implications for their data collection, to ensure that they appropriately sensitise their findings. Otherwise, a disjuncture may emerge between what researchers understand and what participants experience (Prochner et al., 2022).

Furthermore, reflexivity can be employed to enhance the ethical constraints of qualitative research. By recognising their biases and possible power dynamics between the researcher and participant, researchers can attempt to mitigate the influence of these issues on their interpretations. Ethical reflexivity enables researchers to maintain a continuous conversation with their participants, acknowledging their interpretations and eliciting feedback that may challenge or refine them. Such back-and-forth negotiations not only enhance the analysis but also create a more collaborative research context, wherein participants come to feel that their voices are being reciprocally honoured. In other words, this kind of engagement with participants not only enhances the ethical standards of the study but also acknowledges that human experiences are complex, and is congruent with the contemporary emphasis on participatory approaches to qualitative inquiry that underpin the co-generation of knowledge.

Moreover, the interplay of objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative research necessitates a nuanced understanding of how reflexivity enhances the analysis of data. Opponents of qualitative remarks usually emphasise the defeat this type of subjectivity wreaks on the validity of the findings. However, advocates believe that acknowledging subjectivity through reflexivity can lend interpretive credibility to qualitative research. This view corresponds with the one presented, and the interpretive act is a dialogical conversation between the researcher and the data, mediated through the researcher's consciousness and their life history experiences. By situating oneself in the research context and being sensitive to the interpretive

background of researchers, one can produce valid findings that are closely related to the participants' world.

In summary, the researcher's influence on the interpretation of the data is significant and represents a complex issue. The credibility and richness of qualitative findings can be enhanced through the researcher's critical reflection on their biases, positionality, and the ethical implications of their interpretations. Reflexivity is not simply a matter of methodological requirement but central to the practice of more engaged and meaningful encounters with those we work with and who speak to us. As qualitative inquiry advances, the incorporation of reflexivity into the research process will become increasingly critical for generating interpretations that are both ethically sound and reflective of the intricacies of human experience (Thelwall et al., 2024).

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN SHAPING MEANING

The issue of language and meaning is a fundamental one in qualitative research—a question that underpins the processes of analysis, representation and communication. The language is not only used as a means of communication, but it also acts as a dynamic tool for developing and negotiating meaning. This interpretation aligns with the claim that language is intrinsically performative, as posited in speech-act theory, which posits that utterances not only represent reality but also act upon it by shaping how meaning is produced and interpreted. In qualitative explorations, the language employed by researchers and participants alike is instrumental in constructing and subtending narratives, identities, and complex emotional and situational nuances. Thus, researchers who strive to portray the lived experiences of participants accurately must consider the relationship between language and meaning (Steccolini et al., 2023).

Additionally, the language-meaning relationship is encoded in second-level constitutive rules, which are enacted in the researchers' interpretive activities. The interpretation process is not simply a passive reception of data; it is an active construction of meaning, and inevitably reflects the linguist's own language and culture. This tension is pertinent to misinterpretation or bias in qualitative research. For example, the meaning in participants' own stories can be twisted by the impositions of the researchers' categories of understanding. To address this risk, it is proposed that researchers adopt a reflexive approach to critically reflect on their own discourse and the impact of language on their interpretations. By reflecting on their positionality and the linguistic ideologies that may have influenced their interpretations, researchers can strive to achieve interpretations that are closer to what participants intended to convey, thereby contributing to the general validity.

Finally, attending to the language of meaning-making also highlights the ethical dimensions of representation in qualitative research. Stories told in a language not only influence, but also reflect how a story is made in public. Interpreters are thus faced with the ethical import of the choices inherent in their interpretations. This entails an awareness of how their language can uplift or disenfranchise participants, particularly in research with marginalised groups. Research ethics require researchers to give careful consideration to how they represent the voices and experiences of participants, being sensitive to the language used to do justice to the intricacies and subtleties of these narratives. By bringing the ethical aspects of language to the forefront in research, scholars can promote more responsible and ethical qualitative practices and work to craft a more inclusive portrayal of diverse experiences (Thelwall et al., 2025).

In summary, language plays a complex and pivotal role in the construction of meaning, a role that deserves considerable attention within qualitative research. Language acts as a filter for meaning creation, shaping the interpretative tools used by researchers. By identifying the inseparable interaction of language and meaning, researchers can obtain valid results that reflect ethical concerns in representing the participants' stories. Ultimately, considering language in this manner not only informs the analysis of participant contributions but also fosters an appreciation for the nuanced nature of human experience (Rahal et al., 2023).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN INTERPRETIVE RESEARCH

Ethical considerations pervade all aspects of qualitative research, and this is particularly true as it pertains to interpretive processes that influence the construction of participants' voices and experiences. Ethical debates often arise in power-relational situations where the researcher plays a significant role and has, in some sense, control over the narrative-making process. This raised some very important questions about who gets to speak and how their stories are told. Researchers are faced with the delicate balance between their interpretive privilege and the ethical obligation to reflect participants' points of view accurately. Ethical concerns extend not only to issues of informed consent but also to our commitment to participants, both now and in the future, and the broader social implications of research findings on those studied.

Recent critical reflection highlights the importance of an ethical hermeneutic perspective that involves reflection and critical consciousness in the interpretive process. This approach acknowledges that interpretation is not neutral, but rather has been influenced by the cultural, social, and political frameworks within which both researchers and participants operate. For example, propose that a particular ethical

interpretive practice is achieved by reminding researchers of their positionality and the power-asymmetrical contexts of qualitative research. Such awareness includes critically reflecting on one's own biases, assumptions, and possible outcomes for data interpretation. Through reflexive action, researchers can negotiate a more equitable space for participants to retain control of their narratives (Inglis et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the representation effects are also relevant to the language of research. The language used to describe how participants experience participation can either privilege or disempower them. It can shape how members of the broader community perceive and discuss other community members and their achievements. For instance, a study that examines the experiences of marginalised communities in the language of research reports can contribute to stigmatisation and reinforce negative stereotypes if not managed adeptly. Consequently, researchers must be mindful of the language they use, considering the power it may convey and its implications for the participants. That responsibility implies a commitment to using ethical language in depicting participants with the dignity and complexity they deserve.

Transparency in the research enterprise is paramount. In interpretivist research, ethical issues also focus on the introduction of the research, the methodologies and possible consequences. Researchers should allow participants to read and comment on their narratives, promoting such collaboration in recognition of the co-constructed nature of understanding. They serve as a way to help maintain the validity of our work and promote ethical conduct in interviewing/consulting practices, reminding us to show respect for participants' voices and preserve their experiences and stories.

In summary, ethical issues in qualitative research are multi-layered and a vital aspect of the reliability of qualitative research. Through reflexivity, critical consciousness, and ethical language, researchers can work through power and representation to cultivate methodological justice, ultimately leading to a more equitable approach to conducting qualitative research. As the discipline evolves, ethical interpretive work will remain foundational to creating findings that accurately reflect the complexity of lived experiences and adhere to the ethical obligations of qualitative inquiry.

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE NARRATIVES

The relationship between particular and general narrative is a complex matter reflecting the dynamism between individual stories and the panoramic social background in which they are situated. Personal Narratives Personal narratives stem from the individual's experiences, emotions, and identity, whereas collective narratives are based on cultural, historical, and social dimensions. This interchange is critical to understanding how people interact with their communities, how shared values can

shape personal identity, and how each of those narratives can evolve and change over time. Through this analysis, we can gain insight into how meaning is constructed and contested in practice and what implications this may have for qualitative researchers and other scholars of human behaviour.

At its essence, personal stories reflect the personal experiences and viewpoints of the storyteller. Here, stories serve as a form of self-expression that enables individuals to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the construction of a narrative. Everyone's experience is grounded in their identity – such as their race, gender, and socio-economic status, but also their unique story. Such accounts are never just pure autobiographical stories, but are also shaped by other stories circulating at the time when the speaker is telling their tale. For example, a person's narrative about discrimination may be profoundly rooted in larger discourses of race, privilege, injustice, and other related issues. This interaction illustrates how personal narratives are often collective fables, in which individuals utilise the shared language and symbols of culture to shape their stories (Liu et al., 2023).

The reverse is also true: shared narratives determine what kind of stories we tell about ourselves. These are "Stories" as they are born of shared experiences and collective memory, and frequently shape the values, norms, and belief systems of an individual group or society. Shared narratives can also emerge through various media, including cultural traditions, legends, history, and the media. They provide an environment through which individual myths can be understood and interpreted. For instance, the national compendium of the American Dream informs personal aspirations and identities and is a factor in how people assess their winners and losers. People can also internalise these stories or make up their own to fit into societal expectations and standards. Thus, collective storylines function as a frame through which personal experiences are interpreted, shaping individual life meaning.

The relationship between individual autobiographical and collective stories becomes especially evident in situations of social transformation or crisis. Both Discourse and Self 87 In times like these, the shared stories people tell themselves about themselves may change, causing personal stories to be refigured in light of transforming notions of society. For instance, with the rise of social movements for racial and gender equality, many people have been reflecting on how they have experienced such injustices in the world, as well as their role in it. This process may also result in individuals re-narrating their stories as they attempt to make sense of their experiences when placed in the context of the struggle. In particular, narratives from minorities are frequently heard at this time, as they come together to affirm their identities and demand recognition. Thus, collective action can have an impact not only on the people involved but also on the possibility of reshaping dominant narratives to create new sites for discourse and understanding (Joseph E. 2023).

Additionally, the relationship between personal and communal narratives has significant implications for understanding agency and identity. On the one hand, collective stories are pregnant with a sense of belonging and shared identity. However, on the other hand, they can become an albatross around the neck of individual expression. People might feel they have to align with collective narratives, and if that does not line up with who they are, you get cognitive dissonance. This tension is everywhere, from cultural identity in which individuals must negotiate what the community expects of them, in order to remain themselves. The management of this tension can develop into a 'choreography' of narratives in which the 'I' and the 'we' can merge in complex ways and where this can be a place of assertion against the personified emergence of 'both' thus contributing both to an enhancement and a possibility.

To capture the complexity of human experiences and behaviours, it is important to understand the dynamics of individual vs. collective narratives in the context of qualitative research. Researchers need to understand that individual stories are embedded in a wider social and cultural backdrop. This realisation requires a reflexive stance, inviting researchers to reflect on how their positionality acts as a lens through which they make sense of the narratives. Recognising the dialectic between personal and collective accounts enables researchers to frame more complex analyses around how participants' experiences and attributions resonate with one another. This is consistent with current qualitative approaches that focus on knowledge co-constructed, thereby opening up to more participatory research.

Furthermore, the interaction between stories is relevant for therapeutic and educational purposes. In therapy with a well-educated body person, knowing the meaning behind metaphoric tales can ease healing and empowerment. By prompting clients to consider how their personal stories align with the larger cultural narratives, therapists can facilitate cognitive-emotional restructuring and a transformative kind of reauthoring that is empowering. Likewise, in educational settings, an awareness of the intertwining of personal and collective stories can support students in developing critical thinking and increased social awareness. Participating with multiple narratives can contest monolithic gazes as well as permit students to think about themselves in the context of society.

In summary, the dialectic between personal and collective frames is rich and dynamic in the process of self-understanding and world positioning. Personal narratives are illuminated by personal history and identity, and collective narratives provide a broader context for understanding them. This interaction is particularly important in moments of social transformation, where the herd's stories can metamorphose and affect individual stories. By taking account of and reflecting on this interrelatedness, one can gain a deeper understanding of how people create meaning from their surroundings, constitute themselves as individuals, and relate to others.

Ultimately, the recognition of both individual and collective narratives fosters a deeper understanding of human experiences and enhances society through a more inclusive and balanced discourse.

METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Methodological developments in qualitative research have become pivotal in moving the field forward, not least because of changing social contexts, new technologies and criticisms of standard methods. These new practices enhance the rigour and relevance of qualitative inquiries, destabilising traditional paradigms by embracing complexity, reflexivity, and inclusiveness. As students of qualitative inquiry traverse various terrains, there are also significant impacts on data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as the depth and subtlety of understanding the human experience.

One real innovation in qualitative research has been the introduction of digital technologies and a kind of fieldwork exchanges taking place on the Web. The emergence of social media, e-forums, and web-based communities provides novel opportunities to engage participants, especially those who may be underserved or hard to reach using traditional approaches. For instance, academics can utilise social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to collect qualitative data through participant observations, interviews, and discussions. In addition to extending the scope of qualitative work, doing so also mirrors the digital age in which we live, enabling researchers to collect the experiences and voices of individuals in their native online habitat. However, this innovation also raises ethical questions, including consent in digitally mediated research environments, the tensions between we-anonymity and privacy, and the authenticity of interactions that take place online, requiring these research practices to be grounded in sound ethical frameworks (Tyagi et al., 2022).

Methodological developments, alongside technological advancements, have been facilitated through the integration of participatory and co-creative approaches. Participatory action research (PAR) is an example in which participants play a leading role in generating research priorities, collecting data, and communicating the findings. Such a collaboration not only enhances the validity of the research but also supports social transformation by prioritising the voices and experiences of those who directly impact the subjects being researched. Through fostering a collaborative relationship between researchers and participants, PAR challenges the asymmetry characteristic of traditional qualitative research and transforms participants from subjects to co-researchers. Not only does this transition improve

the quality of data gathered, but it also makes our findings relevant to the way the life world is actually lived.

A second innovative use of method in qualitative research is the use of visual methods. Photovoice (photo-elicitation), video diaries, and participatory photography are visual methods that provide researchers with the opportunity to photo-document and analyse experiences in a way that text-based methods are unable to do. These approaches harness the power of the visual medium to evoke emotions, convey complex stories, and foster discussions among participants. For example, photo-elicitation requests participants to photograph their experiences, which are used as triggers for deep and meaningful conversations by the researchers. In addition to enhancing participant engagement, this process facilitates richer meaning-making, as visual representations can evoke emotions and insights that may not be attainable through verbal conversation alone. However, the use of visual methods also raises ethical considerations of representation, consent and interpretation.

In addition, emerging methodological work on qualitative research has been embracing intersectionality as a critical lens for explaining the depths of identity and experience. Intersectionality acknowledges the multiple, intersecting identities that people hold and the distinct ways in which they experience life in relation to factors such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability. Through the intersectional method and theory, researchers can identify more subtle and complex interactions and influences that these identities have on individuals, gaining a richer understanding of social phenomena. This novel approach prompts researchers to adopt a more nuanced approach, considering the variances and complexities faced by research participants, which in turn leads to more equitable and inclusive research practices.

The reflexive turn has also found its way into qualitative research as a methodological innovation. Reflexivity concerns an awareness of researchers' positionality, bias, and power in the research process, recognising that researchers are not neutral finders but co-constructors of meaning. Through these reflexive forms of practice, researchers can understand how they themselves, along with their own backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences, bias the way data is interpreted. Such self-reflection enhances the trustworthiness of this type of research and contributes to a more ethical understanding of qualitative research as the researcher strives to minimise bias and capture participants' voices as closely as possible.

In addition, the hybrid methods being developed are a sign of increased awareness of the weaknesses of traditional qualitative methods. Hybrid methods combine components of different qualitative approaches, providing researchers with the flexibility to tailor the method to the specific context and question at hand. For instance, researchers may use narrative inquiry in conjunction with grounded theory to examine individuals' stories without losing sight of overarching patterns and themes. This flexibility enables researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding

of complex social phenomena, as they collect data from and advocate for different vantage points and units of analysis throughout the research process. Most qualitative research is solely based on the use of a methodological approach in a research study. Methodological approaches help the researcher to fulfil the research goals and enable a rich understanding of the context: they increase the validity of the study, as well as an understanding of potential challenges that the researcher experienced.

The turn toward ethics in qualitative research is a major innovation in methodology as well. On a theoretical level, researchers at any stage of the research process, from design or collection to analysis and publication of findings, are asked to engage with moral dilemmas. This includes ensuring the feasibility of research with respect to participants and communities, as well as their rights and dignity. Morally, offenders must consider the matter of representation and how to document participants' experiences without reproducing stereotypes. Through this ethical engagement, qualitative researchers can navigate the intricacies of their research while fostering trust and collaboration with participants.

While the focus on the ethical dimensions of qualitative research is to be welcomed, efforts also need to be directed towards ongoing methodological innovation that addresses the problematic points mentioned above. Digital technology, participatory knowledge expertise, visuals, nomadic models of discovery, intersectionality, reflexivity, hybrid methodologies, and ethics all combine to enhance our understanding of human life. The work of scholars continues to break new ground in the expanding world of counternarratives in qualitative inquiry, work that is not only rigorous but also relevant, topical, and illustrative for the larger landscape of social justice, equity, and representation. The evolution of qualitative methodologies bears witness to the need to grapple with complexity, and to get to the "root of things," beckoning for an ever-more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the varied stories that compose the world.

THE IMPACT OF REFLEXIVITY ON RESEARCHER-PARTICIPANT DYNAMICS

Reflexivity in qualitative research refers to the practice of researchers reflecting on their own beliefs, biases, and perspectives throughout the research process. This type of reflective work is necessary to understand how such factors influence the relationship between the researcher and participants, and, consequently, the research as a whole. Reflexivity is not just a methodological tool; it is an essential ethical position that concerns the validity and truth of qualitative research.

Recent works highlight the importance of reflexivity in fostering a transparent and trustworthy relationship between researchers and research subjects. For exam-

ple, researchers are said to create a more open context for participants' experiences when they actively engage in reflexive practices. This is particularly relevant in sensitive research contexts, where participants are more likely to be vulnerable or anxious. When researchers acknowledge and address their biases and experiences, it contributes to trust and security, resulting in richer data collection.

In addition, reflexivity complicates the authoritativeness of those in power (in the case of qualitative research). Research participants usually have less power in the research relationship and may experience a power imbalance in the representation of their experiences. There is strong awareness in the literature that through reflexivity, researchers are able to acknowledge their part in the storytelling, at the same time as attempting to reduce bias and interference (which may alter the participants' voices). Not only is this movement towards a more equitable relationship but it produces more genuine representations of participants' experiences and views (Grant et al.,2021).

Reflexivity also has an important role in the interpretation of data, and not just in building confidence and equity, asserts that researchers' reflexive engagement of their positionality can generate deeper analysis. By reflecting on how their own background and experiences shape their interpretations, researchers can work towards developing a more nuanced understanding of the data, and this will result in findings that more accurately mirror their participants' realities.

Reflexivity has broader implications for debates about ethical and accountable qualitative research. As researchers become more consciously aware of the influence of their positionality, they are able to confront moments when their research and lives might pose ethical issues. Thus, they can guarantee the rights of participants and report findings in a way that does not contribute to further harm or stigmatization.

In sum, reflexivity has serious inferences for the dynamics between researcher and research participant in qualitative research. Reflexivity helps to ensure the morality and ethical robustness of qualitative inquiry through promoting transparency, discerning power relationships, and making data interpretation more visible. Academies who critically engage with reflexivity are more able to generate knowledge that reflects the experiences of participants and to develop ethical standards in the sector.

EMBRACING NON-TRADITIONAL DATA SOURCES: THE ROLE OF ARTIFACTS AND NARRATIVES

Non-traditional data sources, including artifacts and stories, have increasingly been explored in qualitative research as researchers search for ways to better capture the experiences of participants. Traditional qualitative methods put a premium on interviews and textual data, but the inclusion of artifacts—objects or materials that

hold personal, cultural, or other value for a person or community—allows one to develop a more multi-dimensional understanding of the topic.

Artifacts can be powerful instruments for the collection and analysis of data, providing information that may not be reachable through spoken language only. For instance, (Pontika et al., 2022) have shown how the use of personal items such as photographs or letters enabled participants to express their identities and experiences in ways that the conventional interview to which it accompanied, could not express. Indeed, artifacts that symbolize the stories of the participants can be understood as a way to get closer to their lived experiences. Stories based on the experiences of individuals can greatly enrich qualitative research. Nicola Rollock and David Gillborn's use of narrative inquiry as a method privileges the role of storytelling in making sense of experiences. This approach reinforces a co-constructive relationship between researchers and participants; through this lens, participants' stories are valued and considered equally important to the conduct of the research.

In addition, incorporating nontraditional sources of data also corresponds to more recent demands for methodological pluralism and diversity in qualitative research. By taking different types of data sources into consideration, researchers can better reflect the rich nuances of human experience. For example, visual techniques, like photo-elicitation, facilitate richer discussion in interviews and richer findings. Indeed, using visual stimuli helps to reduce the participants' difficulty to express their feeling and meanings although this could make the data richer.

Nevertheless, the adoption of artefacts and narratives carries very consequential ethical implications such as consent and proprietary and representation issues that researchers need to navigate. For example, if personal artifacts are used, informed consent must be obtained from participants and their privacy must be protected. Researchers also have to be cautious in how they gather and describe the stories of participants and not let them be used in ways that are distorting or exploitative.

In conclusion, by embracing alternative data sources, such as artifacts and stories, qualitative researchers may be in a better position to obtain new understanding into experiences of participants. Accepting the worth of these varied data forms can therefore result in less abstract and truer conclusions which mirror lives as we live them. This is particularly true as qualitative inquiry is continually being redefined with inclusion of non-conventional sources driving new forms of inquiry.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CROSS-CULTURAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Cross-cultural qualitative inquiry presents ethical challenges that necessitate thoughtful and sensitive consideration. As researchers interact with diverse cul-

tures, they encounter complex cultural dynamics that influence the way research is conducted, and results are interpreted. This is one of the strongest approaches to adopt in terms of sensitivity and consideration for participants from other cultures.

Informed consent is one of the most contentious ethical issues in cross-cultural qualitative research. The understanding of what constitutes informed consent can vary in other cultural settings compared to Western contexts, which may lead to a poor understanding or misapprehension. Researchers must be sensitive to cultural nuances and may need to modify their consent procedures to align with local customs and values. This involves more than just the translation of language, but also culture, to ensure that participants are fully informed about the reasons for the research and their rights.

Additionally, researchers should be attentive to potential power imbalances in cross-cultural research contexts. The ethical imbalance between researchers and research subjects is also recognised. These concerns necessitate that researchers develop partnerships with participants, value the expertise of those who participate in the process, and recognise their agency in research conduct. This methodology not only improves ethical standards but also yields findings that are more reliable and generalizable.

The interpretation and reporting of data is another major ethical issue. In doing so, researchers must pay attention to how participants' voices and experiences are represented, while also attending to cultural appropriateness and representational integrity. Inaccurate depiction of narratives can reify stereotypes or serve to reconstitute power relations, which undermines ethical conduct in the study. As such, researchers should engage in critical scrutiny of their interpretations and, when available, seek feedback from culturally diverse individuals.

There are also ethical implications related to the impact of research results on communities. Researchers have a responsibility to reflect on the ways their work may be used or abused, particularly with respect to marginalised populations. This involves being clear about what the research aims to achieve and how the findings might be applied, as well as a commitment to sharing the results in forms that prioritise the voices of participants and work towards social justice.

Finally, ethics in cross-cultural qualitative research are diverse and challenging, requiring researchers to be sensitive and respectful toward cultural complexities. Furthermore, researchers who engage with diverse populations ethically and effectively do so by highlighting three key areas: prioritising informed consent, cultivating a collaborative dynamic, and reflecting on the consequences of knowing the facts. With increasing interest in qualitative research around the world, the best means of meeting these ethical issues is an important consideration to ensure the trustworthiness and applicability of the qualitative enquiry (Dwivedi et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter has discussed the complex relationship between reflexivity, non-traditional data sources, and ethical issues in conducting cross-cultural qualitative research. In examining these themes, we see that qualitative inquiry is not merely a technique for gathering data, but rather an intricate dynamic of consciousness, intentionality, and ethical exchange.

The discussion has focused on the role of reflexivity in shaping researcher-participant dynamics and the importance of remaining self-aware about researchers' own (and often unacknowledged) biases. Subject positions have been identified as a crucial imperative and the chapter's key argument is that through reflexivity, researchers can foster more open and trustworthy relationships with participants, leading to enhanced data collection and a more nuanced interpretation. This reflexive approach prevents the establishment of traditional power structures, and an even playing field allows the voices of the researched to be genuinely presented.

Furthermore, the chapter highlights the value of welcoming non-conventional sources of data, such as artefacts and narratives. These new methods complement qualitative research by providing richer accounts of participants' lived experiences that traditional methods may obscure. Using visual and material culture as forms of data not only enhances the quality of representation in researchers' reports but also resonates with the current demand for methodological pluralism. By integrating various forms of data, researchers can create a more comprehensive picture of the complexity underlying the human experience.

The evolving laws governing cross-cultural qualitative research have underscored the importance of cultural sensitivity and respect. As scholars reach out to different communities, they face the ethical issues of consent, power and representation. Lessons learned from this conversation underscore the importance for researchers to engage in consent practices that are collaborative and attentive to participants' agency and rights. This ethical praxis is necessary to keep research results fuelling those who advocate for, rather than prey on, marginalised voices.

In combination, these themes highlight the changing nature of qualitative research, with reflexivity, uptake of nontraditional data sources, and ethical concerns intersecting to add depth and power to research. By recognising the nuances involved in constructing meaning and ethical dimensions of their work, qualitative researchers have the potential to contribute to a more just and equal understanding of human life. Ultimately, this chapter underscores the importance of maintaining ongoing attentiveness to reflexive and ethical qualitative research practices, with a desire for a world where diverse voices are heard and valued, and where the richness of human experience is represented in all its complexity.

REFERENCES

Ahmadi, F., Khodayarifard, M., Rabbani, M., Zandi, S., & Sabzevari, M. (2022). Existential meaning-making coping in Iran: A qualitative study among patients with cancer. *Social Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, *11*(2), 80. DOI: 10.3390/socsci11020080

Chen, S., Lou, V. W., Leung, R., & Yu, D. S. (2024). Meaning-making of dementia caregiving: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *158*, 104848. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2024.104848 PMID: 39043114

Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, L., Cheung, C. M., Conboy, K., Duan, Y., Dubey, R., Janssen, M., Jones, P., Sigala, M., & Viglia, G. (2022). How to develop a quality research article and avoid a journal desk rejection. *International Journal of Information Management*, *62*, 102426. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102426

Frei-Landau, R., Abo-Mokh, I., & Ben-Yehoshua, N. S. (2023). Religious meaning-making among Muslim parents bereaved by homicide: Struggling to accept 'God's will' and yearning for 'Qayama' day. *Heliyon*, *9*(9), e20246. DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20246 PMID: 37809798

Grant, M. R., & Lincoln, Y. (2021). A conversation about rethinking criteria for qualitative and interpretive research: Quality as trustworthiness. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, *14*(2), 1–15. DOI: 10.21423/jume-v14i2a403

Inglis, N. C., Vukomanovic, J., Costanza, J., & Singh, K. K. (2022). From viewsheds to viewscapes: Trends in landscape visibility and visual quality research. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *224*, 104424. DOI: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2022.104424

Joseph, E. (2023). Underlying Philosophies and Human Resource Management Role for Sustainable Development. In *Governance as a Catalyst for Public Sector Sustainability* (pp. 286–304). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6966-8.ch014

Joseph, E. (2025). Leveraging AI to Inspire Innovation in Traditional and Digital Business Ecosystems. [JBE]. *Journal of Business Ecosystems*, *6*(1), 1–18. DOI: 10.4018/JBE.383049

Joseph, E. (2025). Public-Private Partnerships for Revolutionizing Personalized Education Through AI-Powered Adaptive Learning Systems. In *Public Private Partnerships for Social Development and Impact* (pp. 265–290). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-3471-4.ch011

Liu, H. C., Liu, R., Gu, X., & Yang, M. (2023). From total quality management to Quality 4.0: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Frontiers of Engineering Management*, *10*(2), 191–205. DOI: 10.1007/s42524-022-0243-z

Narayanan, M., & Ordynans, J. G. (2022). Meaning making and self-efficacy: Teacher reflections through COVID-19. *Teacher Educator*, *57*(1), 26–44. DOI: 10.1080/08878730.2021.1990455

Pendergast, D., Bradford, K., & Grootenboer, P. (2021). What is meant by'teacher quality'in research and policy: A systematic, quantitative literature review. *Education Thinking*, *1*(1), 57–76.

Pontika, N., Klebel, T., Correia, A., Metzler, H., Knoth, P., & Ross-Hellauer, T. (2022). Indicators of research quality, quantity, openness, and responsibility in institutional review, promotion, and tenure policies across seven countries. *Quantitative Science Studies*, *3*(4), 888–911. DOI: 10.1162/qss_a_00224

Popa, N. (2022). Operationalizing historical consciousness: A review and synthesis of the literature on meaning making in historical learning. *Review of Educational Research*, *92*(2), 171–208. DOI: 10.3102/00346543211052333

Prochner, I., & Godin, D. (2022). Quality in research through design projects: Recommendations for evaluation and enhancement. *Design Studies*, *78*, 101061. DOI: 10.1016/j.destud.2021.101061

Rahal, R. M., Fiedler, S., Adetula, A., Berntsson, R. P. A., Dirnagl, U., Feld, G. B., Fiebach, C. J., Himi, S. A., Horner, A. J., Lonsdorf, T. B., Schönbrodt, F., Silan, M. A. A., Wenzler, M., & Azevedo, F. (2023). Quality research needs good working conditions. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *7*(2), 164–167. DOI: 10.1038/s41562-022-01508-2 PMID: 36755134

Riedler, M., & Eryaman, M. Y. (2025). Quantum Entanglements, Diffractive Readings: Montage and Meaning-Making in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *24*, 16094069251392418. DOI: 10.1177/16094069251392418

Shannonhouse, L., Dosal-Terminel, D., Kwag, D., Hall, M. E. L., Park, C. L., McMartin, J., Silverman, E. J., Aten, J., O'Connor, M. H., & Kapic, K. (2024). "God was with me": A qualitative study of Christian meaning-making among refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *37*(1), 166–177. DOI: 10.1002/jts.22997 PMID: 38019108

Sokhi, R. S., Moussiopoulos, N., Baklanov, A., Bartzis, J., Coll, I., Finardi, S., Friedrich, R., Geels, C., Grönholm, T., Halenka, T., Ketzel, M., Maragkidou, A., Matthias, V., Moldanova, J., Ntziachristos, L., Schäfer, K., Suppan, P., Tsegas, G., Carmichael, G., & Kukkonen, J. (2021). Advances in air quality research–current and emerging challenges. *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics Discussion*, *2021*, 1–133. DOI: 10.5194/acp-2021-581

Sonck-Rautio, K., Lahtinen, T., & Tynkkynen, N. (2024). Consumer meaning-making of packaging functions for sustainable food packaging–Insights from qualitative research in Finland. *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability*, *7*, 100259. DOI: 10.1016/j.crsust.2024.100259

Spezzacatena, M., & Marsico, G. (2024). Emerging Meaning-Making: Combining Qualitative Methods in a Study of Women's Ambivalence Toward Makeup. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *37*(3), 259–273. DOI: 10.1080/10720537.2023.2178042

Steccolini, I. (2023). Methodological Paper What counts as "good" qualitative accounting research? Researchers' perspectives on assessing and proving research quality. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *36*(3), 1032–1057. DOI: 10.1108/AAAJ-05-2022-5808

Thelwall, M. (2024). Can ChatGPT evaluate research quality? *Journal of Data and Information Science*, *9*(2), 1–21. DOI: 10.2478/jdis-2024-0013

Thelwall, M. (2025). Evaluating research quality with Large Language Models: An analysis of ChatGPT's effectiveness with different settings and inputs. *Journal of Data and Information Science*, *10*(1), 7–25. DOI: 10.2478/jdis-2025-0011

Truijens, F. L., De Smet, M. M., Vandevoorde, M., Desmet, M., & Meganck, R. (2023). What is it like to be the object of research? On meaning making in self-report measurement and validity of data in psychotherapy research. *Methods in Psychology (Online)*, *8*, 100118. DOI: 10.1016/j.metip.2023.100118

Tyagi, A. K., & Bansal, R., Anshu, & Dananjayan, S. (2022, December). A Step-To-Step Guide to Write a Quality Research Article. In *International Conference on Intelligent Systems Design and Applications* (pp. 374-383). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

Section 2
Hermeneutics and Understanding

Chapter 2
The Ethics of Understanding:
Selecting a Research Methodology in Social Sciences

Naureen Farhan

iD https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8370-1125

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines ethical issues across research methods and frames interpretation itself as an inherently ethical act. Traditional safeguards like informed consent and confidentiality are important yet are insufficient for addressing the moral complexities of meaning-making in research. Drawing on hermeneutic traditions, the chapter introduces 'ethical hermeneutics,' viewing interpretation as shaped by subjectivity, power, and responsibility. It offers a critique of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, and demonstrates how each approach can embed ethical safeguards into the construction of knowledge, representation of participants, and truth claims. Since interpretation is never neutral, being mediated by the researcher's assumptions, lived experience, and cultural context, the chapter recommends practices such as reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding. These strategies promote accountability, mitigate bias, and more accurately represent participant voices.

INTRODUCTION

Research in the social sciences has always held immense significance as it deals with people and culture. While traditional research ethics emphasise procedural

safeguards such as informed consent and confidentiality, these measures alone are insufficient to address the deeper moral challenges embedded in the act of meaning-making. Building on hermeneutic traditions, this chapter advances the concept of *ethical hermeneutics* and frames interpretation not as a purely technical or analytical process but as a procedure entangled with subjectivity, power, and responsibility.

Interpretations are too complex to be neutral: they are mediated by the researcher's assumptions, real-time experience and the broader socio-cultural context in which the research has taken place. Accordingly, ethical strategies such as reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding are proposed as applications for cultivating an *ethics of understanding*. These strategies help researchers remain accountable, recognise bias, and correctly represent participants' voices.

Thus, this chapter demonstrates that ethical reflexivity strengthens methodological rigour and also ensures fairness, care, and responsibility. It calls for a shared attitude of understanding, accepting that while researchers cannot be truly neutral, they can practice humility, honesty, and accountability in how they interact with their participants. This thinking approach transcends individual disciplines and considers ethical interpretation not as optional, but as the foundation of fair and reliable scholarship.

The prominent domains of the social sciences employ various methods to collect data, with surveys being the most widely used. Why a methodology is necessary and the significance of adhering to a methodology for conducting research in any sector, including the social sciences, is never clear cut. In the research process, the researcher attempts to understand then identify the existing problem in a particular field, and to generate a hypothesis that potentially explains or resolves it. In the social sciences, the hypothesis most commonly begins with a null hypothesis: the data is collected and interpreted to determine whether it supports the hypothesis or its opposite. Therefore, the generic cycle of research (see Figure 1 below) involves identifying a gap, finding a solution, and validating the results.

Figure 1. Generic structure of Research Method
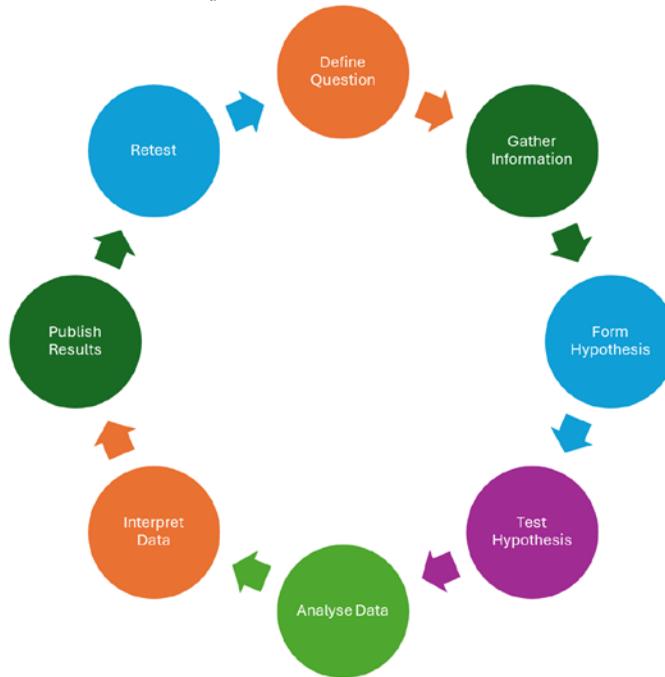
Thus, in social sciences, a researcher always starts with an interpretation and representation that is not neutral but should necessarily be ethical. However, conventional ethical protocols, including obtaining informed consent and anonymising data, are essential yet inadequate. They guarantee adherence to procedures but fail to confront the nuanced, persistent ethical dilemmas that emerge when researchers convert lived experiences into academic texts, models, or algorithms. In this case, the moral issue extends beyond epistemology: how can researchers demonstrate knowledge in ways that respect complexity and honour participants while remaining responsible to larger groups?

This chapter examines the ethical implications of various research methodologies commonly employed in the social sciences. While considerable attention is given to research design and methodology, it will be argued that the process of interpreting data, constructing meaning, and extending conclusions should be an ethically charged effort. Furthermore, the chapter advocates for ethical hermeneutics and the moral responsibility researchers bear when they write and engage with meaning-making in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Moreover, it will include a discussion on how interpretation is never free from subjectivity. Instead, understanding is always reconciled by assumptions, context, and human experience. The chapter will emphasise the ethical approach that enhances the credibility and

legitimacy of research findings, particularly in text-based research within the field of social sciences. As such, it contributes to the growing body of work challenging the false dichotomy between methodological rigour and ethical integrity; and does so by discussing how researchers should view interpretation as more than just a part of the analysis process. They should see it as a place where they can be ethical and where meaning is created with responsibility and with an impact on the people and communities being studied.

MOTIVATION

Conducting research begins with considering how data will be obtained and determining whether a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach is appropriate. However, apart from the selection of methodology, there is a very often overlooked concern: how is meaning derived from this data? What ethical responsibilities does the researcher hold when it comes to the interpretation of data? These concerns become crucial when interpretation involves vulnerable populations, complex sociocultural dynamics, or when truth claims are to be challenged.

Hermeneutics is a philosophical tradition which is more concerned with interpretation and meaning. It provides the essential tools to assess the layers of meaning-making in research. However, typical hermeneutics must include ethical scrutiny, which is here referred to as ethical hermeneutics, i.e., that meaning-making is not just a technical process but a highly ethical act. Whether coding, qualitative interviews, interpreting survey results, or applying statistical models, researchers always apply an interpretive lens that is shaped by their own assumptions, values, and social positioning. However, before doing so, they should investigate the interpretive choices that enhance the representation and validity necessary for ethical research. Such moral concerns should be addressed in their methodologies, whether qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches. Ultimately, the case being made here is that the best and most practical strategies that researchers can adopt are those that entail a more reflexive and ethical interpretive perspective.

Selecting the correct research method is crucial because all phenomena depend on an accurate and efficient research approach that considers the ethical consequences of the various research methodologies prevalent in the social sciences. Research designs heavily rely on the interpretation of data, the construction of meaning, and the formulation of conclusions, and these activities should be approached as ethically significant endeavours. As Reamer (2013) notes, the core issues with values and ethics include the value base of the research and the ethical decision-making that accompanies it. Likewise, van den Hoonaard (2023) states that:

"Seeking a Research-Ethics Covenant in the Social Sciences demonstrates the failure of current ethics codes to serve as meaningful tools for researchers in the social sciences. Many … find that this failure has had a disordering and disorientating effect on their research as a result of policy makers inappropriately imposing the "order" of biomedical research upon social sciences."

This highlights a persistent rigidity between universalised and the nuanced realities of social science research. Unlike biomedical research, social science researchers often engage with dynamic, relational, and contextual phenomena where rigid procedural ethics can hinder rather than protect. The imposition of biomedical standards risks reducing ethical practice rather than fostering reflexivity and accountability in the field. Because researcher accountability emerges from their admittance of their assumptions, contexts, and human experiences: these always require understanding and when made transparent, can enhance the credibility and validity of research results. This is because researcher transparency clarifies the moral challenges that arises when interacting with participants. Thus, a framework for promoting honesty, humility, and responsibility in the process of establishing knowledge is being proposed in this chapter.

LEADING RESEARCH

The process of research in social science is different from other fields of science as it is more about find patterns among sample populations (Abbott & McKinney, 2013). Science holds its own importance because people's experiences are not random but rather based on established facts. Our social location shapes the way one perceives and interprets events, i.e. the position within the social order, evaluated by factors such as class, gender, education, politics and religion. As a result of which any two individuals observing the same event may arrive at completely different conclusions each filtered through their own perspective and context. Social science offers a systematic approach to exploring and explaining these differences.

Research methodology comprises phases such as problem identification, selecting an appropriate research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. In diverse fields, problem identification primarily entails recognising the research gap and the importance of addressing it, informed by the most recent research within the domain. Gathering data involves considering the various methods for collecting data based on the type of research being conducted and selecting the most suitable one and as such methodology gives structure to the process of gathering, analysing, and making sense of valuable data. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the three primary approaches to conducting research. Each possesses unique characteristics, benefits, and applications, contingent upon the

specific research problem identified. In computing, management, or the social sciences, scientific inquiry is based on methodological choices that influence how questions are posed, how data is collected, and how conclusions are drawn. The term "research methodology" encompasses not only a collection of techniques but also the fundamental logic that informs the study's design. Methodologies establish a connection between research questions, methods, and the interpretation of results.

These three methodological traditions guide scientific inquiry, each offering a distinct perspective on the examination of phenomena. The quantitative research method focuses on measurement and statistical analysis, while the qualitative research method prioritises depth and contextual understanding. Simultaneously, mixed methods aim to integrate the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, resulting in a hybrid approach.

POPULAR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AREAS

In various fields, apart from distinct subject matters and core foundations, there is a shared commitment to rigorous inquiry. Among the most popular fields of research in the sciences are medicine, computing, engineering, social sciences, management, and psychology. In the field of computing, research typically involves experimentation, simulation, and evaluation of algorithms or systems. However, computing also encompasses a few human-centred areas, such as the domain of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning, where understanding how people interact with systems and technology is crucial. In management studies, academics grapple with both organisational structures and individual agency, necessitating methodologies that can quantify patterns while simultaneously elucidating real-world experiences. The complexity of human societies in the social sciences demands a range of methods and tools capable of capturing both sweeping social trends and the rich diversity of cultural contexts that add life to the patterns. Consequently, the choice of methodology is rarely random, as it is indicative of the problem being examined, the nature of the evidence required, and the researcher's underlying perspective on knowledge. Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods are the most common ways to do research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is both exploratory and interpretive. It prioritises understanding over measurement, which is about the meanings people attribute to their experiences, practices, and environments. Data can be in the form of text, images, or observations. When you analyse data, you might look for themes, code it, or make a story out of it. Qualitative interviews and usability studies in computing reveal how people use technologies, highlighting problems, motivations, and new ways of doing things that numbers alone cannot reveal.

By contrast, in business management, qualitative methods like case studies and interviews can, for example, elucidate the influence of leadership styles on organisational culture, as well as the significance of customised initiatives in management sciences (Tracy, 2024). Whereas, and speaking more broadly in social sciences, the qualitative participant observation and discourse analysis explaining cultural practices, social identities, and community dynamics utilised by anthropologists offer a comprehensive, scientific account of human societies and cultures, including their customs and traditions. Qualitative research is therefore necessary and has immense potential to show depth, context, and complexity. It excels at generating new theories and offering innovative perspectives on processes that are difficult to measure. But its results are often limited to specific situations. Consequently, it is often criticised for being too general, having too few traits, or being too subjective.

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is primarily conducted in engineering and computing, where researchers typically employ analytical calculations and explanations. Based on positivist ideas, it emphasises measurement, objectivity, and repeatability. Data are numbers that are gathered through surveys, experiments, simulations, or databases. They are then analysed statistically to identify patterns, test hypotheses, or generate results.

In computing, quantitative experiments often take place in controlled settings to measure algorithm performance and efficiency, system analysis, or error rates. In management sciences, extensive surveys are executed to measure employee engagement, customer satisfaction, or market trends. Econometric analyses are employed to ascertain causal relationships in organisational behaviour and strategy. Additionally, sociologists and psychologists in the social sciences employ quantitative methods to investigate correlations among social variables, evaluate hypotheses regarding human behaviour, and analyse national census data.

Quantitative research is strong because it is accurate, can be used to make gener-alisations, and can be used to test hypotheses. Statistical methods are beneficial for finding patterns in large groups of people. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, may oversimplify complex situations by reducing human experiences to numbers and variables.

Mixed Methods Research

Mixed-methods research acknowledges that no single methodology can com-prehensively encapsulate intricate phenomena. Researchers aim to achieve a com-prehensive and profound understanding by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods and examining the synthesis of these two principal techniques. Depending on the problem that needs to be solved and the model that needs to be created to fill the gap, the designs can be sequential, concurrent, or embedded. Sequential designs are a method for transitioning between studies, for example, qualitative research followed by a quantitative survey. Concurrent designs gather both types of data simultaneously, while embedded designs combine one method with a larger framework that is primarily composed of the other.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of three research methodologies

Aspect	Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research	Mixed Methods Research
Nature of Data	Non-numeric, descriptive (words, images, narratives)	Numeric, measurable (statistics, percentages, scores)	A combination of narrative (qualitative) and numeric (quantitative) data
Interpretation Focus	Seeks to uncover meanings, experiences, perspectives, and patterns in depth	Focuses on testing hypotheses, identifying trends, relationships, and generalisations	Integrates both meaning-making and statistical analysis to provide a fuller understanding
Representation of Data	Textual descriptions, thematic analysis, coding categories, direct quotes, case studies	Tables, graphs, charts, statistical models, and regression outputs	Joint displays (merging text with numbers), side-by-side comparisons, or sequential explanatory/ exploratory representations
Level of Subjectivity	High – researcher's interpretation influences outcomes	Low – relies on standardised tools and statistical procedures	Balanced – interpretation guided by both numerical evidence and contextual understanding
Purpose of Representation	To capture the richness, depth, and context of experiences	To provide clarity, precision, and generalisability	To combine depth with breadth for a comprehensive explanation
Significance	Deep insights into context, culture, and lived experiences	Clear, measurable, and generalisable findings	A holistic view that validates insights both statistically and contextually

Domain Specific Research

Computing includes, for example, the study of an e-learning platform that uses both statistical usage data and interviews to find out how students feel about how easy it is to use. In management sciences surveys, assessing organisational commitment may be enhanced by interviews. Additionally, national statistics on migration patterns can be contextualised through ethnographic accounts of migrant communities.

Mixed methods provide a way to gather and allow researchers to corroborate and enhance their findings through triangulation. These methods are beneficial for solving complex problems that can't be solved with just numbers or just stories. However, these studies require a significant number of resources and necessitate knowledge of both traditions, as well as careful integration to prevent them from being compromised.

Methodological Integration and Scientific Advancement

In the social sciences, with its focus on the human condition, mixed-methods research has become increasingly important. Instead of favouring one method over another, researchers should choose methods that align with their research questions, accept complexity, and contribute to the body of knowledge. Research methodologies provide the foundational framework for constructing scientific knowledge. Qualitative research provides depth and context, whereas quantitative methods offer breadth and rigour; mixed methodologies integrate both to capture the complexity of intricate phenomena.

As sciences continue to change to meet the needs of society and new technologies, it will still be important for methods to be flexible. Researchers face the challenge not of selecting between paradigms but of utilising them judiciously, integrating qualitative and quantitative insights in ways that enhance our comprehension of the world.

ETHICS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

This section includes how the interpretation in research is not only a methodological process but also requires ethical hermeneutics to incorporate ethical consciousness into the interpretive process, specifically in the meaning-making data analysis and the representation of findings. Bakhtadze (2015) explores the value and meaning constructed through interpretation and examines the importance of moral education and universal ethical norms in fostering environments where people from diverse cultures, values, and backgrounds come together, particularly within

higher education. Thus, in a world where education stretches well beyond borders, ethics serves as an essential compass. Bakhtadze therefore notes that globalisation demands a shared ethical foundation so that students from diverse backgrounds can engage respectfully and meaningfully with one another. Drawing on the works of classic philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, she demonstrates how ideas rooted in rationality, duty, and the pursuit of greater happiness help ground moral standards in education. However, she also highlights the tension between cultural relativism, which holds that each culture's morality is unique. Similarly with the humanist belief that core values such as honesty, compassion, fairness, and trust-worthiness transcend cultural differences.

In the context of research, interpretation becomes more of an ethical act precisely because such differing views and diverse moral standards require more than a hermeneut's technical skill. It calls for an approach that incorporates ethical awareness into the interpretive process, particularly during the meaning-making and representation of findings. Researchers do not simply find meaning; they help create it. This construction is shaped by their own values, assumptions, and positions of power, which significantly influence how data is understood and communicated.

Therefore, reflexive ethical interpretation focuses on the fact of who is being represented, how their voice is being framed, and what power dynamics are at play in that framing. It requires sensitivity to context, more prominently when deployed on the communities that are marginalised. Misrepresentation, oversimplification, or selective quoting can reinforce harmful narratives or silence essential voices. These are the voices that refer to the situations where critical perspectives or knowledge are ignored and suppressed either intentionally or unintentionally. In research, social disclosure, or policy, the term 'silencing essential voices' refers to the lack of opportunities for people to be heard, which can distort understanding or produce incomplete knowledge.

Consequently, interpretation involves choices that give value and significance to certain aspects of data over others. These decisions must be guided not only by analytical coherence but by a commitment to fairness, respect, and care. Thus, ethical hermeneutics ensures that research not only speaks about people, but with them, and in doing so, upholds the integrity of both the data and the researcher.

COMPREHENDING MEANING

Aside from the choice of a methodology, a frequently neglected issue exists: the process of deriving meaning from data. What moral obligations does the researcher have regarding data interpretation? These issues become particularly important when

interpretation involves vulnerable groups, complex social and cultural dynamics, or challenging truth claims.

Research involves more than just gathering and analysing data; it is also a profoundly moral and interpretive process. Creating meaning in research goes beyond technical procedures; it requires ethical reflection and sensitivity. How researchers engage with their subjects, interpret experiences, and represent voices all carry moral weight. Understanding research in this way underscores the responsibility researchers have not only to be methodologically sound but also to be ethically aware throughout the entire research process. Researchers consistently employ an interpretive framework influenced by their assumptions, values, and social context, whether they are conducting qualitative interviews, analysing survey data, or utilising statistical models.

Hermeneutics is a philosophical tradition primarily focused on interpretation and meaning. It offers the fundamental instruments to evaluate the layers of meaning construction in research. Nevertheless, conventional hermeneutics must encompass ethical examination, termed ethical hermeneutics.

Ethics of Comprehension and Interpretation

Scholars are increasingly contending that interpretation is not a value-neutral process, but a meaning-construction phase influenced by the researcher's assumptions and ethical considerations. The goal is for interpretation to be both technical and moral. In research, all interpretations, such as identifying themes in interviews or drawing conclusions based on statistical correlations, require decisions about what constitutes evidence, who or what receives more attention, and how the overall body of knowledge is presented. These decisions also have moral implications: interpretation is a political and ethical endeavour that delineates what is recognised as legitimate knowledge.

The researcher investigates the notion of implicit, concealed meaning in qualitative research experiences, the interplay among diverse dynamics, and the obstacles to access. Prevalent methodological approaches that overlook the complex intersubjective dynamics of interviews and rely predominantly on transcripts should give access to not only the verbal content but also the embodied, emotional experiences in the data, highlighting the ethical and methodological significance of profound reflexivity. Thus, recent studies involving vulnerable populations, contested identities, or cross-cultural settings have shed light on the ethical dimensions of interpretation. In these contexts, the interpretation of data can either perpetuate or challenge the marginalisation or misrepresentation of injustice. There is a greater emphasis on in-

practice ethics, which represents a shift from procedural ethics to the more nuanced, ongoing ethical decisions involved in interpreting research.

Hermeneutics can be viewed as the guiding framework to alleviate the recognised challenges. Hermeneutics is the philosophy of interpretation that elucidates the construction of meaning through discourse, context, and reflexivity. The research conducted by Dubinina (2019) in the field has highlighted the ethical aspects of hermeneutics, underscoring the obligation of researchers to contemplate the consequences of their interpretations of others' experiences, narratives, and actions. Interpretation encompasses not only the discovery of meaning but also its construction within moral, social, and political frameworks.

Ethics of understanding is a self-reflective, open, and context-aware way of interpreting that puts ethical responsibility front and centre at every step of the research process. It examines the interpretive choices researchers make across methodologies, the moral ramifications of those choices, and the strategies to guarantee ethical representation and legitimacy. These encompass reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding, all of which are increasingly acknowledged as best practices in ethical, high-quality research.

The Principles of Hermeneutic Lens

The Hermeneutic lens is crucial for selecting the appropriate research method for the social sciences. Philosophical hermeneutics provides an essential framework for selecting research methodologies in the social sciences by emphasising the interpretive character of human comprehension. Dubinina (2019) posits that a hermeneutic lens compels researchers to perceive methodology not as a neutral framework, but as an ethical congruence with the ways individuals construct meaning in their contexts. This viewpoint emphasises that social reality is understood through dialogue, self-awareness, and experiences within relevant contexts. Consequently, research design must embody the dynamic and relational nature of meaning-making, prioritising methodologies that are reflexive, contextually attuned, and receptive to the co-construction of knowledge. Fundamental principles, including the hermeneutic circle, intersubjectivity, and the interpretive function of the researcher, demand a methodology that transcends mere data extraction to interact with it as a pre-existing, historically contextualised phenomenon. By incorporating these principles, researchers can formulate studies that are methodologically robust and grounded in ethical comprehension.

Understanding Rather than Explanation

Hermeneutics is more concerned with determining the meaning of something than explaining it. It concentrates on identifying the rationale behind actions and events within a particular context. Hermeneutics is characterised as a methodology focused on comprehending meaning rather than forming relationships. The emphasis is on analysing human behaviour, expressions, and experiences within their cultural, historical, and social frameworks. Instead of asking "what caused this?" Hermeneutics inquires, "What is the significance of this?" or "What does this mean for the people involved?". This interpretive approach aligns with the notion that understanding is more important than explanation. It tries to find the deeper meaning behind actions and events.

Gillo (2021) also noted that hermeneutics places more emphasis on the "why" than on the "what caused it," focusing on interpretive insight rather than causal inference. Drawing from philosophical traditions, including Schleiermacher's pursuit of authorial intent, Dilthey's contextualization of lived experience, and Gadamer and Heidegger's concept of understanding as a fusion of horizons, this framework emphasises interpretive depth and reflexivity. Hermeneutics does not separate the researcher from the subject; instead, it encourages an ethical and dialogical engagement with meaning, emphasising empathy, historical context, and co-constructed understanding.

Knowledge Situated in Context

It recognises that knowledge is neither objective nor neutral; instead, it is generated within contexts by individuals who possess their own perspectives and biases. Dubinina (2019) asserts that interpretation is not a means of accessing an entirely objective reality; instead, it is mediated by the researcher's preconceptions, implicit frameworks, and prior knowledge, which influence the recognition, construction, and valuation of meaning. These pre-understandings are not mistakes to be eliminated; instead, they are essential elements of the interpretive process that necessitate critical reflection.

Gillo (2021) also emphasises that comprehension emerges from the convergence of perspectives, particularly the interplay between the researcher's interpretive framework and the participant's experiential reality. These dynamic elements suggest that meaning is co-constructed rather than merely discovered, and that each account is inherently partial, perspectival, and contingent upon the specific conditions of its production. Acknowledging the contextual nature of knowledge contests the positivist notion of universal, context-independent truth and necessitates a clear recognition of the interpretive perspective adopted in research.

From a methodological perspective, adopting situated knowledge constitutes a fundamental commitment to epistemic integrity. It requires more than just automatic gestures toward reflexivity or context. Researchers must deeply comprehend that knowledge is inherently connected, never neutral, and constantly influenced by the interpretive frameworks that shape it.

Reflexivity evolves into a near constant self-examination, a perpetual inward reflection that acknowledges one's position, privileges, and blind spots are not incidental but fundamental to interpretation. Contextual grounding necessitates that researchers not only recognise the socio-cultural and historical milieu but also intricately weave their findings into this framework, rendering the research inseparable from the lived reality it aims to elucidate. Transparency necessitates profound openness, which involves the overt revelation of assumptions, value commitments, and interpretive biases, thereby exposing the framework of knowledge production to rigorous examination and scrutiny.

When these practices are deeply ingrained in methodological choices, research transcends mere procedural rigour. It becomes ethically charged, contextually saturated, and epistemologically vibrant, able to respect the inherent complexity of social reality while enhancing credibility in ways that traditional paradigms frequently deem incomprehensible.

The Circle of Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic circle is a way to interpret something, according to it understanding is always circular, Kublikowski (2023). Every time one understands a piece, one must assume that it is part of a whole, and every time one knows a whole, one must assume that it is made up of pieces. The researcher's preconceptions, inherently influenced by disciplinary traditions, cultural contexts, and implicit assumptions, serve not as impediments but as fundamental forces in this dynamic interplay of meaning; Gillo (2021) and Dubinina (2019).

Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Hermeneutics fundamentally opposes the allure of finality. It asserts that meaning is not singular but plural, not static but dynamic. Ambiguity is not a defect to be eliminated but a creative force that expands interpretive possibilities. To engage in hermeneutics is to accept uncertainty not as a methodological flaw, but as a stringent recognition of the boundless complexity of both human and computational realities, Gonzalez and Faubert (2020).

Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibility recognises that the chosen data for research extends beyond mere raw data. But instead, it is gathered with some moral and interpretive issues in mind. This will be further substantiated by the analysis and presentation of the collected data before processing.

It will also include arguments about the moral and ethical effects of interpreting data. It also contains examples and case studies to illustrate how ethical mistakes in interpretation have rendered research less valid.

ETHICAL REPRESENTATION IN RESEARCH

Representation in research is inherently biased. In computing, management sciences, or social sciences, interpreting and presenting knowledge always has ethical implications. Decisions regarding inclusion, exclusion, and the presentation of findings transcend mere technical or stylistic considerations; they are fundamentally ethical determinations. They influence the comprehension of communities, the legitimisation of practices, and the circulation of power both within and outside the research encounter.

Formal research ethics frameworks often emphasise informed consent, confidentiality, and institutional review processes; however, these protocols do not encompass the entirety of researchers' ethical responsibilities. The more difficult problem is how knowledge is shown: how voices are heard, how contexts are kept, and how interpretations are held accountable. According to Gillo (2021) this challenge has become more difficult because more people are realising that researchers don't just record reality; they also help create meaning. Their viewpoints, positions, and interpretive frameworks are fundamentally connected to the knowledge they generate.

According to Motlhabane (2024), to traverse this landscape, scholars have adopted what is called an ethics of understanding, i.e., an approach that emphasises reflexivity, dialogue, transparency, and contextual awareness. This perspective avoids the inclination to depict research findings as universal or dispassionate. Instead, it insists on treating knowledge as contextual, relational, and ethically significant. This chapter describes four ways to put this ethics of understanding into action: reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding.

Strategies of Ethical Representation

These strategies are not strict rules, but rather ways of thinking about how to do things. Each one provides researchers with a means to establish integrity, account-

ability, and respect, while also enhancing the credibility and interest of the results. They collaborate to develop a framework of ethical representation that transcends disciplinary boundaries and addresses the numerous challenges posed by contemporary scholarship.

Reflexive Journaling: Fostering Ethical Self-Awareness

Palaganas et al. (2017) discuss that reflexivity has long been acknowledged as fundamental to qualitative research; however, its ethical implications often outweigh simple organisational precision. Reflexive journaling serves as a persistent reminder that researchers are not separate from their work but are profoundly intertwined with it. Journaling provides a systematic framework for examining how individual history, academic training, institutional connections, and cultural context influence the formulation of questions and the development of interpretations.

Reflexive journaling can be transformative in the field of computing research. For instance, a researcher working on natural language processing systems might keep a reflexive journal to record how their own language background influences their ideas about what constitutes "standard" or "correct" language. Such a record helps prevent the uncritical replication of biases, such as the preferential treatment of Western idioms in model design. In managerial research, reflexive journaling enables scholars to recognise how their personal experiences with organisational hierarchies may shape their interpretations of leadership styles, potentially leading them to favour hierarchical authority over more collaborative approaches. In the social sciences, a researcher examining migration may contemplate their own nationality or immigration status and the impact of these factors on participant access and narrative interpretations.

Journaling is an ethical way to keep track of one's own actions. It keeps track of the researcher's changing thoughts, including times when they were uncomfortable, realised something, or had doubts. This openness is helpful for the researcher and can also be shared with others or used as proof of reflexive engagement in publications. In this way, reflexive journaling makes ethical accountability stronger by keeping track of the conditions under which knowledge comes to light.

Dialogical Validation: Collaborative Knowledge Creation

Reflexive journaling directs the researcher's focus inward, whereas dialogical validation directs it outward, towards participants and communities. This strategy reflects the belief that representation should not be the sole domain of the researcher.

Instead, it views research as a collaborative effort in which everyone is seen as a co-creator of meaning.

Dialogical validation entails involving participants in continuous discussions regarding the evolving interpretations. In managerial science, this could include sharing initial findings regarding workplace culture with employees and managers, encouraging them to validate, refine, or contest the researcher's classifications. In social science research, particularly in ethnography, dialogical validation may involve member-checking practices, where participants review transcripts, thematic codes, or preliminary analyses to verify the accuracy of the findings. In computing, dialogical validation has emerged within participatory design traditions, where end-users engage not only in testing prototypes but also in formulating interpretations and representations of technological outcomes.

The ethical significance of this practice resides in its reallocation of interpretive authority. Participants are not just "data points" that do nothing; they are active participants in creating meaning. Dialogical validation enables participants to counter misrepresentation, rectify inaccuracies, and emphasise viewpoints that the researcher may have neglected. It recognises participants as independent creators of knowledge.

There are, of course, problems with dialogical validation. It necessitates considerable time and resources, and participants may not consistently concur with the researcher's interpretations. However, these problems aren't problems; they're opportunities: they remind us that knowledge is always open to debate and has many perspectives. By considering these factors, researchers move closer to a morally sound representation.

Ethical Transparency: Making Interpretive Choices Apparent

People often discuss transparency when discussing data management or reproducibility, but ethical transparency takes it a step further. It demands the clear expression of the values, assumptions, and frameworks that support the research. These kinds of choices shape every project: why a dataset was chosen, why certain voices were given more importance, and why one theoretical framework was chosen over another. These choices are too often not made clear, which makes readers think that the results came directly from "the data."

In computing research, ethical transparency may entail recognising how the creation of datasets favours demographics, consequently instilling biases in machine learning models. Researchers may also discuss the business or institutional interests that influence design choices. In managerial research, transparency may encompass the examination of how participant access, frequently facilitated by gatekeepers, such as senior executives, affects the nature of insights that can be produced. In social science research, transparency may encompass positionality statements wherein

researchers reveal how their social identities and theoretical commitments shape interpretations.

Ethical transparency enhances credibility by allowing readers to critically evaluate the circumstances surrounding the generation of knowledge. More importantly, it shows respect by letting the audience know not only what conclusions were reached but also how they were reached. Ethical transparency, therefore, opposes the complication of interpretive labour and represents a mode of scholarly integrity that enhances trust among researchers, participants, and readers.

Contextual Grounding: Resisting Abstraction

Contextual grounding ensures that results aren't taken out of context, which would deprive them of their meaning. In disciplines that seek to generalise, knowledge is often presented without its context, as if it were universal. However, this kind of abstraction could erase the very things that shape phenomena, potentially leading to misrepresentation and ethical distortion.

The ethical foundation of interpretation is grounded in context. It means situating participants' voices, behaviours, and experiences within the cultural, historical, social, and political landscapes that shape them. Ethical representation is impossible without attention to context; stripped of it, meaning becomes distorted or even harmful. This strategy urges researchers to move beyond surface-level description and dive into the nuanced conditions that influence meaning-making.

When it comes to computers, workplace monitoring algorithms are often judged solely on their effectiveness, rather than their impact on other aspects, such as labour exploitation, privacy loss, and various cultural views on work. If one doesn't think about the context, one might see these technologies as neutral tools, when in fact they can make the differences that already exist worse. In management research, studies on leadership often portray Western models as universally applicable, overlooking the unique historical and cultural factors that shape them. To understand the model, consider the time it was created, the location where it was made, and the industry for which it was designed. In the social sciences, placing research within its proper context helps to prevent the erasure of the histories of marginalised communities. It ensures that their problems aren't viewed in isolation, but in relation to broader issues such as racism, colonialism, or poverty. From an ethical perspective, contextualising information serves as a reminder that its sources consistently shape it and can never attain absolute completeness. This method contradicts the notion that complex situations can be distilled into "best practices" or universal frameworks. Instead, it illustrates how events and environments interact with one another. This leads to interpretations that are both more accurate and fairer.

BUILDING A COMMON ETHICS OF COMPREHENSION

Reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding are all strategies that can be employed independently. Their true ethical strength, however, is in how they work together. Reflexive journaling helps us remember where we are; dialogical validation takes power away from one interpreter; ethical transparency makes the research process open to questioning; and contextual grounding keeps findings linked to real-life experiences. When combined, they form a more comprehensive and responsible way to represent others.

This integrated ethics of understanding is crucial in places where people from different fields work together. In computing, where technical systems often outpace moral thought, these strategies provide designers and analysts with a means to ensure that ethical accountability is integrated into their work. In managerial sciences, they mitigate the pursuit of universal "best practices" by emphasising power dynamics, voice, and contextual factors. In the social sciences, they build on long-standing traditions of reflexivity and contextual analysis, while placing greater emphasis on the moral importance of these approaches.

Table 2. Comparative table that synthesises the four strategies for ethical representation

Strategy	Core Idea	Application in Research	Strengths	Limitations / Challenges	Distinctive Contribution
Reflexive Journaling	Ongoing self-examination of the researcher's role, assumptions, and impact.	Maintain a reflexive journal or positionality statement to document feelings, decisions, and biases throughout the research process.	Builds trust and accountability, enhances self-awareness, helps manage emotional responses, and prevents unconscious bias.	Time-intensive; requires vulnerability and honesty; may not be easily integrated into quantitative traditions.	Makes visible the researcher's influence on knowledge production, turning subjectivity into an ethical asset.
Dialogical Validation	Co-construction of meaning through participant feedback and dialogue.	Use member checks, collaborative design, or participant feedback loops to validate interpretations and ensure accuracy.	Ensures participants' voices are respected; prevents misrepresentation; empowers participants; fosters richer data.	It may be logistically challenging; participants may disagree with the interpretations; and risks may overburden them.	Shifts research from "on" participants to "with" participants, emphasising mutual respect and shared meaning-making.
Ethical Transparency	Clear documentation of methods, decisions, and interpretive frameworks.	Provide explicit accounts of methodological choices, reasoning, and interpretive processes in publications.	Enhances credibility and reproducibility, builds trust with participants and readers, and prevents hidden assumptions.	Requires careful reporting; space limitations in publications may restrict detail; risks of making research appear overly rigid.	Makes the interpretive process visible, showing how meaning was created rather than leaving it implicit.
Contextual Grounding	Situating participants' experiences within cultural, social, historical, and political contexts.	Analyse data in light of broader systemic and contextual influences; avoid universalising or decontextualising voices.	Strengthens the validity of findings; prevents distortion or harm; honours the integrity of participants' lived realities.	Requires deep contextual knowledge; risk of overgeneralization if context is misinterpreted; demands sensitivity to complexity.	Anchors interpretation ethically in participants' realities, ensuring representation is both accurate and respectful.

48

FUNDAMENTAL ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODOLOGY

Who Speaks and Who is Spoken For? Representation and Voice

Representation is an interpretive act that may lead to appropriation if the researcher co-opts or recontextualises participants' voices. Ethical practice necessitates authentic collaborative constructions of narrative. In her thought-provoking essay, Baker (1999) explores a complex but essential question: *How can everyone's voice be included fairly in academic reviews, especially in education?* Rather than offering a simple answer, she delves into the deeper issues behind the question itself, such as what we even mean by "voice" and who gets to be heard or recognised in scholarly spaces.

Academic reviews often shape what counts as valid knowledge in a field, so the way they're written can either include or silence different perspectives. Baker argues that terms like *"voice," "identity," and "representation" are often taken for granted, as if they naturally reflect who someone is or to which group they belong*. But she shows that these ideas are shaped by history, power, and culture.

Using the ideas of philosopher Michel Foucault, she suggests that reviews don't just present neutral truth; they also help shape what is seen as truth and whose knowledge is valued. Rather than looking for a one-size-fits-all solution, Baker strives to ask better questions. Instead of just asking *how* to include more voices, we should also be asking *who* is speaking, *how* they're recognised, and *why* certain voices are heard over others.

Power and Positionality in Research Relationships

The social and institutional positioning of researchers fundamentally influences interactions and interpretations. Being critically reflexive helps one strike a balance between empathy and awareness of these power dynamics.

According to Clarke et al. (2017), power and positionality shape relationships within critical research. Thus, academic work must go beyond observing from the sidelines and instead become actively involved in challenging injustice. This requires researchers to be deeply reflexive and constantly examine their own social positions, privileges, and relationships to both marginalised communities and powerful institutions. The authors emphasise that research relationships are never neutral. Power operates in every interaction, and academics must be mindful not to reproduce the very systems of exclusion they aim to critique. This form of research resists dominant narratives by valuing lived experience and challenging the silencing of opposition.

Rather than pretending to be objective outsiders, the authors advocate for an "interventionist" approach, one that acknowledges partiality, supports collective struggle, and amplifies the voices of those who have been historically ignored. Ultimately, positionality is not a weakness to overcome but a vital lens for understanding and confronting how power circulates in and through research itself.

Interpretation and Misinterpretation

Frameworks and biases are part of interpretation. To reduce misrepresentation, researchers must consistently validate interpretations through participant involvement and self-examination.

In the social sciences, interpretation is about more than just analysing data; it's about trying to understand people's lives, experiences, and perspectives. But doing that comes with real ethical challenges. Researchers don't just enter the field as neutral observers; they bring their own backgrounds, beliefs, and biases. These can shape how they understand what people say and do, and sometimes, that can lead to misinterpretation. When researchers misinterpret someone's story or experience, even unintentionally, the consequences can be severe. It can mean reinforcing stereotypes, misunderstanding a community's needs, or telling a story that doesn't truly belong to them. This is especially risky when working with groups who are already marginalised or misrepresented.

That's why ethics in interpretation matters so much. Social researchers have a responsibility to reflect on their role, to question their own assumptions, and to work with, not just about, the people they're studying. It's about listening closely, being honest about uncertainty, and respecting complexity. At its core, ethical interpretation is about doing justice to the people behind the data. It means being careful not to speak over others and recognising that the way we tell stories in research can shape how people are seen and how they're treated in the real world.

Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and the Facade of Neutrality

Haraway's critique of the "view from nowhere" reminds us that claims to neutrality often conceal underlying positionality. Ethically responsible research recognises ambiguity and rejects overall declarations. In social research, ambiguity and uncertainty are not just challenges; they are unavoidable realities. Human behaviour is complex, shaped by shifting identities, social norms, and power dynamics. No matter how carefully a study is designed, researchers inevitably face moments where

meaning is unclear, data contradict themselves, or interpretations pull in multiple directions. Embracing this uncertainty is part of honest scholarship.

Yet, within academic and policy circles, there's often pressure to present findings as clear, objective, and conclusive. This gives rise to the facade of neutrality, the idea that researchers can (and should) remain detached and unbiased observers. But neutrality is not only impossible; it can also be harmful. Claiming to be neutral often masks the values, assumptions, and positionality embedded in the research process. It can allow dominant perspectives to pass as "universal truths" while silencing others.

Acknowledging ambiguity and uncertainty does not weaken research instead it strengthens it. It invites critical reflection and transparency. It reminds us that knowledge is always situated and shaped by context. Rather than striving for an impossible neutrality, researchers have an ethical responsibility to be transparent about their position, acknowledge complexity, and remain accountable for how their interpretations influence understanding, policy, and the lives of people.

Being Responsible for Participants, Disciplines, and the Public

Researchers owe it to several groups: participants (for honesty and respect), disciplines (for methodological rigour), and the public (for clarity and relevance). It is morally problematic to address these issues simultaneously.

Social researchers carry a responsibility that extends far beyond data collection. They are accountable to the people they work with, the academic disciplines to which they contribute, and the broader public whose findings they may impact. This responsibility begins with participants ensuring their dignity, safety, and voices are respected throughout the research process. Especially when working with vulnerable or marginalised groups, researchers must prioritise consent, confidentiality, and representation, being careful not to exploit or misinterpret the lived experiences of those they study.

Responsibility to the discipline means maintaining integrity, transparency, and critical reflexivity. Researchers help shape the body of knowledge others rely on, so their methods and conclusions must be robust, honest, and ethically grounded. This also involves challenging harmful traditions and biases within the field itself and contributing to more inclusive and reflective scholarship.

Eventually, researchers carry a responsibility to the public, as social science research is never isolated from the world; it can shape policies, influence narratives, and directly impact people's lives. Being responsible means communicating findings clearly, acknowledging limitations, and being mindful of how research can be used or misused. Ultimately, ethical research involves holding space for complexity,

being transparent about intentions, and remaining accountable to all those whose lives and understandings it touches.

ETHICS OF DATA AND INTERPRETATION AS ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

This section includes a detailed description of the fact that the selected data is not actually raw data, but it is collected through some interpretative and ethical choices. This will be further supported by the fact that the collected data is somehow analysed and presented before being processed. It will include further arguments on the ethical and moral implications of data interpretation. This section will also include some examples/case studies to illustrate how ethical failures in interpretation have led to weak research validity.

In today's data-driven world, we often celebrate the power of data to reveal patterns, predict trends, and drive decisions. But what's frequently overlooked is the ethical responsibility that comes with interpreting data, especially when those interpretations can shape real lives and policies. Egger et al. (2022) explore this tension, reminding us that analysing data isn't just a technical task, it's a moral one.

Every decision made in the process of what data to collect, how to analyse it, and how to present the results is influenced by values, assumptions, and sometimes bias. For example, if a dataset excludes certain voices or reinforces stereotypes, the interpretation can unintentionally cause harm. We have already seen real-world examples of this, like biased algorithms in hiring tools or financial systems that disadvantage specific groups.

The authors emphasise that traditional ethical theories, such as acting on principle, aiming for the greatest good, or being guided by integrity, can provide helpful ways to approach these challenges. But in the fast-moving world of big data and AI, broad ethical codes aren't always enough. What's needed is a commitment to context, paying attention to who might be affected, whose voices are missing, and what harm could be done.

Ultimately, interpreting data ethically means staying mindful of the people behind the numbers. It is about more than accuracy. It is about fairness, accountability, and care. Researchers and practitioners alike must reflect on their role in shaping narratives and systems using data. Ethical interpretation isn't a one-time checklist—it's an ongoing, conscious effort to ensure that data serves society justly and respectfully.

Reflections on Comparison

At first glance, computing, managerial science, and the social sciences might seem like distant planets in the research universe. But when it comes to ethics, these disciplines, each with its own language, culture, and tools, surprisingly orbit the same moral sun. Computing comes equipped with code, algorithms, and a fierce commitment to transparency and precision. In this world, ethics means clarity, re-producibility, and playing fair with data. It's about doing things "by the book" and ensuring that what one builds doesn't spiral out of control or harm people along the way.

Managerial science, meanwhile, dives into the heart of power: who holds it, how it's used, and what it means to lead ethically in complex systems. Here, ethics is not just about being fair; it's about navigating influence, acknowledging the blind spots, and reflecting deeply on decisions that affect entire organisations. Then there are the social sciences, messy, beautiful, and deeply human. Ethics here is all about people: listening to them, understanding their stories, and honouring their lived experiences. It values context, participation, and the idea that research should be done with people, not on them.

Though their methods differ, all three are grounded in shared ethical concerns: responsibility, accountability, and care. And when they meet, something powerful happens: each discipline tempers the others' weaknesses and enriches the ethical conversation with its own depth. Together, they remind us that ethical research is never a one-size-fits-all approach. It's a collective effort, grounded in both technical excellence and a deep respect for humanity.

Trustworthiness and Genuineness:

Integrity in research is not about just completing a checklist of credibility. Even long-standing frameworks such as those proposed by Guba and Lincoln still hold value today, as discussed in Ahmed, S.K. (2024). But they gain a new depth when viewed through a more human-centred lens. In the current research landscape, trustworthiness is about honesty, openness to complexity in relationships, and an ongoing awareness of how our own presence unavoidably shapes the process.

Thick Description and Contextual Validity

Context is not mere background detail; it is the heart of understanding. Rich de-scription gives research life, drawing out the textures, emotions, and lived realities of people in their actual worlds. Without which the findings risk becoming flat,

abstract generalisations. With it, research gains both ethical grounding and interpretive richness, showing not just what happens but why it matters.

Strictness vs. Flexibility: The Ethical Tightrope

Procedures provide structure, but rigidity should never be mistaken for virtue. Ethical research demands to be responsive. When unexpected challenges occur, which is very common, flexibility is not a weakness; it's a mark of integrity. The ability to adapt thoughtfully is what keeps research both rigorous and humane.

Reflexivity: The Heartbeat of Ethical Research

Reflexivity is not an afterthought tucked into an appendix; it is the driving force of ethical inquiry. It should shape the work at every stage, from the first scribbles of an idea to the final, polished paper. Objectivity is often an illusion, but reflexive honesty creates trust. By acknowledging our influence rather than hiding it, we give our work authenticity and depth.

The Ethics of Writing, Representation, and Voice

Writing is never neutral; it always carries ethical weight. The way we quote, or frame determines who is amplified and who is left unheard. As Woods and Sikes (2022) remind us, ethical writing means 'showing the seams', making visible the process of meaning-making and allowing readers to see not just the findings, but how they were shaped.

Sharing Data Without Selling Out Participants

Open science is a noble aim, but not if it exposes vulnerable voices. Ethical researchers walk a fine line: championing transparency while fiercely protecting privacy. The goal? Openness that doesn't come at the cost of safety or dignity. Ethics and methodology are inextricable; research is not neutral; it constructs realities. Researchers fulfil their obligation to participants, disciplines, and society by anchoring practice in reflexivity, dialogue, transparency, and context, guided by humility, accountability, and hope.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has argued that methodology in the social sciences, computing, and management sciences is not only a technical framework for generating data but also an ethical enterprise that shapes how knowledge is constructed, communicated, and legitimised. Too often, the ethical dimension of interpretation has been marginalised in favour of procedural safeguards that, while necessary, cannot fully address the moral complexities of representing lived realities. By foregrounding interpretation as a site of ethical responsibility, this work has called for a rethinking of what it means to conduct research with integrity.

At the centre of this rethinking lies *ethical hermeneutics*—a framework that insists interpretation is never neutral, but rather always shaped by assumptions, positionality, and context. Hermeneutics demands that researchers move beyond the search for objectivity and instead embrace reflexivity, dialogue, and transparency. It challenges the illusion of a "view from nowhere" by acknowledging that all knowledge is situated, partial, and co-constructed. Such recognition does not weaken research; rather, it strengthens its credibility by making visible the interpretive choices and value commitments underlying scholarly work.

Ethical strategies address a different facet of the interpretive process: reflexive journaling fosters self-awareness of biases and assumptions; dialogical validation redistributes authority by inviting participants into the interpretive process; ethical transparency renders methodological choices explicit and accountable; and contextual grounding resists harmful abstraction by embedding findings in their socio-cultural realities. Together, these strategies cultivate research that is both methodologically robust and ethically accountable.

Moreover, by comparing applications across computing, management, and social sciences, the discussion has shown how ethical hermeneutics transcends disciplinary boundaries. In computing, it mitigates algorithmic bias and highlights the lived implications of technological systems. In management sciences, it illuminates power dynamics within organisations and challenges the uncritical adoption of universal models. In social sciences, it deepens engagement with lived experience, ensuring that research speaks with communities rather than about them.

Ultimately, the chapter concludes that ethical research is not achieved by rigid adherence to rules but by cultivating humility, accountability, and care throughout the research process. Interpretation must be recognised as both a technical and moral act, an act that shapes how voices are heard, how experiences are represented, and how truths are legitimised. Ethical hermeneutics therefore offers a pathway toward research that honours complexity, resists misrepresentation, and upholds responsibility to participants, disciplines, and society at large.

In a world increasingly reliant on research to guide policy, technology, and social life, the stakes of interpretation are immense. Researchers cannot afford to retreat into claims of neutrality; instead, they must embrace the ethical burden of their work as an opportunity to produce knowledge that is not only credible but also just. The future of scholarship, across fields, depends on this integrated vision of methodological rigour and ethical responsibility—a vision where understanding is inseparable from ethics, and where interpretation becomes a practice of care, humility, and shared humanity.

Ethical representation is not just about following the rules; it is an ongoing duty to participants, communities, and the public. It acknowledges that knowledge is inherently biased, and that each interpretive act influences the comprehension of individuals and practices. Researchers can create a stronger ethics of understanding by using strategies like reflexive journaling, dialogical validation, ethical transparency, and contextual grounding. This ethics of understanding honours complexity amplifies the voices of marginalised people, and fights against the erasures of abstraction.

The job is hard. It necessitates humility, transparency, and the readiness to acknowledge that knowledge is perpetually incomplete, contextual, and subject to dispute. But it is this very acknowledgement that renders research ethically significant. In an era where knowledge is becoming increasingly important in technology, government, and social life, it is not optional to represent oneself ethically; it is necessary. An emphasis on the fact that interpretation is not a value-free process, but rather it is a form of ethical engagement with knowledge and honest representation.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The Pillars of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, *2*, 100051. DOI: 10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051

Baker, B. (1999). What is voice? Issues of Identity and Representation in the Framing of Reviews. *Review of Educational Research*, *69*(4), 365–383. DOI: 10.3102/00346543069004365

Bakhtadze, I. (2015). The Importance of Ethics and Its Relevance to Challenges of Global Education. *Journal in Humanities.*, *4*(1), 5–9. DOI: 10.31578/hum.v4i1.284

Clarke, R., Chadwick, K., & Williams, P. (2017). 'Critical Social Research as a 'Site of Resistance': Reflections on Relationships, Power and Positionality.' *Justice, Power and Resistance*. 261-282

Dubinina, V. O.V. O. Dubinina. (2019). The Methodology of Philosophical Hermeneutics in the Social Sciences. *Scientific Review (Singapore)*, *2*(19), 25–31. DOI: 10.31435/rsglobal_sr/28022019/6366

Egger, R., Neuburger, L., & Mattuzzi, M. (2022). *'Data science and ethical issues: between knowledge gain and ethical responsibility.' Applied Data Science in Tourism: Interdisciplinary Approaches, Methodologies, and Applications*. Springer International Publishing.

Gillo, M. D. (2021). The Basic Ideas of Hermeneutics as a Theoretical Framework for Qualitative Research. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, *2*(3), 42–45. DOI: 10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.43

Gonzalez, E., & Faubert, M. (2020). Integrating Meaning Making with Collaborative-Dialogic Practice. *International Journal of Collaborative-Dialogic Practices.*, *12*(1), 68–77.

Kublikowski, I. (2023). Reflections on Analysis in Qualitative Research: The Hermeneutic Circle in Ricoeur. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, *33*, e3319. DOI: 10.1590/1982-4327e3319

Motlhabane, A. (2024). Navigating The Ethical Landscape of Research: An Exploration of Reflective Practice Balancing Ethical Dilemmas. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review.*, *11*(1), 255–262.

Reamer, F. (2013, September 2nd). *Social Work Values and Ethics*. 4th ed. Columbia University Press. https://www.perlego.com/book/774701

Tracy, S. J. (2024). *Qualitative Research Methods: Gathering Proof, Making Sense of it, and Showing How it Affects People*. John Wiley & Sons.

van den Hoonaard, W. van den (2023, September 2nd). *Seeking a Research-Ethics Covenant in the Social Sciences.* University of Alberta Press. https://www.perlego.com/book/4213624

Woods, P., & Sikes, P. (2022). *Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003143406

Chapter 3
Rethinking Nuance and Objectivity in Qualitative Research:
A Hermeneutic Resolution

Daniel Oladiran

iD https://orcid.org/0009-0002-4668-2521

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the presumed opposition between nuance and objectivity in qualitative research and argues that the binary is based on outdated positivist assumptions. Drawing on hermeneutic philosophy, particularly the works of Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricœur, the chapter demonstrates that nuance and objectivity can be reconciled through interpretive rigour and ethical responsibility. Hermeneutics reframes objectivity not as detachment, but as a disciplined practice of reflexivity, coherence, and openness to critique. A practical illustration shows how nuanced interpretation can produce findings that are contextually rich yet systematically credible. Objectivity is thus reconceived as an ethics of interpretation, grounded in fairness, transparency, and accountability. The chapter concludes by outlining implications for qualitative methodology, pedagogy, and evaluation, highlighting how a hermeneutic resolution enables researchers to embrace complexity while maintaining credibility and producing knowledge that is both rigorous and practically relevant.

INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research has long been valued for its capacity to engage deeply with human experiences, meanings, and contexts (Lim 2025). Nonetheless, this strength, i.e its attentiveness to nuance, is often framed as a liability in academic debates about research validity (Clift et al., 2023). Critics argue that the nuanced, context-dependent interpretations in qualitative work inevitably compromise objectivity, leaving findings vulnerable to unreliability due to subjectivity or bias (White and Davis, 2023; Ahmed, 2024; Neubert, 2024). For example, methodologists in psychology have noted persistent concerns that qualitative approaches lack the scientific objectivity of experimental methods (Levitt et al., 2022). Such critiques reflect an enduring perception in some academic circles that one must choose between richness and rigour i.e, between doing justice to nuanced human phenomena and producing results deemed objectively credible (Stanley, 2023; Bentalha and Alla, 2024; Halme et al., 2024).

The present chapter takes issue with this framing and proposes an alternative view. Drawing on the hermeneutic tradition in philosophy - particularly the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricœur (Piecychna, 2023; Silalahi, 2024; Ricoeur, 2024), but also extending to thinkers like Wilhelm Dilthey (Nasution, 2022), Martin Heidegger (Patton and Broward, 2023), Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, and Jacques Derrida (Kate, 2022) - it argues that nuance and objectivity need not be inherently opposed. When grounded in reflexive and ethical interpretation, a hermeneutic approach enables a principled reconciliation of interpretive depth with epistemic responsibility (Sarangi, 2024; Cajahuanca et al., 2025). In other words, nuance and objectivity can be mutually supportive rather than mutually exclusive. In order to develop this argument, the chapter first interrogates the binary that casts nuance and objectivity as antithetical qualities in research. It then introduces hermeneutics as an appropriate framework for redefining objectivity in terms of interpretive rigour and ethical engagement rather than detachment or neutrality (Soysal and Türkmen, 2024; Vella, 2025). A practical illustration is provided to show how a nuanced interpretive process can yield findings that are both richly meaningful and systematically credible. Finally, the chapter reframes objectivity as an ethics of interpretation, discussing methodological implications for qualitative researchers. Throughout, recent literature in philosophy of science, qualitative methodology, and interpretive social science is incorporated to demonstrate how contemporary scholars are moving beyond positivist conceptions of objectivity toward more nuanced understandings of rigour in qualitative inquiry.

The introduction of nuance as a contested category is not accidental but reflects deeper epistemological struggles that have shaped the history of social research. The so-called crisis of representation in the 1980s and 1990s underscored the lim-

itations of assuming that social reality can be neutrally captured through detached observation (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This crisis exposed the fact that all representations are constructed, situated, and interpretive, raising uncomfortable questions about what counts as credible knowledge. In this sense, the tension between nuance and objectivity is not simply a methodological quibble but a philosophical problem that touches on the very possibility of truth in social science. Addressing it requires engaging both methodological debates in qualitative research and long-standing philosophical inquiries into interpretation and meaning. At stake is the legitimacy of qualitative research within the broader academy. Quantitative researchers, drawing on a positivist lineage, often valorise replicability, reliability, and generalisability as hallmarks of rigour (Ali, 2024). By contrast, qualitative scholars argue that such standards, when uncritically applied, risk obscuring the very phenomena under investigation (Finlay, 2024). The persistence of these debates signals that a rearticulation of objectivity is overdue. Rather than discarding objectivity as a relic of positivism, or retreating into relativism, qualitative researchers must explore alternative frameworks in which objectivity can be preserved without erasing nuance. This chapter contends that hermeneutics offers such a framework.

A FALSE BINARY: NUANCE AND OBJECTIVITY IN TENSION

In dominant research paradigms particularly those shaped by positivist traditions, objectivity is often understood as a matter of detachment, neutrality, and replicability (Omodan, 2024). The classic ideal of objectivity calls for researchers to eliminate their influence on data and to produce findings that can be universally verified by other observers (Vuković et al., 2023). These criteria align with quantitative methods that emphasise measurement, statistical generalisation, and procedural rigour (Hung et al., 2024; Koskinen, 2025). Within this framework, the context sensitive, interpretive nature of qualitative research appears problematic or even unscientific (Finlay, 2024). Nuance becomes implausible, treated as a marker of ambiguity, bias, or a threat to truth claims (Goyes and Sandberg, 2025). In essence, conventional thinking often posits a dichotomy: either one pursues objectivity by minimizing human interpretation, or one embraces nuance at the cost of rigour. This view rests on a binary that is false. It implies that nuance and objectivity cannot coexist, that one must be sacrificed for the other. Such reasoning reduces objectivity to a narrow set of mechanical procedures, denying the legitimacy of depth, reflexivity, and human understanding in the research process. As a result, the rich insights afforded by qualitative approaches are too easily dismissed as merely subjective. This binary overlooks the possibility of interpretive objectivity an approach grounded not in detachment, however in reasoned judgment, ethical transparency,

and contextual fidelity (Kadyschuk, 2023; Watson, 2024; Maher, 2025). From this perspective, nuance in qualitative research is not a methodological flaw at all; it is a methodological imperative (Lim, 2025). It acknowledges that meaning is multi-layered, dynamic, and shaped by lived experience. Engagement with data in all its nuance is to recognize the complexity of the phenomenon under study, rather than to abandon rigour (Steltenpohl et al., 2023). In fact, interpreting nuanced data well requires a different kind of rigour, one that involves close attention to context, careful reflexivity, and iterative validation of interpretations, instead of simplistic measurement or control (Frank, Magnone and Netzer, 2022). It is the contention in this chapter that hermeneutics is an appropriate framework for this type of nuanced interpretation (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Contrasting Traditional vs. Hermeneutic Objectivity

Criteria	Traditional Objectivity (Positivist)	Hermeneutic Objectivity
Researcher Role	Detached observer	Engaged interpreter
View of Bias	Bias must be eliminated	Bias managed through reflexivity
Goal	Replicability, neutrality	Contextual fidelity, ethical interpretation
Validation	Statistical measures	Transparency, coherence, dialogue

Contemporary qualitative methodologists increasingly recognise that what is needed is a broader conception of objectivity, one that sees nuance not as its obstacle but as its necessary ally in meaning making (Christou, 2025; Goyes and Sandberg, 2025). This sentiment echoes Guba and Lincoln's calls for trustworthiness criteria in qualitative research; emphasizing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as an alternative to naive empiricist notions of validation (Enworo, 2023). It also resonates with feminist epistemologists who have critiqued the 'view from nowhere' in science (Harding, 2023). For instance, an argument is made for an embodied objectivity or situated knowledge, establishing that all observation is from a perspective and that acknowledging one's standpoint leads to stronger, not weaker, objectivity (Trächtler, 2024). Rather than aiming for the impossible ideal of a completely neutral observer, Haraway's 'view from somewhere' celebrates partial perspectives as a source of insight (Schmidgen, 2023). Similarly, Sandra Harding's concept of strong objectivity demands a rigorous reflexivity about the researcher's own social location and values, placing the subject of knowledge on the same critical plane as the objects of knowledge (Jebeile, 2022). This heightened self-scrutiny, Harding argues, ultimately produces less biased and more robust knowledge than claims of neutrality (Harding, 2023). Such perspectives underline that eliminating nuance does not guarantee objectivity; on the contrary, a failure

to consider multiple viewpoints and context can lead to systematic blind spots or hidden biases in research.

Philosophers of science have also problematised the binary between objective facts and subjective interpretations. A move beyond objectivism and relativism has been advocated, emphasizing a middle path that acknowledges the socially situated nature of inquiry while still upholding the notion of truth (Colapietro, 2023). In the domain of social science, Charles Taylor has influentially argued that interpretive understanding is indispensable and that attempting to purge it in favour of purely objective descriptions results in shallow or distorted accounts of human life (Taylor, 2023). Taylor observes that natural science strives for data with one fixed meaning (univocal data) to enable consensus, but in social science the data (e.g. actions, utterances, symbols) are inherently multivocal, always open to multiple meanings and interpretation (Taylor, 2023). Forcing qualitative data into a single meaning for the sake of intersubjective agreement can strip away what is meaningful about it in the first place (Eliezer and Peled, 2023). Thus, attempts to imitate a narrow vision of objectivity in the social realm risk producing what Taylor calls 'highly distorted or largely vacuous' representations of the social world (Hendrickson, 2022). In a similar vein, anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) maintained that only through 'thick description' i.e rich, nuanced accounts of culture can researchers approach an understanding of what is really going on in a given context; a mere 'thin' account of observable behaviour without interpretation misses the meaning that makes those observations intelligible (Balmaceda, 2022).

Further critiques of the binary come from postcolonial and decolonial scholarship, which emphasise how Eurocentric notions of scientific objectivity have historically silenced alternative epistemologies. Scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in Decolonizing Methodologies argue that the imposition of rigid, supposedly objective research standards has often marginalised indigenous ways of knowing, which are holistic, relational, and deeply embedded in cultural context. From this perspective, nuance is not an indulgence but a form of justice: it ensures that diverse voices and epistemologies are heard on their own terms rather than flattened into categories devised from dominant worldviews. In such contexts, claiming neutrality can perpetuate epistemic violence, whereas (and as Table 2 shows) embracing nuance responsibly opens the possibility of more ethical, inclusive forms of objectivity.

Table 2. Nuance vs. Objectivity

Assumption	Positivist View	Hermeneutic Challenge
Nuance weakens objectivity	Yes	No – Nuance enriches rigour
Objectivity = neutrality	Yes	No – Objectivity = ethical integrity
Multiple meanings problematic	Yes	No – They offer depth

Philosophy of science also offers insights. Thomas Kuhn's (1962) notion of paradigms shows that what counts as objective knowledge is historically contingent, shaped by communities of practice and their shared assumptions. Paul Feyerabend (1975) went further, suggesting in *Against Method* that no single scientific method can claim universal authority. These critiques align with the view that objectivity is not best understood as a rigid set of procedures but as a commitment to fair reasoning, open dialogue, and accountability to evidence. They reinforce the idea that objectivity evolves with disciplinary debates and cultural shifts, rather than standing above them.

Moreover, the binary between nuance and objectivity obscures the fact that even quantitative research relies on interpretive acts. Deciding what to measure, how to operationalise concepts, or how to interpret statistical significance all involve judgments shaped by theory, context, and values (Hacking, 1999). These interpretive decisions are rarely neutral, yet they are often naturalised as objective because they are embedded in numbers. Recognising this undermines the charge that qualitative research alone is vulnerable to subjectivity. Instead, it highlights that all research, whether qualitative or quantitative, involves both nuance and interpretation; the difference lies in how explicitly these are acknowledged and managed.

In sum, the tension between nuance and objectivity stems from an outdated conception of objectivity as complete separation of knower and known. Newer paradigms in qualitative research, as well as philosophical critiques of positivism, suggest that objectivity can be reimagined (Mosinyan, 2024). It is not a binary choice between being scientific and being interpretive. Rather, the challenge is how to be rigorously interpretive i.e to carry out nuanced research in a disciplined, transparent, and responsible manner. This reimagining is precisely where hermeneutic philosophy provides valuable guidance, offering principles to move beyond the false binary and toward a more integrated understanding of validity in qualitative research.

HERMENEUTICS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL AND RIGOROUS INTERPRETATION

Hermeneutics, the philosophy of interpretation, offers a powerful framework for reconciling the interpretive nature of qualitative research with demands for rigour and credibility (Vella, 2024). At its core, hermeneutic theory insists that understanding is not a mechanical act of decoding an objective truth; rather, all understanding is an interpretive process shaped by history, language, culture, and the prior experiences of both researcher and participants (Virkler and Ayayo, 2023). Far from undermining validity, acknowledging this situated and dialogical character of understanding allows for a more faithful and ethically responsible approach to meaning in research.

The hermeneutic tradition provides concepts and practices that enable researchers to treat nuance as a strength to be cultivated through rigorous interpretation, instead of a weakness to be suppressed.

Hermeneutic philosophers show that understanding unfolds via a "hermeneutic circle a continuous dialogue between part and whole; whereby interpreters refine their grasp of the whole by reference to its parts and vice versa through iterative recontextualization (Tomkins and Eatough, 2018). This cyclical process acts as a safeguard for rigour, as interpretations evolve, they are repeatedly checked against both the evidence and the broader context to ensure internal coherence and fidelity to the phenomenon. Equally important is a balanced interpretive stance: hermeneutic inquiry invites both a sympathetic understanding of participants' accounts and a critical interrogation of their deeper implications, a dual perspective similar to Ricoeur's hermeneutics of faith and hermeneutics of suspicion (Tang, 2021). By engaging both empathy and critique, researchers can uncover layered meanings such as hidden power dynamics without losing sight of participants' authentic voices, thereby further bolstering interpretive rigour. Moreover, qualitative inquiry often entails a double hermeneutic, wherein participants first interpret their own experiences in articulating them, and researchers then interpret those interpretations. Rather than introducing bias, this layered sense making is seen as enriching: the researcher's guided insights can illuminate latent meanings that participants might not explicitly voice, so long as these insights remain anchored in participants' narratives and are transparently derived.

Modern hermeneutics has deep roots. In the late 19th century, Wilhelm Dilthey extended earlier hermeneutic ideas (which began as methods for interpreting scripture) into a general methodology for human sciences. Dilthey argued that human cultural and social life expresses itself in observable objectifications (texts, actions, artworks, institutions) which researchers must interpret to understand the inner meaning or lived experience behind them (Gillo, 2021). Crucially, this interpretation cannot rely on empathy or introspection alone; it requires historical contextualisation. As Dilthey emphasized, understanding a social action or text means situating it in its historical context and grasping the interplay between outward expression and inward meaning i.e the outer and inner aspects of life (Nelson, 2023). He contended that the human sciences have a unique subject matter and method distinct from the natural sciences (McAllister, 2023). Whereas natural sciences explain phenomena by subsuming them under general laws, human sciences aim to understand the particular meanings of human creations and actions, which entails interpretive insight rather than purely causal explanation. Dilthey's legacy for contemporary qualitative methodology is the notion that objectivity in understanding is not achieved by eliminating the human factor, but by rigorously grounding interpretations in evidence of historical

and cultural context. In other words, one strives for objectivity through thorough contextualisation and critical self-reflection, rather than through detachment alone.

In 20th century existential phenomenology, Martin Heidegger made an even more radical claim: interpretation is not just a method researchers apply, it is a basic condition of human existence (Anam, 2024). Heidegger proposed that the human person is always already in a state of understanding the world; being is fundamentally interpretive. He introduced the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which in his formulation meant that understanding each part of a text or phenomenon is shaped by pre-understandings of the whole, and vice versa (Gillo, 2021). Rather than seeing prejudices or prior knowledge as biases to be eliminated, Heidegger saw them as the starting point for interpretation though he insisted they must be held up to reflection and revision in light of new insights (Philipse, 2021).

One cannot bracket out all assumptions. Instead, one engages in a process of becoming aware of one's fore-meanings and allowing them to evolve. Heidegger thus rejected the ideal of complete neutrality as neither possible nor desirable. Understanding, for Heidegger, is always contextual and participatory: researchers understand phenomena by being in dialogue with them, guided by their evolving fore-structures of knowledge. The implication for qualitative research is profound: the researcher is inevitably implicated in the interpretation, and this is not a threat to validity but a resource to be managed through critical reflexivity. From a Heideggerian angle, objectivity becomes authentic understanding, achieved by a disciplined iterative process (the hermeneutic circle) where one's initial assumptions are continuously checked against the things themselves i.e the data or texts (Gillo, 2021). The outcome is not an absolute truth in positivistic terms, but a well-grounded interpretation that acknowledges its own situatedness.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, further developed these ideas into comprehensive philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer argued that understanding is inherently a fusion of horizons. By horizon, Gadamer meant the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (Judhananto and Sitorus, 2025). Each person or historical period has a horizon shaped by their culture and experience. Understanding occurs when the horizon of the interpreter and the horizon of the text merge to yield a new, expanded horizon (Piecychna, 2023). Rather than trying to eliminate one's prejudices, Gadamer suggested researchers should openly engage them in dialogue with the perspectives embedded in the data. Our historically affected consciousness means that we inevitably bring pre-judgments to the act of understanding. Some of these prejudices can be enabling (they make understanding possible), while others may be limiting or distortive; the task is to discriminate between them through dialogue and reflection. Gadamer thus positions dialogue at the heart of the interpretive process: understanding is not a one-way extraction of information, but a two-way conversation between researcher and par-

ticipant, between reader and text where both sides may be transformed (Rule, 2024; Smith and Noble, 2025). In practical terms, Gadamerian hermeneutics demands that qualitative researchers be transparent about their starting assumptions and remain open to having those assumptions changed through engagement with the data.

Notably, Gadamer did not deny the importance of objectivity altogether; rather, he denied the sufficiency and primacy of objectivity as conceived by positivism (Ruthrof, 2022). He acknowledged that scholars should strive to be objective in the sense of doing justice to the subject matter, but he argued that objectivity cannot mean an absence of perspective. All understanding involves a perspective and claiming to have none is self-deceptive. What we can do is approach our research subjects with what Gadamer called 'intellectual honesty' and openness (Bhattacharya and Kim, 2020). Gadamer summed up hermeneutic ethics as the ability to listen to 'the other' in the belief that they could be right. This stance of openness is a cornerstone of hermeneutic objectivity: it requires sincere effort to understand phenomena on their own terms and a willingness to have one's own view corrected or enriched by the encounter. Objectivity, in this light, is less about neutrality and more about fairness and dialogue.

Paul Ricœur added another dimension to hermeneutics, emphasizing the oscillation between understanding and explanation and the ethical imperative of interpretation (Tasso, 2022). He contrasts a hermeneutics of suspicion critical of power and ideology with a hermeneutics of faith committed to understanding meaning in good faith (Tang, 2021). A hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to unmask hidden forces, ideologies, or power imbalances beneath apparent meanings; it approaches texts and narratives skeptically, probing for distortion or manipulation. A hermeneutics of faith, by contrast, approaches the object of study with a willingness to hear its meaning in good faith and to seek understanding on its own terms. Ricœur argued that both moments are essential: researchers should be critical i.e suspicious of surface meanings that may conceal deeper truths, but also empathetic, i.e. willing to be moved by and learn from the text or participant. He emphasized that interpretation can be both rigorous and charitable, and he insisted that interpretations must ultimately be arguable and open to public scrutiny (Xavier and Escach-Dubourg, 2022).

In other words, even the most nuanced interpretation should be presented with reasons and evidence such that others can debate its validity. This aligns with the idea that coherence, logical reasoning, and fidelity to the data are the arbiters of objectivity in qualitative research, rather than the elimination of all subjectivity. Ricœur's perspective is that an ethical obligation underpins good qualitative research i.e the obligation to represent participants' meanings faithfully while also subjecting one's own interpretations to critical questioning. By emphasizing both hermeneutics of suspicion and hermeneutics of faith, Ricœur effectively merges nuance with rigour. That is, researchers must neither naively accept every narrative at face value

nor cynically dismiss meanings as nothing but some underlying factor. Instead, they must engage in a careful dance of understanding and critique.

Beyond Gadamer and Ricœur, other voices have enriched the hermeneutic perspective. Jürgen Habermas, for instance, engaged Gadamer in a famous debate (Vessey, 2021), agreeing that understanding is historical and dialogical but critiquing hermeneutics for what he saw as a lack of attention to power and distortion. Habermas argued that tradition and prejudice can mislead, and that critical reflection on ideology is necessary for any understanding to be complete (Susen, 2021). He feared that a purely hermeneutic approach might accept understanding as it is, without asking whose interests it serves. From Habermas's critical theory viewpoint, researchers should incorporate a critical hermeneutic that questions whether the meanings observed are distorted by domination or false consciousness (Gillo, 2021). Indeed, Habermas introduced the idea of an ideal speech situation in which genuine dialogue free from coercion could ground objective understanding. In qualitative practice, this suggests incorporating critical questions about power, social context, and whose voice is heard or silenced in the data. Hermeneutic research influenced by Habermas would, for example, be attentive to how participants' narratives might reflect internalized social prejudices or systemic constraints, and the researcher would aim to identify and account for these in the analysis. While Gadamer contended that hermeneutics itself, done properly, is self-reflective enough to expose prejudices, he asserted that to be unaware of one's biases is more dogmatic than to acknowledge the universality of hermeneutics (Ruthrof, 2022).Habermas's insistence on explicit critical reflection has led many qualitative researchers to blend hermeneutic interpretation with critical theory or emancipatory approaches (e.g. feminist, postcolonial, or Marxist-informed qualitative research).

Another perspective comes from Jacques Derrida and post-structuralism, which highlight the importance of indeterminacy in meaning. Derrida's approach of deconstruction holds that texts (and by extension, social actions or accounts) do not have a single, stable meaning or subject matter to be objectively understood; rather, meaning is always deferred in an endless play of differences (Mendie and Udofia, 2020). It presents a perspective that any claim to have arrived at a definitive interpretation is suspect, because there will always be other viable readings. Derrida thus underscores the radical plurality of nuance i.e an extreme form of multivocality (Olivier, 2022). While this stance might seem to make any notion of objectivity impossible, qualitative researchers have taken constructive lessons from deconstruction by remaining humble about their interpretations and alert to marginalized meanings or internal contradictions in texts (Fazlollahi Ghomshe, and Mohammadi, 2025). In practice, acknowledging Derrida reminds us that no interpretation ever exhausts the meaning of qualitative data; there is always excess or supplementarity (Jacobsen, 2024.). The goal of rigorous qualitative research is not to capture the

one true meaning (an impossibility), but to provide a well-supported, insightful, and useful interpretation while recognising it as one interpretation among many. In summary, the inclusion of Derridean thinking pushes hermeneutically inclined researchers to embrace intellectual humility and to invite alternative perspectives as part of the scholarly dialogue. Thus, Table 3 below attempts to synthesise the different perspectives and their implications for qualitative researchers.

Table 3. Hermeneutic Thinkers and Core Contributions

Philosopher	Key Idea	Implication for Qualitative Research
Dilthey	Contextual understanding	Interpret social action through life context
Heidegger	Interpretation as existence	Researcher always part of meaning-making
Gadamer	Fusion of horizons	Dialogue between researcher and subject
Ricœur	Faith & suspicion	Balance empathy with critique
Derrida	Indeterminacy	Invite plural readings, avoid finality

In essence, hermeneutic philosophy reframes the research process as an ongoing dialogue between interpreter and data, guided by reflexivity, historical or contextual consciousness, and ethical commitment. It requires the researcher to assume a dual role i.e both engaged interpreter (immersed in the particularities of participants' meanings) and critical examiner (scrutinising one's own interpretations and the influence of broader structures). This framework turns the demand for rigour into a positive force in qualitative research; rigour is achieved not by excluding the personal or contextual, but by systematically accounting for them. As Table 4 shows, strategies like maintaining an audit trail of decision-making, engaging in researcher reflexivity journals, peer debriefing, participant validation, and triangulation of sources all align with a hermeneutic ethos of transparency and dialogue (Ahmed, 2024; Bang, 2024).

Table 4. Strategies for Ensuring Hermeneutic Objectivity

Strategy	Purpose	Linked Thinker
Reflexive journals	Track bias & fore-meanings	Heidegger
Audit trail	Support transparency	Ricœur
Peer debriefing	Check interpretive logic	Habermas
Member validation	Confirm accuracy with participants	Gadamer

What hermeneutics offers, above all, is a redefinition of objectivity not as the absence of perspective, but as the disciplined, well-argued use of perspective. In

hermeneutic inquiry, an interpretation can be considered objective to the extent that it is coherent, grounded in the data and context i.e contextual fidelity (MacLeod et al., 2023), and offered in a spirit of openness to scrutiny and revision. This kind of objectivity is a virtue of discourse rather than a static property of results. It is inherently ethical because it involves respect for the phenomenon and accountability to the audience through argumentative support and transparency.

This hermeneutic conception of inquiry also resonates with contemporary methodological guidance in qualitative fields. Scholars now emphasise that rigour stems from qualities like interpretive coherence, reflexivity, transparency, and contextual fidelity rather than from mechanical reproducibility of results Maher (2025). In educational research, for example, Maher (2025) argues that an interpretive study's integrity is demonstrated when researchers explicitly justify how their choices align with a coherent philosophical approach, account for their positionality, and carry out ethically transparent analyses, thereby evidencing rigour without resorting to positivist criteria. Notably, this view also reexamines practices like member checking (asking participants to verify findings). Some argue that while member feedback can enhance credibility, it may not suit hermeneutic phenomenology, where valid interpretations often extend beyond participants' own initial understandings. In hermeneutic research, an interpretation's trustworthiness lies less in participant endorsement and more in how well it is supported by the data and its internal logic (Vella, 2024). Such approaches show that nuanced, context-rich interpretation can be achieved with systematic care, ensuring that depth of insight is accompanied by accountability and intellectual honesty.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION: OBJECTIVITY IN A NUANCED INTERPRETIVE PROCESS

To make these abstract ideas more concrete, consider a practical illustration in the context of an actual qualitative study. Imagine a researcher is investigating leadership practices in culturally diverse teams using in-depth interviews across different organisations. As the interviews proceed, it becomes evident that the very concept of leadership carries multiple nuanced meanings for participants depending on their cultural background, professional role, and personal experience. For example, some participants describe leadership in terms of hierarchical authority and directive decision-making i.e leadership as giving orders and maintaining control (Joullié *et al*., 2021). Others emphasise collaborative influence, describing a good leader as someone who facilitates teamwork, shares responsibility, and listens; a view aligning with notions of emotional intelligence and distributed leadership (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Still others speak of leadership

in almost spiritual or moral terms; leadership as stewardship or moral guidance often rooted in religious or community traditions as documented in a recent phenomenological study of Christian nonprofit leaders (Madson, 2025). These perspectives are not just minor variations; they reflect fundamentally different understandings of what it means to lead.

At first glance, such diversity of meanings might seem to present a challenge to objectivity. If leadership means so many things, how can the researcher produce a single objective account? A naive approach might be to force these responses into a predefined framework say, coding everything into a few categories like authoritarian vs. democratic leadership and counting frequencies. However, doing so could flatten the richness of the data, glossing over context and reducing nuance to a simplistic binary. Key insights such as why certain cultural groups value one form of leadership over another, or how personal history shapes one's leadership style might be lost. Alternatively, the researcher might be tempted to quote a few illustrative statements from each participant and simply celebrate the variety, but without deeper analysis such an approach could be criticized as anecdotal or lacking rigour.

A hermeneutic approach offers a way to navigate this complexity by treating the multiplicity of meanings not as an obstacle to objectivity, but as material to be interpreted systematically. The researcher begins by acknowledging their own preconceptions of leadership. Perhaps the researcher was educated in a Western context with a bias toward seeing leadership as individual charisma; maybe they have assumptions about what constitutes effective leadership. Instead of pretending to be a blank slate, the researcher brings these preconceptions to light. For instance, by writing a reflexive memo at the start of the project or discussing their stance with peers. This echoes Gadamer's point that we must be aware of our horizon to allow it to fuse with that of our participants. By identifying one's initial horizon (e.g. "I tend to view leadership as X…"), the researcher primes themselves to recognise when participants are saying something that challenges or extends that view.

Furthermore, as interviews are conducted and transcribed, the researcher approaches the data dialogically. Rather than immediately coding statements into fixed categories, they situate each participant's meaning within a broader context. For a participant from a collectivist culture describing leadership as community stewardship, the researcher explores the cultural context (perhaps drawing on anthropological or sociological literature about that culture's leadership norms) to better understand the significance of that description. Similarly, if a participant uses religious metaphors (a leader is like a shepherd), the researcher considers the religious or spiritual tradition informing that metaphor. This process is akin to what Dilthey advocated: moving from the external expression to the inner meaning by embedding it in its life-context (Gillo, 2021). Throughout this analysis, the researcher remains attuned to language and power dynamics. For instance, if a junior team member hesitates

to criticise their leader, the researcher notes how power relations might shape the narrative (perhaps the participant's cultural norm discourages open criticism of authority). This sensitivity reflects a Habermasian critical hermeneutic element, asking where understanding might be distorted by social forces.

Crucially, the hermeneutic researcher employs strategies to enhance the credibility and transparency of the interpretation, thereby addressing conventional concerns about objectivity. One such strategy is iterative member checking (Burke Reifman, White, and Kalish, 2022), after developing preliminary interpretations of different leadership notions, the researcher might go back to a subset of participants with a summary and ask, "Does this capture what you meant? Did I understand correctly?" (This practice aligns with ensuring communicative validation (Bachman and Palmer, 2024), as per Lincoln & Guba's credibility criterion (Enworo, 2023), and is indeed recommended in qualitative validation procedures (Ahmed, 2024). Another strategy is peer debriefing or seeking analytic auditing, the researcher can discuss their interpretations with colleagues or mentors not involved in the study, providing them with excerpts of data and the tentative analysis (Bang, 2024). If those peers can trace the logic of how the researcher moved from raw interview quotes to their conclusions, and if they find the interpretation reasonable and supported, it bolsters confidence in the objectivity of the process. An audit trail can be kept, documenting how each theme was developed, which ensures that others can follow the chain of evidence.

By applying hermeneutic principles in this way, the researcher constructs an account of leadership across cultures that is coherent, context-sensitive, and theoretically informed. For example, the final analysis might reveal that what seemed like disparate definitions of leadership actually share some underlying dimensions. Perhaps they all address how leaders manage the tension between individual and group goals, or how they invoke ethical principles. The researcher might integrate insights from leadership theory or ethics to articulate a framework that accommodates these diverse views thus adding a layer of theoretical triangulation. The resulting interpretation does not iron out the differences for the sake of uniformity; rather, it presents a synthesis (see Table 5) that highlights patterns through the differences. It might, for instance, propose a typology of leadership concepts (authority-based, collaborative, spiritual-moral, etc.) and discuss how each arises from particular socio-cultural conditions, while also noting points of overlap (e.g. all types value trust, albeit expressed differently).

Table 5. Synthesized Interpretations – Leadership Case

Leadership View	Cultural Origin/Context	Interpretive Method	Objectivity Strategy
Directive Authority	Hierarchical cultures	Contextual coding	Reflexivity
Collaborative Influence	Team-based orgs	Thick description	Dialogical validation
Moral Stewardship	Religious/NGOs	Metaphor analysis	Ethical transparency

In this interpretive process, nuance is fully embraced, yet the outcome is not a loose collage of subjective impressions it is a structured, argued narrative that others can examine and critique. The researcher explicitly justifies why certain interpretations are privileged over others, based on evidence and logical coherence. For instance, if two interpretations of a participant's quote were possible, the researcher explains why the chosen interpretation was deemed more plausible, perhaps drawing on the participant's other statements or the context. All along, the researcher remains open to alternative readings, inviting readers of the research or the participants themselves to offer counter-interpretations. This openness to scrutiny exemplifies what we might call hermeneutic objectivity; the account is not presented as the incontestable truth, but as a reasoned interpretation that stands up to examination and dialogue.

By the end of the study, the complexity that initially seemed like a barrier becomes a virtue. The researcher does not claim to have eliminated subjectivity; instead, they have managed and harnessed subjectivity in a thoughtful way. The final portrayal of 'leadership in diverse teams' might show, for example, how different cultural narratives of leadership can complement each other or lead to misunderstandings in practice, offering practical insights for organisations. It is an account that is richer than a monolithic definition of leadership, yet more disciplined and credible than an unstructured series of anecdotes. In effect, the researcher has demonstrated how nuance and objectivity can be reconciled; the nuanced findings are presented with a transparent methodology and an ethical awareness, allowing others to trust the results not because they are formulaically repeatable, but because they are well-argued, contextually true to the participants, and open to further inquiry.

This illustration underscores that in qualitative research, rigour is achieved not by ignoring complexity, but by engaging with it systematically. What might superficially appear as subjective (researcher interpretation, contextual understanding) is transformed into a source of strength, provided the interpretation is conducted with intellectual honesty and care. The researcher's role is more akin to a translator or dialogical partner than a detached observer translating between participants' worldviews and the audience's understanding, while ensuring the translation is consistent and insightful. Such a process embodies the hermeneutic virtues of understanding; it is iterative, dialogical, reflexive, and transparent. It shows that objectivity is not

neutralisation of the human element, but the responsible and reflexive deployment of the human element in research.

A parallel example from the field of education further illustrates how hermeneutics brings interpretive depth and rigour together. Consider a study of teachers' experiences with implementing inclusive education. A hermeneutic approach would prompt the researcher to begin by reflecting on their own assumptions about inclusion and then engage with teachers' narratives to interpret how inclusive practices are understood in different school contexts. For instance, one teacher might describe inclusion as fundamentally about creating a sense of belonging and community for every student, whereas another might focus on the pragmatic adaptation of teaching strategies to accommodate students' varied needs. A hermeneutic researcher would treat these divergent emphases not as contradictions to be resolved, but as complementary insights, each grounded in a particular context that together enrich the overall understanding of what inclusion entails. The hermeneutic circle guides this analysis by moving back and forth between each teacher's account and the broader educational cultural framework, ensuring that individual meanings are respected while forming a coherent overall interpretation. Throughout, quality is reinforced by practices such as keeping a reflexive journal and maintaining a transparent audit trail of decision-making, so that peers can trace how conclusions were reached. By embracing such complexity, the researcher can produce findings that are both richly nuanced and credible to others, demonstrating hermeneutic objectivity in action.

REFRAMING OBJECTIVITY: TOWARD AN ETHICS OF INTERPRETATION

The following discussions point toward a reframing of objectivity appropriate for qualitative inquiry, one grounded in ethical interpretive practice rather than in illusory neutrality. In this reframed view, objectivity becomes a commitment to intellectual honesty, transparency of method, and accountability in interpretation. It is less about adhering to a rigid procedural checklist and more about the researcher's stance and integrity in handling data.

Several key features characterize this ethical interpretive objectivity:

1. Reflexive Integrity: The researcher acknowledges that complete elimination of perspective is impossible. Instead, they strive for integrity by openly examining how their preconceptions and values influence the inquiry (Finlay, 2024). As Nielsen and Utsler (2022) put it, understanding always involves some form of pre-judgment, but the task is to make those prejudgments visible and subject to critique. By documenting one's reflexive self-analysis (for example, in

methodological appendices or reflexive sections of a report), the researcher demonstrates an ethical commitment to self-scrutiny. This echoes Harding's notion of strong objectivity, which requires turning the critical lens back onto the scientist themselves. In practical terms, a qualitative researcher might include a section on Researcher Positionality in a publication, thereby allowing readers to weigh how the researcher's background may have shaped the interpretations and to see what steps were taken to mitigate bias (e.g. bracketing interviews, reflexive journaling).

2. Dialogical Validity: Objectivity is pursued through dialogue: both the internal dialogue of the hermeneutic circle and the external dialogue with peers, participants, and readers. Rather than conceiving objectivity as singularity of truth, this approach treats consensus building and intersubjective agreement as a process. Validity emerges from a community's reasoned agreement that an interpretation is sound or at least reasonable. Habermas's influence is evident here; the ideal toward which we strive is that of an ideal speech situation (Aigwi et al., 2021) where all voices and objections can be raised freely, and only the force of the better argument prevails. In qualitative research practice, this means creating opportunities for collaborative checking of results through participant feedback, workshops, or presenting findings to stakeholder groups and valuing critique as a means to improve the interpretive account. An interpretation that can survive diverse critical perspectives is, in this sense, more objective than one that hasn't been exposed to dialogue. Gadamer's insistence that understanding requires openness to the other's truth is transformed into a methodological norm; be willing to let your analysis be questioned and modified by others, including those whom the research is about.

3. Coherence and Groundedness: An objective qualitative account is one that is internally coherent and grounded in evidence from the data and context. Ricœur's criterion that interpretation must be arguable (Xavier and Escach-Dubourg, 2022) means that researchers should present their interpretations with logical reasoning and support, so that others can follow the argument and see how conclusions were drawn. This is analogous to how a legal argument is made persuasive by evidence and reasoning rather than the authority of the lawyer. In qualitative reports, this often takes the form of rich excerpts from data linked to thematic analysis, so readers can verify that the interpretations make sense given what participants said or did. Textual fidelity is crucial; the interpretations should not blatantly contradict what is in the data, and where they go beyond the literal text, the researcher should explain why this extrapolation is warranted for instance, by linking to theory or other participants' narratives. By providing clear documentation (quotes, field note descriptions, etc.), the researcher invites the reader to assess the credibility of the interpretation. This transparency turns the

subjective act of interpretation into a publicly examinable argument. Qualitative objectivity is hence achieved when interpretations are presented for the purpose by scholarly community.

4. Ethical Transparency and Responsibility: Perhaps most importantly, this reframed objectivity is inseparable from ethics. The researcher carries a responsibility to represent participants and phenomena faithfully and respectfully, and to do so in a way that contributes to knowledge without causing harm or distortion. Objectivity in this sense means being true to the phenomenon not imposing one's theory or biases so forcefully that the voice of the data is lost. It also means being honest about uncertainty. Rather than hiding ambiguities or counterevidence, an ethically objective report will acknowledge places where the data were puzzling or did not neatly fit the researcher's framework, and it will discuss alternative interpretations considered. This forthrightness strengthens the objectivity of the account because it shows the researcher is not cherry-picking evidence to suit a narrative but is wrestling with the complexity of reality. An ethically grounded interpretation also involves crediting sources of ideas to avoid misappropriation and being transparent about research procedures to avoid misleading the audience about how data were produced. All these practices align with formal guidelines of research integrity (Gupta & Mishra, 2024) which stress honesty, accountability, and fairness as pillars of good science.

When qualitative researchers adopt this stance, objectivity is not lost in nuance; it is made possible through the careful handling of nuance. In fact, by embracing nuance ethically, researchers can produce knowledge that is more objective in a human-relevant sense than a so-called objective study that ignores context and meaning. For instance, a large survey might claim objectivity through numbers, but if the concepts measured are poorly understood or culturally biased, the findings could be quite misleading. By contrast, a nuanced qualitative study that deeply explores those concepts in context may provide a more accurate thus objective understanding of the phenomenon, even if it doesn't yield a single generalisable metric. As an example, consider cross-cultural mental health research; a questionnaire might objectively measure depression in various cultures, but if that questionnaire assumes symptoms that aren't recognised as distress in some cultures, its objectivity is superficial. A nuanced qualitative approach that explores how different communities conceptualise sadness or despair might actually lead to a more valid, culturally informed understanding of depression, hence a form of objectivity that is contextually true. This reflects what some scholars in interpretive social science argue; intersubjective objectivity (agreement among informed knowers) (Majlesi, 2021; Levitt et al., 2022) and pragmatic objectivity (Daston and Galison 2021; Gillespie, Glăveanu, and de Saint Laurent, 2024) i.e usefulness and robustness of an understanding in

practice can sometimes trump simplistic notions of objectivity as reproducibility or quantifiability

Recent research on scientific methodology further bolsters this perspective. In interviews with leading methodologists, Levitt et al. (2022) found broad agreement that all inquiry is value-laden and that investigators must openly acknowledge their theoretical and personal perspectives to guard against both unchecked subjectivity and a false sense of detachment (Levitt et al., 2020). Rather than seeking to eliminate the researcher's influence, these experts advise managing it transparently using reflexivity as a tool to prevent what Levitt and colleagues term the premature foreclosure of possible understanding caused by unexamined biases or assumptions. They further propose embracing pluralism in perspectives and methods, so that research questions can be approached from multiple angles as needed. Ultimately, this consensus reframes objectivity as something achieved not by eliminating subjectivity, but by managing it with reflexive honesty and methodological flexibility.

Another way to articulate this reframing is to say that objectivity in qualitative research becomes an ethic of inquiry. The goal is not to eliminate the researcher's mind, but to discipline it; to cultivate habits of mind that yield trustworthy interpretations. These habits or practices include careful listening, openness to surprise, critical reflection, and dialogical engagement. They also include suspending rash judgment; rather than quickly deciding what the data mean, the researcher lives with the ambiguity and explores multiple angles. In doing so, researchers adhere to what is called connoisseurship and educational criticism in qualitative work (Austin, S. and Stanley, S., 2022) i.e an expert sensitivity to subtle patterns combined with a systematic rendering of those patterns.

By reframing objectivity in this manner, qualitative researchers align themselves with a broader movement in the philosophy of science that recognises all observation as theory laden, and all knowledge as socially situated yet still strives for a form of objectivity. Objectivity can illustrate the effort to find forms of description that are not arbitrarily tied to one's subjective preference. In qualitative terms, this is achieved by maximising input from the data, from participants, from other perspectives, and from critical reasoning, so that the final account is not peculiar to the researcher but reflects a concerted engagement with the phenomenon from multiple sides. It is, in effect, objectivized subjectivity; the subjective insights of the researcher rendered in a form that others can inspect, appreciate, and build upon.

CONCLUSION

The supposed tension between nuance and objectivity in qualitative research dissolves once we move beyond an antiquated, positivist notion of objectivity. This

chapter has argued that hermeneutic philosophy provides a viable and indeed necessary resolution: an approach that respects the interpretive, meaning-centered nature of human inquiry while holding researchers to standards of reasoned argument, reflexive transparency, and ethical responsibility. Nuance and objectivity, rather than being opposing poles, emerge as complements in the pursuit of understanding. Nuance provides the depth and context sensitivity required to truly grasp human phenomena, whereas objectivity recast as an ethic of good interpretation provides the discipline and accountability that make our qualitative insights credible and communicable.

By embracing a hermeneutic approach, researchers can delve into complex, context-bound aspects of human life without sacrificing rigour. In fact, it is precisely by acknowledging complexity and treating interpretation as a rigorous practice that qualitative inquiry can achieve its most credible and insightful results. Objectivity is not abandoned in the face of nuance; rather, it is redefined and reclaimed. It becomes the outcome of a dialogical process; a collaborative achievement of understanding rather than the input of a detached procedure. This redefinition has significant implications. It suggests that training in qualitative research should place as much emphasis on developing researchers' reflexive and interpretive skills as on technical procedures. It also suggests that evaluation of qualitative research should consider criteria like coherence, insightfulness, and resonance (Tracy, 2025) alongside traditional markers of validity.

One of the central contributions of hermeneutic philosophy is its ability to articulate objectivity as an ethical stance rather than a methodological rule. In practical terms, this means that researchers are not simply technicians applying rules but ethical actors whose interpretive decisions carry consequences for how participants and their communities are represented. By foregrounding responsibility and dialogue, hermeneutic inquiry reframes objectivity as care for the phenomenon studied and fairness in the way interpretations are communicated. This marks a shift from a procedural understanding of rigour to a virtue-based understanding, where qualities such as humility, openness, and intellectual honesty become as important as methodological precision. The implications extend beyond methodology into pedagogy. Training in qualitative methods must go beyond the technicalities of coding, thematic analysis, or interview design to cultivate researchers who are capable of reflexive engagement and ethical discernment. Emerging scholarship in education emphasises the need for curricula that prepare students not only to conduct interviews or manage data but also to grapple with their own pre-understandings, positionalities, and interpretive commitments (Maher, 2025). Embedding hermeneutic philosophy into training programmes could ensure that future researchers are equipped to handle the inevitable ambiguities and complexities of fieldwork, seeing these not as threats to validity but as opportunities for deeper understanding. Equally important are the institutional and evaluative frameworks within which qualitative research

is assessed. Too often, evaluation criteria borrowed from positivist traditions lead to the dismissal of richly interpretive work as insufficiently rigorous. A hermeneutic reframing challenges journals, funding bodies, and universities to recognise coherence, reflexive transparency, and resonance as legitimate markers of quality (Watson, 2024). This does not lower the bar for qualitative research; rather, it raises it, demanding from researchers not only methodological precision but also ethical integrity and intellectual courage. By adopting evaluative standards aligned with hermeneutic principles, the academy can encourage research that is simultaneously more nuanced and more trustworthy.

Furthermore, hermeneutic approaches to objectivity have the potential to bridge divides between academic research and practice. In education, healthcare, and the social sciences, practitioners often find that abstract, decontextualised findings provide little guidance for addressing the complexities of real-world problems. Hermeneutically informed research, by contrast, produces knowledge that resonates with lived experience and remains sensitive to context. For instance, studies of inclusive education or community health practices grounded in hermeneutics can offer practitioners not rigid prescriptions but interpretive frameworks that help them navigate diverse situations with greater awareness and reflexivity. In this way, hermeneutic objectivity contributes not only to epistemic credibility but also to practical relevance.

Finally, there is a broader cultural and societal significance to the hermeneutic resolution of the nuance/objectivity tension. In an age marked by polarisation, misinformation, and scepticism toward expertise, the ability to produce knowledge that is both nuanced and trustworthy is of pressing importance. Hermeneutic objectivity offers a model of scholarship that resists simplistic binaries and recognises complexity without collapsing into relativism. It models a way of knowing that is dialogical, humble, and yet committed to truth as a shared, arguable, and revisable endeavour. In this respect, hermeneutic philosophy does not simply provide tools for qualitative research; it offers resources for cultivating more responsible forms of public reasoning in democratic societies. These considerations highlight that the reconciliation of nuance and objectivity is more than an academic exercise. It is a reorientation of how we conceive knowledge, rigour, and responsibility in the human sciences. By placing hermeneutics at the centre of this reorientation, we gain a framework that is at once philosophically robust, methodologically practical, and ethically attuned. The task ahead for qualitative researchers is to embody this ethos in their work, thereby demonstrating that nuanced interpretation, far from undermining objectivity, is the very condition for achieving it in meaningful and humanly relevant ways.

In conclusion, a hermeneutic resolution to the nuance/objectivity dichotomy invites the research community to broaden its conception of scientific rigor. It encourages

us to value the narrative truth and meaningful coherence that come from in-depth qualitative analyses, and to recognize that such analyses can be objective in a humanly relevant sense. Objectivity, then, is not an unreachable mirror of nature; it is the ongoing effort to ensure that this event of understanding is conducted with honesty, openness, and care. In a world increasingly aware of the complexity of social issues and human experiences, this hermeneutic approach to qualitative research offers a pathway to knowledge that is at once richly nuanced and responsibly objective.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The Pillars of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, *2*, 100051. DOI: 10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051

Aigwi, I. E., Phipps, R., Ingham, J., & Filippova, O. (2021). Characterisation of Adaptive Reuse Stakeholders and the Effectiveness of Collaborative Rationality towards Building Resilient Urban Areas. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *34*(2), 141–151. DOI: 10.1007/s11213-020-09521-0

Ali, I.M. (2024). 'A Guide for Positivist Research Paradigm: From Philosophy to Methodology.' *Idealogy Journal. 9*(2).

Anam, R.K. (2024). 'Hermeneutics Situation as the Philosophizing Method of Martin Heidegger and its Relevance to Social Research.' *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism. 10*(2). pp.161-182.

Austin, S., & Stanley, S. (2022). *'Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship: A Case Study Example.' Conceptual Analyses of Curriculum Inquiry Methodologies*. IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8848-2.ch011

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2024). *'The Construct Validation of Some Components of Communicative Proficiency 1.' The Writings of Lyle F. Bachman*. Routledge.

Balmaceda, F. G. (2022). 'The Thick Description of Clifford Geertz: An Anti-Scientific Approach to Anthropology.' *Acta Scientiarum. Human and Social Sciences.*, *44*(2), e65730.

Bang, T. C. (2024). *'Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Inquiries.' Applied Linguistics and Language Education Research Methods: Fundamentals and Innovations*. IGI Global.

Bentalha, B., & Alla, L. (2024). *'Revealing the Subtleties: The Art of Qualitative Studies in Science and Management.' Applying Qualitative Research Methods to Management Science*. IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-5543-5.ch001

Bhattacharya, K., & Kim, J. H. (2020). Reworking Prejudice in Qualitative Inquiry with Gadamer and De/Colonizing Onto-Epistemologies. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *26*(10), 1174–1183. DOI: 10.1177/1077800418767201

Burke Reifman, J., White, M. and Kalish, L. (2022). 'Students as Researchers and Participants: A Model of Iterative Member-Checking for Inclusive, Equity-Centered Assessment Research.' *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning. 3*(1). p.n1.

Cajahuanca, M., Jara, G. X., Cruz, G. J., Suarez, C. J., Yaipen, E. N. M., Rojas, V. Y., & Rodas, J. R. (2025). *Research Methodology Applied to The Social Sciences: From Hermeneutics to Holistic and Cross-Cultural*. Editorial Mar Caribe.

Christou, P. (2025). Looking Beyond Numbers in Qualitative Research: From Data Saturation to Data Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, *30*(1), 3088–3100. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2025.7560

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *The poetics and politics of ethnography*. University of California, Berkeley Press.

Clift, B. C., Batlle, I. C., Bekker, S., & Chudzikowski, K. (Eds.). (2023). *Qualitative Researcher Vulnerability: Negotiating, Experiencing and Embracing*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003349266

Colapietro, V. (2023). Le-didakh: A Defining Directive of the Talmudic Tradition. *Dewey Studies.*, *7*(1), 105–136.

Coronado-Maldonado, I., & Benítez-Márquez, M. D. (2023). Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, and Work Teams: A Hybrid Literature Review. *Heliyon*, *9*(10), E2023. DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20356 PMID: 37790975

Daston, L., & Galison, P. L. (2021). *Objectivity*. Princeton University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1c9hq4d

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1–32). Sage Publications Ltd.

Eliezer, K., & Peled, E. (2023). Intertextual Psychoanalytic-Intersubjective Analysis in Qualitative Research: "Can Two Walk Together, Except They Be Agreed?". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *26*(4), 425–437. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2021.2011118

Enworo, O. C. (2023). Application of Guba and Lincoln's Parallel Criteria to Assess Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research on Indigenous Social Protection Systems. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *23*(4), 372–384. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-08-2022-0116

Fazlollahi Ghomshe, S., & Mohammadi, R. (2025). Deconstruction Methodology in Qualitative Research: From Theory to Practice. *Methodology of Social Sciences and Humanities.*, *31*(122), 107–129.

Finlay, L. (2024). Qualitative Research: the "Good," the "Bad," the "Ugly". *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy. 14*1-19.

Frank, C., Magnone, P., & Netzer, O. (2022, August 28th). *Decisions Over Decimals*. 1st ed. Wiley. https://www.perlego.com/book/3739432

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

Gillespie, A., Glăveanu, V., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2024). *Pragmatism and Methodology: Doing Research that Matters with Mixed Methods*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781009031066

Gillo, M. D. (2021). Fundamentals of Hermeneutics as a Qualitative Research Theoretical Framework. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy.*, *2*(3), 42–45. DOI: 10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.43

Goyes, D. R., & Sandberg, S. (2025). Trust, Nuance, and Care: Advantages and Challenges of Repeat Qualitative Interviews. *Qualitative Research*, *25*(2), 330–349. DOI: 10.1177/14687941241246159

Gupta, C. P., & Mishra, M. (2024). *The Relation Between Intellectual Honesty and Research Integrity as the Fundamental Principles oof Research*. Research and Publication Ethics.

Halme, M., Piekkari, R., Matos, S., Wierenga, M., & Hall, J. (2024). Rigour vs. Reality: Contextualizing Qualitative Research in the Low-Income Settings in Emerging Markets. *British Journal of Management*, *35*(1), 36–51. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8551.12690

Harding, N. (2023). *'Locating our Research within Feminist Philosophies and Epistemologies'. Handbook of Feminist Research Methodologies in Management and Organization Studies*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Harding, S. (2023). *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues*. University Of Illinois Press.

Hendrickson, D. S. (2022). *Jesuit Higher Education in a Secular Age: A Response to Charles Taylor and the Crisis of Fullness*. Georgetown University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv29z1hmx

Hung, P., Miciak, M., Godziuk, K., Gross, D. P., & Forhan, M. (2024). Reducing Weight Bias and Stigma in Qualitative Research Interviews: Considerations for Researchers. *Obesity Reviews*, *25*(7), e13750. DOI: 10.1111/obr.13750 PMID: 38685680

Jacobsen, B. N. (2024). The Logic of the Synthetic Supplement in Algorithmic Societies. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *41*(4), 41–56. DOI: 10.1177/02632764231225768

Jebeile, J. (2022). *'Values and Objectivity in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.' Questioning Experts and Expertise*. Routledge.

Joullié, J. E., Gould, A. M., Spillane, R., & Luc, S. (2021). The Language of Power and Authority in Leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(4), 101491. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101491

Judhananto, M.N. and Sitorus, F.K. (2025). 'Fusion of Horizons: Pemikiran Gadamer Mengenai Dialog dan Pemahaman dalam Kehidupan Manusia.' *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Humaniora. 5*(1). pp.12-12.

Kadyschuk, L. (2023). *'Interpretive Analysis.' Varieties of Qualitative Research Methods: Selected Contextual Perspectives*. Springer International Publishing.

Koskinen, C. (2025). Researcher Vulnerability in Qualitative Research—A Conceptual Framework. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, *39*(1), e70012. DOI: 10.1111/scs.70012 PMID: 40087860

Levitt, H., Surace, F., Wu, M., Chapin, B., Hargrove, J., Herbitter, C., Lu, E., Maroney, M., & Hochman, A. (2020). The Meaning of Scientific Objectivity and Subjectivity: From the Perspective of Methodologists. *Psychological Methods*, *27*(4), 589–605. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1037/met0000363 PMID: 33048563

Levitt, H. M., Surace, F. I., Wu, M. B., Chapin, B., Hargrove, J. G., Herbitter, C., Lu, E. C., Maroney, M. R., & Hochman, A. L. (2022). The Meaning of Scientific Objectivity and Subjectivity: From the Perspective of Methodologists. *Psychological Methods*, *27*(4), 589–605. DOI: 10.1037/met0000363 PMID: 33048563

Lim, W. M. (2025). What is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *33*(2), 199–229. DOI: 10.1177/14413582241264619

MacLeod, M. L., McCaffrey, G., Wilson, E., Zimmer, L. V., Snadden, D., Zimmer, P., Jónatansdóttir, S., Fyfe, T. M., Koopmans, E., Ulrich, C., & Graham, I. D. (2023). Exploring the Intersection of Hermeneutics and Implementation: A Scoping Review. *Systematic Reviews*, *12*(1), 30. DOI: 10.1186/s13643-023-02176-7 PMID: 36864488

Maher, A. J. (2025). Rigour in Interpretive Qualitative Research in Education: Ideas to Think With. *British Educational Research Journal*, *51*(5), 2099–2155. DOI: 10.1002/berj.4156

Majlesi, A. R. (2021). *'The Intersubjective Objectivity of Learnables.' Classroom-based Conversation Analytic Research: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives on Pedagogy*. Springer International Publishing.

McAllister, J. W. (2023). Common Sense and the Difference Between Natural and Human Sciences. *Inquiry (Oslo, Norway)*, ●●●, 1–26. DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2023.2240430

Mendie, J.G. and Udofia, S.N. (2020). 'A Philosophical Analysis of Jacques Derrida's Contributions to Language and Meaning.' *International Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Science (IJ-HuMaSS). 3*(1). pp.20-34.

Mosinyan, D. (2024). Reimagining Epistemology: A Historical Analysis of Shifting Paradigms. *Multidisciplinary Reviews.*, *7*(5), 2024082–2024082. DOI: 10.31893/multirev.2024082

Nasution, U. (2022). Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutical Methodology in Understanding Text. *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies.*, *3*(1), 1–4. DOI: 10.30984/kijms.v3i1.59

Nelson, E. S. (2023). *'Individuation and Self-Awareness in Wilhelm Dilthey.' Varieties of Self-Awareness: New Perspectives from Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Comparative Philosophy*. Springer International Publishing.

Neubert, M. (2024). Foundations of Academic Philosophy for Doctoral Researchers. *SSRN* 5255888.

Nielsen, C. R., & Utsler, D. (2022). *'Gadamer, Fricker, and Honneth: Testimonial Injustice, Prejudice, and Social Esteem.' Epistemic Injustice and the Philosophy of Recognition*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780429435133-5

Olivier, B. (2022). 'Massive Deception Masquerading as Information and Communication: A (Largely) Derridean Perspective'. *Phronimon.*, *23*(1), 1–31. DOI: 10.25159/2413-3086/10811

Omodan, B. I. (2024). *Research Paradigms and their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences: A Practical Guide for Researchers*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003484066

Patton, C. M., & Broward, J. (2023). The Giants and Forerunners of Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and their Predecessors. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *7*(4), 79–94. DOI: 10.29333/ajqr/13600

Philipse, H. (2021). *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*. PUP. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1fkgd98

Piecychna, B. (2023). Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophy of Understanding and its Implications for a Model of Hermeneutical Translation Competence. *Perspectives.*, *31*(1), 74–87. DOI: 10.1080/0907676X.2022.2145909

Ricoeur, P. (2024). 'Discourse, Metaphysics, and Hermeneutics of the Self.' *Études Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies. 15*(2). pp.193-206.

Rule, P. (2024). Dialogue, Horizon and Chronotope: Using Bakhtin's and Gadamer's Ideas to Frame Online Teaching and Learning. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *43*(3), 305–323. DOI: 10.1007/s11217-024-09933-8

Ruthrof, H. (2022). *'Introduction: Gadamer–Benchmark of Hermeneutics.' The Roots of Hermeneutics in Kant's Reflective-Teleological Judgment*. Springer International Publishing.

Sarangi, S. (2024). Walking a Tightrope: The Ethical Dilemma of Rigour and/or Relevance in Interpretation-Driven Qualitative Inquiry. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice.*, *18*(3), 343–370. DOI: 10.3138/jalpp.28415

Schmidgen, W. (2023). Appreciation After Critique. *New Literary History*, *54*(2), 1085–1111. DOI: 10.1353/nlh.2023.a907160

Silalahi, A. D. (2024). Some Debates of Hermeneutic and Legal Interpretation: Critical Analysis of Hans-Georg Gadamer Philosophical Hermeneutics. *Mimbar Hukum.*, *36*(1), 213–233. DOI: 10.22146/mh.v36i1.9493

Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2025). Understanding Sources of Bias in Research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *28*(3), 137–139. DOI: 10.1136/ebnurs-2024-104231 PMID: 39762016

Soysal, Y., & Türkmen, S. (2024). ' Reinterpreting the Member Checking Validation Strategy in Qualitative Research Through the Hermeneutics Lens.'. *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: Theory & Practice.*, *2*(1), 42–63. DOI: 10.59455/qietp.19

Stanley, M. (2023). *'Qualitative Descriptive: A Very Good Place to Start.' Qualitative Research Methodologies for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003456216-4

Susen, S. (2021). 'Jürgen Habermas.' Kivisto, P. Ed. *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory. Volume I: A Contested Canon.* (pp. 369-394). Cambridge University Press.

Tang, M.T. (2021). 'In Defense of Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Interpretation of Freud's Psychoanalysis.' *Segni e Comprensione*. (100).

Tasso, B. C. (2022). Narrative as Action: Paul Ricœur and the Emancipatory Power of Interpretation. *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics.*, *45*(2), 37–45.

Taylor, C. (2023). *'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man.' The Philosophy of Society*. Routledge.

Tomkins, L., & Eatough, V. (2018). *'Hermeneutics: Interpretation, Understanding and Sense-Making.' SAGE handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*. SAGE.

Trächtler, J. (2024). The World as Witty Agent-Donna Haraway an the Object of Knowledge. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1389575. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1389575 PMID: 39372962

Tracy, S. J. (2025). Practicing Qualitative Research Under the "Big Tent": Origins, Development, and Continuing Relevance of the Eight Big-Tent Framework for Qualitative Quality. *Qualitative Inquiry*, ●●●, 10778004251348167. DOI: 10.1177/10778004251348167

Vella, J. (2024). In Pursuit of Credibility: Evaluating the Divergence Between Member-Checking and Hermeneutic Phenomenology. *Research in Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, *20*(7), 665–669. DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2024.04.001 PMID: 38575497

Vella, J. (2025). Reclaiming Dialogue: Focus Groups and Hermeneutic Phenomenology. *Research in Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, *21*(10), 811–816. DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2025.05.013 PMID: 40467397

Vessey, D. (2021). *'Gadamer on Tradition.' The Gadamerian Mind*. Routledge.

Virkler, H. A., & Ayayo, K. G. (2023). *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Baker Books.

Vuković, M., Urošević, S., & Dašić, D. (2023). 'Threats to Objectivity in Social Science Research.' *Sport*. Media and Business., *9*(2), 143–158.

Watson, A. (2024). A Postmodernist Qualitative Research Approach: Choosing Between Descriptive and Interpretive Phenomenology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. PMID: 39737771

White, E., & Davis, M. (2023). Exploring Subjectivity: A Critique of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research Review Letter.*, *1*(02), 96–103.

Xavier, B.I.O.Y. and Escach-Dubourg, T. (2022). 'A Hermeneutic Reading of Law and Legal Theory: Regarding Paul Ricœur.' *Meta-theory of Law. 235*. Steltenpohl, C. N., Lustick, H., Meyer, M. S., Lee, L. E., Stegenga, S. M., Reyes, L. S., & Renbarger, R. L. (2023). Rethinking transparency and rigor from a qualitative open science perspective. *Journal of Trial & Error, 4*(1). Hacking, I. (1999). *The social construction of what?*. Harvard university press.

Chapter 4
Exploring the Role of Lexical and Logical Semantics in Quantitative Research Within Business Management

Christina Kalaitsidou

iD https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4892-0038

Liverpool John Moores University, UK & Oryx University, Qatar

Sein Tin

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

For a long time, quantitative research methods have been recognised for their empirical rigour and apparent objectivity, serving as a cornerstone of evidence-based strategy in business management. Yet these methods are not free from the effects of semantic interpretation. This chapter examines lexical semantics—the study of word meanings—and logical semantics—the study of argument meanings—within quantitative research design, implementation, and interpretation. It argues that semantically informed interventions enhance accuracy, consistency, and practical relevance of outcomes. Moreover, attention to semantics reconciles the presumed objectivity of statistical methods with the interpretive sophistication demanded by business practice. Anchored in theoretical discussion and case studies, the chapter proposes a framework that balances semantic subjectivity with methodological objectivity, equipping scholars and practitioners with tools to strengthen the ethical and substantive reliability of research findings.

Copyright © 2026, IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global Scientific Publishing is prohibited. Use of this chapter to train generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is expressly prohibited. The publisher reserves all rights to license its use for generative AI training and machine learning model development.

INTRODUCTION

Quantitative research methods are widely regarded as the pinnacle of scientific rigour in business and management studies, prized for their use of hypotheses, statistical analysis, and empirical verification to produce credible knowledge (Hair et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2023). From financial forecasting models to employee engagement surveys, managers often treat quantitative results as objective facts guiding decision-making. However, an overlooked reality is that every stage of the quantitative research process – from framing hypotheses to designing questionnaires and interpreting data – is imbued with language and meaning. The words and logical structures researchers choose can subtly shape questions, responses, and even statistical conclusions. This chapter argues that the objectivity of quantitative research is not absolute but constructed through semantic framing. What we often consider "neutral" numbers are in fact conditioned by lexical choices (wording, terminology) and logical semantics (the way concepts and relationships are structured). Recognising this nuance is critical for business management research, which spans diverse domains (accounting, finance, marketing, HR, operations, etc.) and organisational contexts from small enterprises to multinational corporations. Neglecting the influence of language in these contexts can lead to misinterpretation of data and flawed managerial decisions.

Business and management research covers a broad range of topics – from individual behaviour and team dynamics to organisational strategy and market phenomena. It encompasses studies in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as large multinationals and addresses social units ranging from employees and customers to entire industries and economies. Across these settings, quantitative methods are commonly applied (e.g. surveys, statistical analyses) to inform evidence-based management. Yet, as this chapter will show, the language used in these methods can introduce subjective interpretation. For example, a survey administered in a multinational firm must consider cross-cultural linguistic nuances, and an SME's employee questionnaire may yield different results depending on the phrasing of questions. By rethinking objectivity through nuance, this chapter situates its discussion at the intersection of measurement science, linguistics, and business management practice.

Objectives of the Chapter

The primary objectives of this chapter are threefold:

1. To critically evaluate the objectivity of quantitative research by challenging the traditional notion that quantitative research is inherently objective and examining how lexical and logical semantics influence research outcomes. We

will demonstrate how seemingly minor variations in wording or reasoning can significantly sway findings and management decisions and discuss strategies to mitigate such effects.

2. To enhance research validity through semantic nuance by illustrating how incorporating semantic considerations into research design and analysis can improve the validity and reliability of quantitative studies. We will show that by managing ambiguous language and applying evidence-based guidelines (e.g. from survey methodology and case studies), researchers can reduce interpretative biases, leading to more robust and credible results.

3. To promote a nuanced concept of objectivity in business methods by advocating for a less rigid, more reflexive conceptualisation of objectivity that balances empirical rigour with interpretative awareness. We will argue that recognising researcher subjectivity and strategically managing its influence – through semantic awareness and methodological reflexivity – does not undermine credibility; instead, it strengthens the ethical and analytical foundations of quantitative inquiry in business management.

Accordingly, the chapter comprises a literature review that synthesises relevant scholarship on objectivity versus subjectivity in research and the role of language/semantics in quantitative methods; a methodology section that clarifies the chapter's conceptual approach (based on secondary sources and case analysis): and a thematic discussion that forms the core of the chapter, examining two dimensions of semantics in quantitative research: (i) lexical semantics in research design (i.e. wording of measures) and (ii) logical semantics in statistical analysis (i.e. reasoning and inference). Within this discussion, real-world examples from business contexts – in human resources, marketing, ethics, and more – illustrate how semantic nuances impact data interpretation. Finally, the conclusion summarises the insights and reiterates the need to integrate lexical and logical semantics into quantitative business research to achieve strong objectivity (Harding, 1995) in practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Business Research

Classical positivist philosophy held that scientific research should strive for complete objectivity – eliminating personal biases so that facts "speak for themselves." In the history of science and social science, quantitative methods were developed with this ideal in mind. For example, systematic observation and measurement techniques (like randomised experiments and statistical tests) were intended to uphold neutral-

ity. Thinkers such as Karl Popper argued that objectivity in science emerges from formulating universal hypotheses and subjecting them to potential falsification by anyone. Early management researchers like Max Weber echoed this sentiment with the principle of Wertfreiheit (value-freedom), advising social scientists to remove personal values from analysis (Weber, 1904/1949). The 19th and 20th centuries saw business research eagerly adopt the trappings of the natural sciences – standardised metrics, quantitative surveys, statistical significance thresholds ($p < 0.05$) – under the assumption that quantification itself guarantees objectivity. In practice, quantitative rigour became synonymous with scientific credibility in fields like finance or organisational behaviour (Rescher, 1997).

However, decades of philosophical and methodological critique have revealed that pure objectivity is more ideal than reality. As Thomas Kuhn famously noted, "all observation is paradigm-bound" – researchers' perceptions are shaped by the conceptual lenses and assumptions of their time (Kuhn, 1962). Weber himself acknowledged that no social inquiry can escape the investigator's worldview. Every choice of what to study, how to measure it, and how to interpret results is infused with human judgment. In business and management research, this means that the supposedly "neutral numbers" in our datasets are influenced by how we define constructs and design instruments. Biases enter through the selection of metrics (e.g. choosing certain performance indicators but not others), through analytical frameworks (e.g. assuming a linear relationship for convenience), and crucially through the language used to communicate with respondents or describe variables.

Postmodern and critical scholars go further, arguing that what passes as objective knowledge often reflects dominant paradigms and hidden value choices. Derrida's theory of language (1967) contends that meaning is never fixed and always mediated by context and difference; any description is thus relative, not absolute (Derrida, 1967/2016). In management, concepts like "leadership" or "performance" are not natural facts but socially constructed ideas that carry cultural and metaphorical meanings. From a post-structuralist view, quantitative data do not simply mirror reality; they narrate reality through a particular vocabulary and framing. Feminist epistemologist Sandra Harding introduced the notion of "strong objectivity," which asserts that greater objectivity is achieved by explicitly accounting for the subjectivity and standpoint of the researcher (Harding, 1995). This perspective suggests that by being reflexive – openly acknowledging and examining how our assumptions and words influence our findings – we can produce more trustworthy and ethical research.

In sum, contemporary thinking frames objectivity not as the elimination of all subjectivity (an impossible feat), but as a collective, reflexive endeavour. Business research, being an applied social science, increasingly recognises that numbers gain meaning only in context. As researchers triangulate findings with multiple methods, invite peer critique, and disclose their assumptions, a more robust form of

objectivity can emerge. This chapter builds on that foundation by focusing on one pervasive source of subjectivity in quantitative business research: the semantics of language and logic.

The Role of Semantics and Language in Quantitative Research

Language is the medium through which researchers connect abstract concepts to empirical observations. In quantitative studies – especially those involving surveys, interviews turned into scales, or text analysis – semantic choices play a pivotal role in shaping data. Decades of survey methodology research have demonstrated that the wording of questions can dramatically affect how respondents understand and answer them (Schwarz, 1999; Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski, 2000). In an influential study, Schwarz (1999) found that when asked to rate their life satisfaction on a scale, people's responses shifted depending on whether the scale ranged from 0 ("completely dissatisfied") to 10 ("completely satisfied") versus -5 to +5 – even though both scales spanned 11 points. The mere framing of the scale altered the meaning respondents ascribed to the numeric values. This illustrates that respondents are not passive providers of data; they actively interpret questions based on wording, format, and context.

Similarly, slight wording changes can trigger different mental frames and thus different answers. For instance, Schuldt, Konrath & Schwarz (2011) showed that Americans reported varying beliefs about climate change depending on whether a survey used the term "global warming" or "climate change" – the former wording produced lower acknowledgement of the phenomenon, presumably because "warming" emphasises temperature and invites seasonal scepticism. In business research, a study by Bruine de Bruin and van der Klaauw (2012) found that when consumers were asked about "inflation" versus "prices you pay", the latter phrasing (which is more concrete and personal) yielded higher inflation expectations. These examples underscore that semantics influence what data we get. The words "inflation" vs. "prices" or "global warming" vs. "climate change" are not perfect synonyms – they carry different connotations and contextual cues, leading respondents down different cognitive paths.

Language-driven biases are not limited to public opinion polling; they permeate business management surveys and metrics as well. A well-known challenge is common method bias, wherein the use of a single survey instrument for both predictor and outcome variables can inflate correlations due to consistent response styles or social desirability (Podsakoff et al., 2003). For example, an employee who wants to be seen favourably might rate both their job satisfaction and their commitment high, creating an illusory strong correlation between the two. Part of this effect is psychological, but part is semantic – the interpretation of similarly worded scales

can align in the respondent's mind, producing artificially correlated responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In general, self-report measures are pervasive in business research (e.g. leadership assessments, culture surveys), and it is "a reality that must be controlled" that these measures often carry social desirability and subjective bias. Researchers mitigate this by ensuring anonymity, using neutral wording, and statistically checking for such bias, but the root of the issue lies in how language is processed by respondents.

Another dimension of semantics in quantitative research is cross-cultural and cross-linguistic variation. Business is increasingly global, and management researchers frequently conduct studies across countries or in multilingual populations (e.g. employee surveys in multinational firms or international customer research). A central concern is measurement equivalence – whether a survey or test means the same thing to different groups (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). Words that denote a key construct in one culture may not have an exact counterpart in another. For instance, the construct of "empowerment" in a management survey might be understood differently (or lack a direct translation) in various languages. If one translates a questionnaire directly, respondents in different countries might not be answering the same question, undermining the validity of cross-country comparisons. Researchers have developed procedures like back-translation (translating a survey from Language A to B, then independently back to A to check for consistency) and multi-group confirmatory factor analysis to test measurement invariance (Van Herk & Goldman, 2022). If semantic equivalence cannot be achieved, relying on quantitative comparisons across cultures can be misleading. In such cases, qualitative approaches or careful localisation of measures are recommended rather than assuming the data are directly comparable.

Beyond surveys, semantics also enter quantitative research through how variables and constructs are conceptually defined. In management research, we often deal with abstract constructs like "innovation capability" or "organisational performance." These require operational definitions (often a set of questionnaire items or proxies), and the lexical semantics of those definitions matter. Flake and Fried (2020) caution that many measurement practices suffer from vague construct definitions – a problem they dub "measurement schmeasurement." If a construct is not clearly delineated in words, the items meant to measure it can drift in meaning or overlap with other constructs, leading to muddled results. For example, an "organisational commitment" survey might inadvertently include items that tap job satisfaction or intention to stay, if the language isn't precise. Such slippage reduces the reliability and reproducibility of findings, as different studies end up measuring slightly different things under the same label. To combat this, recent best practices emphasise providing explicit definitions of key terms to respondents and using techniques

like cognitive interviewing (asking a few people to paraphrase survey questions to reveal misinterpretations) before full deployment (Lenzner, Hadler & Neuert, 2024).

In summary, a rich body of literature across psychology, survey research, and management science highlights that language matters enormously in quantitative research. What we often treat as objective data points are actually co-constructed by researchers and respondents through the medium of words and interpretations (Israel & Hay, 2006). Instead of seeing language as a transparent pipeline carrying facts from the world to our dataset, we must recognise it as an active force that shapes those facts. This understanding motivates the need for semantic awareness in research design: being deliberate about word choice, pretesting instruments, clarifying meaning, and remaining alert to how participants might interpret terms. By reviewing the literature, we see that embracing this nuance is not a threat to quantitative rigour but a means to enhance validity. The next sections will build on these insights, examining in depth how lexical semantics (wording) and logical semantics (reasoning structures) impact quantitative research in business and how researchers can address these challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is based on a conceptual and analytical research approach that relies on secondary sources and illustrative cases. The chapter draws from existing literature, documented case studies, and thought experiments to explore the interplay between semantics and objectivity in business research. The methodology can be described in two parts: a literature-based analysis and a case-based illustration.

Literature-Based Analysis

We conducted an extensive review of scholarly literature across disciplines – including research methodology, linguistics, psychology, and business management – to identify key arguments and empirical findings on objectivity, subjectivity, and semantics. Classic theoretical works (e.g. Popper, Kuhn, Derrida, Weber) were analysed to frame the historical and philosophical context. Empirical studies in survey design and organisational research (e.g. Schwarz, 1999; Podsakoff et al., 2003; Flake & Fried, 2020) were examined to gather evidence of how wording and framing affect quantitative results. This integrative literature review allowed us to synthesise dispersed insights into a coherent narrative.

Case Illustrations and Secondary Examples

To ground the conceptual discussion in reality, the chapter incorporates case examples and scenarios drawn from prior research and real-world business contexts. These include published survey experiments (such as the Pew Research Centre's wording experiment on job availability) and documented organisational surveys (like the employee retention survey example). Where appropriate, the chapter also uses hypothetical scenarios informed by practical experience (e.g. a double-barrelled ethics question in a company survey) to demonstrate how semantic issues can manifest in business settings. All such examples are used for illustrative purposes and are based on secondary reports – for instance, the "loyalty vs. commitment" survey phrasing case is adapted from a company case study reported in management literature. By analysing these cases, the chapter highlights concrete consequences of semantic choices, which support a more engaging and applied understanding of the concepts.

Since this is a conceptual chapter, it adheres to scholarly rigour through critical analysis and triangulation of sources. Multiple sources are cited to support each major point, and both theoretical and empirical works are brought into conversation. This approach aligns with what academic literature calls an integrative review or conceptual synthesis, aimed at developing new insights by combining existing knowledge. Additionally, to ensure relevance to business management, the selection of sources and examples was filtered with an eye toward enterprise contexts (from SMEs to global firms) and various business functions (HR, marketing, etc.).

Thematic Discussion

In the following discussion, we delve into the nuanced ways that semantics influence quantitative research outcomes, focusing on two dimensions: (1) Lexical semantics – the role of word choice and phrasing in research design; and (2) Logical semantics – the role of logic and reasoning structures in data analysis and inference. Throughout, examples from business management contexts (e.g. surveys in HR and marketing, statistical reasoning in strategy and finance) will illustrate these concepts in action.

THE SEMANTICS OF OBJECTIVITY IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

Quantitative research in business is often upheld as objective and value-free, but semantic analysis reveals that objectivity is better understood as a carefully managed illusion rather than a guaranteed trait. Even when researchers follow rigorous

protocols, the interpretation of language can introduce subjectivity at every turn. For example, consider a simple HR survey question: "Do you receive sufficient feedback from your supervisor?"

On the surface, this appears to be a straightforward, factual question. Yet the term "sufficient" is contextually vague – what is "sufficient" to one employee may not be to another. Some might interpret it in terms of frequency (e.g. feedback at least weekly), others in terms of quality or depth. If the survey instead asks: "Do you receive frequent feedback from your supervisor?"

The focus shifts – "frequent" might be taken to mean regular intervals (e.g. weekly check-ins) but says nothing about content or usefulness. An employee could say "Yes, I get frequent feedback" even if it's just superficial comments given often, whereas "sufficient feedback" might be interpreted as substantive input, even if less often. In practice, responses to these two versions of the question will differ, not because employees' situations differ, but because the wording guides their interpretation differently. The data obtained are subjective, reflecting each respondent's personal standard of "sufficiency" or "frequency," rather than an objective measure of feedback practices. Thus, what might be reported as, say, "60% of employees receive sufficient feedback" could be an artifact of phrasing rather than a true organizational fact.

Such examples highlight how semantic framing can undermine the neutrality of data. The illusion of objectivity in quantitative results breaks down under scrutiny: respondents are not measuring some external reality so much as filtering their experience through language. This does not mean quantitative data are useless – rather, it means we must interpret numbers with an awareness of their semantic origin. In our example, an HR manager should not take the "60% sufficient feedback" at face value without probing what employees understood by "sufficient." Maybe a follow-up or mixed-method approach (adding interviews) would reveal that many employees wanted more detailed feedback, even if it was infrequent – a nuance lost in the initial data. Being reflexive about such possibilities makes the research more robust.

The notion that language shapes research outcomes is supported by philosophical critiques discussed earlier. If meaning is always co-constructed between communicator and audience (as poststructuralists suggest), then a survey is essentially a conversation between the researcher (through the questionnaire text) and the respondent. The respondent's answer is contingent on how they interpret the researcher's "utterance" (the question). In this light, objectivity in survey responses is not about eliminating interpretation, but about controlling and aligning interpretation. Researchers increase objectivity by using clear, unambiguous terms that most people interpret similarly, and by anticipating different interpretations. This is why best practices in survey design urge us to avoid loaded words, define key terms, and use simple language (Tourangeau et al., 2000; Lenzner et al., 2024).

Importantly, acknowledging the semantic and subjective layer in quantitative research does not undermine its rigor – in fact, it can enhance rigor. Embracing a reflexive mindset (Luoma & Hietanen, 2024) means the researcher actively reflects on how their own word choices or conceptual frameworks might bias results, and adjusts the design accordingly. This is akin to a calibration process. Just as a scientist would calibrate instruments to reduce measurement error, a business researcher can "calibrate" their survey instrument by refining language to reduce semantic noise. The outcome is data that more faithfully represent the phenomena of interest. As one scholar put it, objectivity stems from the absence of subjectivity – in other words, by systematically removing or accounting for subjective influences, we get closer to an objective picture. Paradoxically, it is the reflexive practice of thinking about our own biases and language (a seemingly subjective exercise) that forms the foundation of objectivity in research.

In summary, the semantics of objectivity teach us that quantitative results are only as objective as the instruments and assumptions behind them. Business researchers and analysts must remain vigilant about the words and logical structures they employ. Seemingly trivial phrasing decisions can have outsized effects on data and ensuing decisions. The following sections will examine these effects in detail, first by focusing on lexical semantics (word choice in research design) and then on logical semantics (reasoning in analysis), with examples of how each plays out in business management research.

LEXICAL SEMANTICS IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Lexical semantics refers to the meanings of words and how those meanings arise from context. In the design of quantitative research – particularly surveys, questionnaires, and any tools that rely on language – lexical semantics is critically important. The specific wording of questions, labels, and even response options can influence how respondents understand the question and what answers they provide. In business management studies, where surveys of employees, customers, or managers are common, careful attention to wording can make the difference between a valid finding and a misleading one. This section examines how word choice affects data quality and offers strategies to ensure semantic clarity in research instruments.

Wording and Meaning in Surveys: Even words that seem synonymous can carry different connotations. In marketing research, for example, a survey might ask consumers about environmentally conscious products. Describing a product as "eco-friendly" versus "sustainable" can yield different responses. The term eco-friendly might evoke thoughts of recycling, organic ingredients, or specific certifications (some consumers may even be sceptical, associating it with "greenwashing"). Sustainable,

on the other hand, can imply a broader ethos including social and economic factors, not just ecology – or it might simply be less clearly understood by respondents. One study found that subtle wording differences like these led to significantly different levels of reported consumer interest (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). In HR surveys, a question might use the phrase "my manager gives me sufficient feedback" versus "my manager gives me frequent feedback." As discussed earlier, sufficient and frequent points to different dimensions (quality vs. quantity) can shape an employee's response to the same underlying reality. Thus, lexical choices are not neutral – they actively shape the respondent's frame of reference.

There is ample evidence that even minor linguistic tweaks can have measurable effects. A notable case comes from a Pew Research Centre experiment on U.S. job market perceptions. Respondents were split into two groups: one was asked whether there are "plenty of jobs" in their area, the other whether there are "plenty of good jobs." The inclusion of the single word "good" dramatically changed the outcome: about 60% agreed there were plenty of jobs, but only 48% said there were plenty of good jobs. The word "good" raised respondents' criteria – making them think about job quality, not just availability – leading many to respond more pessimistically about the job market. From a business perspective, if a market research survey for a recruitment firm were to inadvertently include that extra word, it could have led to a mistaken conclusion about local employment conditions.

Why do such small changes matter? Cognitive psychology provides some answers. Tourangeau, Rips and Rasinski (2000) describe the survey response process as having multiple stages: comprehension of the question, retrieval of relevant information, judgment/estimation, and then mapping that to the response options. Lexical semantics primarily impact the comprehension stage. If a word is ambiguous or interpreted variously (like "regularly" or "recently"), respondents might each retrieve different information from memory. For instance, "regularly" could mean daily to one person and weekly to another. One respondent thinking "regularly = once a week" might answer "Yes, I regularly do X," whereas another who interprets it as daily might answer "No," even if their behavior is identical. The data thus become inconsistent. Table 1 provides a few examples of ambiguous wording commonly found in surveys and how they can be resolved:

Table 1. Examples of ambiguous or biased wording in survey design and methods for improving clarity

Ambiguous Word/ Phrase	Why It's Problematic	Improved Wording Solution
"Regularly"	Interpretation varies widely (e.g., daily vs. weekly).	Specify a timeframe. *E.g.*: "How many days *per week* do you…?"
"Recently"	Timeframe is subjective (what counts as recent?).	Define the period. *E.g.*: "In the past 30 days, have you…?"
Technical jargon	Not everyone knows specialized terms or acronyms.	Use simple, common terms or include a brief definition.
"Go to the store"	Lacks context (for what purpose? which store?).	Add context/details. *E.g.*: "go to the grocery store."
Leading or loaded wording	Suggests a "right" answer or is emotionally charged.	Use neutral terms and phrasing without emotive language.

Adapted from Lenzner et al., 2024

As Table 1 indicates, the general principle is to be specific and neutral in wording. Words like "regularly" or "recently" should be anchored to a concrete timeframe; vague references should be clarified; and emotionally loaded or leading terms (for example, using a politically charged nickname for a policy) should be replaced with neutral descriptors to avoid swaying the response.

CONTEXT AND CULTURAL NUANCE

Lexical semantics become even more complex when accounting for contextual and cultural differences. The meaning of a word can depend on the broader context of the question and the cultural background of the participant. A classic demonstration of question-order context effects is by Schuman & Presser (1981), who showed that asking a specific question about an issue (e.g., a question about allowing a controversial speaker) before a general question on free speech can prime respondents to think differently than if the order is reversed. Similarly, the position of a term within a question can trigger certain associations (this is related to framing effects noted by Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). For instance, in asking about corporate "social responsibility", prefacing the term with examples ("such as environmental protection and fair labour practices") will shape how respondents interpret it – without examples, they might think mainly of philanthropy, but with examples, they think broader.

Culturally, certain words carry different weights. Steenkamp & Baumgartner (1998) discuss how values and abstract concepts often do not translate cleanly across languages. An employee engagement survey in English might ask about

"pride in the company." A direct translation of "pride" into another language may have different connotations – in some cultures, expressing pride is discouraged as boastful, in others it may translate to a word closer to "honour". The result is that respondents from different cultures, even if they faithfully translate the term, might be answering subtly different questions. As another example, consider how yes/no questions can misfire across cultures. In some East Asian cultures, respondents tend to avoid bluntly saying "No," so a question like "Do you agree that management is doing a good job?" may receive a cultural yes (to show politeness or avoid direct disagreement) whereas a more nuanced scale or an indirect phrasing might reveal dissatisfaction. To preserve equivalence, researchers must sometimes localise phrasing or use non-verbal scales (like slider bars with icons) to circumvent linguistic idiosyncrasies.

THE SEMANTIC CHALLENGE TO RIGOUR

These lexical issues pose a challenge to the rigour and objectivity of quantitative research. Business scholars often take pride in the precision of quantitative methods – transforming fuzzy social phenomena into numbers and statistics. Yet, as noted by Israel & Hay (2006), this precision can be illusory if the language feeding into those numbers is inconsistent. A survey or experiment may give a false sense of certainty ("according to our five-point scale, average satisfaction is 4.2/5") while obscuring the fact that different participants may have understood the questions in disparate ways. In fields like organisational diagnostics or market analysis, this is troublesome: strategic decisions (e.g., whether to change an HR policy or launch a product) might be based on data that are partly an artefact of wording.

One could say that quantitative research is only as objective as its most subjective question. If even one key question in a survey is misinterpreted by a large portion of respondents, it can skew the entire result. For example, imagine a consulting firm surveying employees on "organisational trust" and including an item, "Management effectively communicates news." If some employees interpret "effectively" as frequently and others as honestly, their answers aren't truly comparable. Yet if 70% said "Agree," management might celebrate a high trust score, not realising the agreement is on different interpretations. Such issues have led some scholars to advocate for greater transparency in measurement, urging researchers to report how they defined terms and even to provide the exact phrasing used when publishing findings (to allow readers to judge potential ambiguities). Therefore, what can researchers do? The good news is that lexical semantic challenges are manageable with careful design and pre-testing. Below, we present several strategies that have emerged from the literature and best practices for business research instruments:

Invest in careful instrument design and testing: Treat the development of a survey or questionnaire as an engineering task for semantics. Craft each item deliberately, and pilot test questions on a small sample. Techniques like cognitive interviewing (asking pilot participants to "think aloud" as they interpret and answer questions) help reveal if a question is poorly worded. If a participant can paraphrase your question in a way that deviates from your intent, that's a red flag to revise the wording. Iterative testing – refining questions and testing again – acts as debugging for language, ensuring that items reliably communicate the intended meaning.

Embrace a mixed-methods mindset: Quantitative surveys provide breadth, but qualitative methods provide depth and clarity. Incorporating open-ended questions or follow-up interviews can illuminate why respondents answered as they did. For instance, if a survey of employees shows an unexpected drop in morale index, conducting a few focus groups can reveal whether the issue lies in reality or perhaps in how the survey questions were interpreted (maybe a new term confused people). Mixed-methods approaches leverage the strength of each method and help cross-verify findings, thereby mitigating the risk of semantic misinterpretation in quantitative data.

Provide context and definitions in questionnaires: Don't assume respondents share your definitions. If a key term in a question could be understood in different ways, define it briefly within the question. For example, instead of asking "My manager gives me regular feedback," one could clarify: "My manager gives me feedback at least once a week (i.e., regular feedback)." If asking about "misconduct," specify what behaviours count as misconduct. It's often feasible to include a short parenthetical or clause to pin down meaning without making the question too long. Providing concrete examples can also help. A marketing survey might clarify "sustainable product (e.g., made with recycled materials)" to ensure respondents have a consistent idea.

Train researchers and practitioners in language and bias awareness: Often, issues arise simply because designers of research instruments are not fully aware of how phrasing can bias answers. Incorporating basic training in survey design, semantics, and cognitive bias for researchers (and even for managers who craft informal polls in companies) can pay dividends. Even within a research team, having colleagues review each other's survey questions can catch problematic wording. In organisational settings, HR or market research departments should be versed in these principles or consult experts, rather than assuming any survey question that "sounds clear to me" is universally clear.

Document and acknowledge measurement limitations: Finally, transparency is key to maintaining trust in research findings. When presenting quantitative results, researchers should acknowledge any linguistic ambiguities or choices that were made. For instance, a consultant's report might note: "Employee 'engagement'

was measured by agreement with five items (listed in Appendix), which focused on feelings of value and support. This term can be interpreted broadly, so results should be viewed as an overall sentiment rather than a precise metric." Such candidness builds credibility. It shows that the researchers are aware of the semantic nuance and have taken it into account, rather than blindly assuming their measures are flawless. In academic publications, one might include this in the limitations section: e.g., "The construct of 'innovation culture' was assessed with new survey items that, while based on theory, may not cover all facets of the concept; future research should refine these definitions."

By implementing these strategies, business researchers can greatly reduce semantic bias in their quantitative tools. The result is a closer alignment between what we intend to measure and what we are actually measuring – a fundamental requisite for objectivity. With well-crafted wording, pre-tested instruments, and reflexivity about language, the data we collect stand on much firmer ground.

CASE STUDIES

To illustrate how lexical semantics tangibly influence research outcomes, consider the following real and hypothetical cases drawn from business research scenarios:

Case 1: Wording and Job Perceptions

A survey by the Pew Research Centre asked Americans about local employment opportunities. One group was asked if there were "plenty of jobs" in their community, while another was asked if there were "plenty of good jobs." The addition of that single adjective changed the meaning – respondents now considered job quality. Consequently, 60% answered yes to the first phrasing, but only 48% to the second. From a business standpoint, a regional economic analyst or HR recruiter interpreting these results could reach opposite conclusions about labour market optimism depending on phrasing. It shows how one word can elevate respondents' criteria and yield a statistically significant difference. The lesson: seemingly minor wording nuances can have major implications for data interpretation.

Case 2: "Loyalty" vs. "Commitment" in Employee Surveys

A multinational company conducted an internal survey to gauge employees' intent to stay with the company. In one version, employees were asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "I intend to remain with the company for the next two years." In another version (at a different time), a similar cohort was presented with: "I see a

long-term future for myself at this company." Interestingly, the second phrasing – which feels more positive and open-ended – yielded a higher agreement rate than the first, stricter phrasing. Employees who were uneasy committing to "two years" could nonetheless agree they had a "long-term future" there. If one interpreted the first survey's low agreement as low loyalty, one might have misdiagnosed a retention problem. The second survey revealed that the sentiment was more favourable; it was the phrasing that had constrained people's responses. This example underscores how different lexical choices (one framing the issue as a concrete commitment, the other as an aspirational outlook) can affect results. In practice, both questions aimed to measure the same thing – retention likelihood – but got divergent answers. The company learned to formulate such items more carefully, choosing language that employees resonated with and found less intimidating.

Case 3: Cross-Cultural Questionnaire Translation

A research team attempted to use an English-language employee satisfaction survey in an overseas subsidiary (with translation to the local language). They found that direct translations of certain terms didn't work. For instance, "empowerment" had no direct single-word translation in the local language; the closest term connoted something more like "authority given by superiors," lacking the motivational nuance of empowerment. Similarly, the word "patient" (in the context of customer service, being patient with customers) translated to a phrase that carried a connotation of suffering in silence. Recognizing these issues, the team employed back-translation and consulted bilingual employees to adjust the phrasing. They added explanatory phrases to approximate the true meaning of "empowerment" in context, and in one case, dropped a term entirely because it was too culturally loaded. This aligns with findings by Annajigowda et al. (2025), who, during translation of a stigma scale, decided to omit certain English words that could not be cleanly translated without bias. The broader point is that when extending research instruments across languages, one must account for lexical semantics to ensure functional equivalence. Without doing so, differences in data might reflect translation artefacts rather than real organisational differences.

Case 4: Double-Barrelled Ethics Question

In an employee ethics survey at a mid-sized company, one question asked: "In the past year, have you reported any unethical behaviour you observed in the work-place?" On the surface, it's a straightforward question about whistleblowing. The company was pleased to find only 5% answered "Yes," concluding that unethical incidents were rare or always reported. However, an internal review revealed a flaw:

the question was double-barrelled, effectively asking two things at once – (1) Did you witness misconduct? and (2) Did you report it? An employee who did see misconduct but did not report it would answer "No" (since the question was phrased as a single yes/no, it did not capture the two-step scenario). Thus, the low "Yes" rate was falsely reassuring. Realising this, the survey was revised the next year to split into: "Did you witness misconduct in the past year?" and for those who said yes, a follow-up: "If yes, did you report it? If not, why?" The result: a sizable percentage had indeed witnessed misconduct but hadn't reported, citing reasons like fear of retaliation or belief that it wasn't serious. The original wording hid a potentially serious issue (unreported incidents) behind a semantic artefact. This example teaches how a question is structured lexically and logically (single vs. multiple components) affects the data. It also shows the value of breaking complex concepts into simpler pieces to get more accurate information.

These cases demonstrate that lexical semantics in research design is not an abstract concern – it has practical consequences. Poorly phrased questions can mask real problems or create illusory ones, leading organisations to misallocate resources or misconstrue employee and customer sentiments. On the other hand, by applying semantic rigour – clear wording, cultural tuning, avoiding double-barrelled questions – researchers can obtain data that more precisely reflect reality. The central takeaway is that objectivity in quantitative business research requires precision at the semantic level. Numbers and statistics may seem precise, but if they are based on linguistically imprecise inputs, their objectivity is compromised. Strengthening semantic clarity is therefore part and parcel of methodological rigour.

BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Having explored the issues, we can summarise actionable best practices to integrate lexical semantic awareness into quantitative research design (many of which have been exemplified above):

- Plan and pretest surveys like critical instruments: Craft each survey item deliberately and test it in stages (cognitive interviews, pilot surveys). Just as engineers remove bugs from software, researchers should remove "semantic bugs" from questionnaires.
- Use mixed methods for context: Don't rely solely on numbers. Qualitative follow-ups help interpret what survey responses mean, distinguishing whether a finding is robust or driven by wording quirks.

- Define key terms within questions: If a term can be taken in different ways, add a definition or example directly in the question to guide respondents. This minimises guessing and variation in interpretation.
- Avoid ambiguity, jargon, and double-barrelled items: Frame questions as simply and clearly as possible. Split complex ideas into multiple questions if needed (as with the misconduct example). Use language familiar to your target population – if technical terms are unavoidable, provide brief explanations.
- Cultivate semantic reflexivity in research teams: Encourage a culture where wording is critically discussed. Team members can review each other's instruments with an eye for possible misinterpretations. Training in survey design and awareness of biases (halo effects, leading questions, etc.) should be provided, especially in business settings where staff may design surveys without a formal research background
- Be transparent in reporting: When sharing results, include the actual phrasing of survey items (perhaps in an appendix or footnotes). Acknowledge any semantic limitations. For instance, if a concept was measured with new or not perfectly validated items, caution the reader that interpretations should be tentative. This honesty can prompt constructive feedback and improvements in future research.

By implementing these practices, the lexical dimension of quantitative research can be managed to uphold objectivity. As we refine our language, we eliminate one major source of bias and error, bringing us closer to the ideal of neutral, reliable measurement.

Before moving to logical semantics, it is important to note a forward-looking point: modern advances in text analysis and natural language processing (NLP) are equipping researchers with new tools to quantify and analyse semantics themselves. For example, distributional semantics models (like word embeddings) allow researchers to measure similarity or nuance in language usage across large text corpora. These tools, when used judiciously, can complement traditional survey methods – for instance, analysing open-ended responses or social media content to detect semantic patterns in how people talk about a brand or an employer. However, even these sophisticated techniques face the same fundamental issue: they must be interpreted in context, and they inherit biases present in language data (Caliskan et al., 2017; Bolukbasi et al., 2016). In fact, advanced NLP models have demonstrated how cultural biases can be embedded in semantics (e.g., word associations reflecting gender stereotypes). This reinforces our message: whether using traditional surveys or cutting-edge AI language models, researchers must remain critically aware of semantics to achieve ethical and accurate results.

LOGICAL SEMANTICS IN STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

While lexical semantics deals with the meanings of words in research instruments, logical semantics in research pertains to the meaning and validity of the reasoning and relationships within a quantitative study. In other words, once data are collected (via whatever wording), how do we construct logical arguments from those data? Are the inferences we make valid, or are they clouded by semantic confusions in our reasoning? In business research, analysts often build models, test hypotheses, and draw conclusions that have a real impact on strategic decisions. It is crucial that the logical structure of these analyses is sound and that we do not fall prey to reasoning fallacies or misinterpretations of statistical results. This section explores common logical pitfalls in quantitative analysis and discusses how applying semantic scrutiny to our reasoning (i.e. clarifying concepts and logic) can sharpen the precision of our conclusions.

LOGICAL REASONING IN QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

At its core, a quantitative study in management is an exercise in applied logic. Researchers start with theories or hypotheses – essentially logical propositions about how variables relate (e.g., "if X increases, then Y will improve"). They then collect data and use statistical tests to evaluate whether those propositions hold true. The meaning of the statistical results, however, depends on the logical semantics of the terms and relationships. For example, if we hypothesise "All engaged employees are productive employees," logically this implies a structure: Engagement → Productivity. If we find data that support this, what have we really shown? We have to be careful: did we define "engaged" and "productive" clearly, and did we ensure those constructs were measured distinctly? If "productivity" was measured in a way that overlaps with engagement (say, self-rated motivation), then we have a logical tautology rather than a meaningful result. Thus, logical semantic clarity starts with construct validity – making sure each concept in our hypothesis is well-defined and measured separately (Kaplan, 2011).

In practice, good quantitative research in business follows a chain of logical steps: theory → hypothesis → operationalisation → analysis → inference. At each step, semantics play a role. When formulating a hypothesis, one uses language to articulate expected relationships. Ambiguous phrasing here can lead to confusion about what exactly is being tested. For instance, a statement like "Diversity improves performance" is logically incomplete – what aspect of diversity? what kind of performance? If left vague, different readers might interpret the hypothesis differently, and the researchers themselves might unconsciously "fill in" a convenient meaning

when analysing results. A clearer hypothesis would be: "Teams with greater functional background diversity (in roles such as marketing, finance, operations) will have higher revenue growth rates." Now the logical statement has specific terms that can be empirically tested.

COMMON LOGICAL FALLACIES IN ANALYSIS

Even with clear hypotheses and data, researchers (and practitioners interpreting data) can stumble in reasoning from results. Several recurring fallacies are noted in management research (and more broadly), often tied to semantics – i.e., how we label and interpret statistical outcomes. Let's outline some of the most common logical missteps, with business examples:

Fallacy 1: Confusing Correlation With Causation

Post hoc ergo propter hoc – "after this, therefore because of this" – remains a trap. In business analytics it is tempting to read causality into appealing narratives: a retailer sees social-media posts correlate with sales and concludes 'more posts will raise revenue'. The direction may be reversed (stores post more when sales are already strong) or both may be driven by a third factor (e.g., seasonality or marketing spend). Similarly, productivity gains after a wellness programme may stem from macroeconomic tailwinds or leadership changes. Without temporal evidence, controls for confounders, and ideally experimental or quasi-experimental designs, causal claims are weak (Antonakis et al., 2010). Acting on spurious causality risks costly missteps when the effect fails to replicate at scale.

Fallacy 2: Base Rate Neglect and the Law of Small Numbers

Business executives and researchers can be swayed by striking figures from tiny samples or by ignoring background rates. A start-up accelerator claiming '2 out of 3 firms doubled revenue' sounds impressive until one realises the sample is three companies; chance, selection effects, or similar base-rate growth could explain the result. The law of small numbers is the mistaken belief that small samples mirror populations (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Popular business books often spotlight a few winners and credit a style or strategy while overlooking many failed imitators (survivorship bias). To avoid over-interpretation, report sample size and baseline rates (e.g., 'in a sample of three, two succeeded'), and temper conclusions with confidence intervals or Bayesian updating.

Fallacy 3: The Halo Effect and Confirmation Bias

As mentioned, the halo effect in management is when perceptions of one positive trait (often overall success) spill over into attributions about everything else (leadership, strategy, culture). This is a semantic issue in that the language used to describe a company's traits can be more reflective of performance outcomes than of objective qualities. Success in one domain often colours judgements elsewhere. When a firm's share price surges, commentators may relabel the same CEO as 'visionary' and the same culture as 'agile'; the narrative shifts although the underlying attributes may not. Confirmation bias then favours evidence that fits the story. Meindl et al. (1985) called this the 'romance of leadership': outcomes drive attributions to leaders, producing circular reasoning ('the strategy is good because the company succeeded'). Robust evaluation requires negative cases and independent measures—study a broad set of firms and assess leadership or culture independently of performance. Otherwise, we risk peddling success 'keys' that fail outside the success sample.

By identifying these fallacies, we underscore a broader message: logical consistency and clarity are as important as statistical sophistication in quantitative research. Business researchers must ensure that their interpretations of data follow logically from the evidence and definitions at hand. Many of these errors are semantic at root – they arise from how we describe and label the relationships in data (e.g., calling something a "cause," labelling a metric as "success," declaring something significant). Tightening the semantics of our analysis means being precise with language: saying "associated with" instead of "leads to" when causality isn't proven, acknowledging uncertainty, and defining what metrics actually capture.

ENHANCING ANALYTICAL PRECISION THROUGH LOGICAL SEMANTICS

Given the above pitfalls, how can we improve the precision and validity of our quantitative analyses? It involves instilling checks and balances and being explicit about the logical assumptions in our models. Here are some strategies and principles:

Strengthen Theory–Method Alignment

Before diving into data, clearly outline the conceptual model: what causes what, under what conditions. Tools like conceptual causal models or diagrams (Pearl, 2009) can be extremely helpful. For example, sketch a diagram for a study on employee engagement and company performance: Does engagement lead to performance, or could performance (success) be driving engagement? Is there a third factor (like

leadership quality or economic conditions) influencing both? By mapping this out, researchers define the logical semantics of their hypothesis – what exactly each variable represents and how they are logically connected. This guides which control variables to include, what to test, and guards against attributing effects to the wrong cause. In structural equation modelling (SEM) terms, one should define latent variables and directional paths based on theory, then test if the data fit that model. Aligning the statistical method to the theory ensures that we're not just finding patterns, but testing meaningful patterns.

Incorporate Logical Checks and Balances

Similar to how we pre-test survey questions, we should "pre-test" our logic. For example, if our theory posits a mediator (A causes B through M), then logically if we account for M, the direct effect of A on B should diminish. If our data analysis shows A still strongly affects B even after including M, something in our theoretical semantics might be off – maybe A has other pathways or our mediator wasn't measured well. Another check is invariance testing – if we believe a relationship holds generally, test it across subgroups (e.g., does our engagement → performance link hold in both manufacturing and tech companies? If not, perhaps the logic is context-bound). Analysts should also be wary of tautologies – sometimes our operational definitions inadvertently bake in the outcome. A humorous example: defining "high performance teams" partly by their profitability, and then finding that high performance teams correlate with profits. That's circular. We must ensure our constructs are independent; if not, we need to adjust definitions or acknowledge the overlap. Residual analysis in regressions, testing for independence of errors, and other diagnostics can reveal when assumptions (linearity, independence, etc.) are violated, indicating a logical misspecification.

Pre-Register Hypotheses and Use Open Science Practices

A major aid to logical clarity is pre-registration (Nosek et al., 2018), where researchers publicly commit to their hypotheses, methods, and analysis plan before seeing the data. This curtails practices like HARKing (Hypothesising After Results are Known) which can lead to logical incoherence – presenting a data-driven finding as if it were theoretically predicted. Pre-registration forces clarity in semantics: you must explicitly define your terms, your expected relationships, and how you'll evaluate them. It separates confirmatory tests from exploratory analyses, thereby maintaining the logical integrity of confirmatory claims. Additionally, sharing data and code (when possible) allows others to scrutinise the logical steps from raw data to conclusion, catching errors or alternative explanations. Open science fosters a

culture where the focus shifts from just obtaining a significant result to ensuring the result means what we claim it means. It also encourages reporting null results, which is logically important – a theory that something has an effect must also grapple with evidence when that effect doesn't appear. Admitting "no significant relationship found" (when that's the case) actually sharpens the field's logical understanding of where a theory holds or doesn't (Borgstede & Scholz, 2021).

Use Bayesian Reasoning for More Coherent Inference

Bayesian analysis integrates prior knowledge (or theoretically expected effect sizes) with the data evidence to produce an updated belief. This can often lead to more nuanced conclusions than binary hypothesis testing. For example, if theory strongly expected a positive effect and the data show a small positive but $p > 0.05$, a Bayesian might still conclude there's moderate evidence for a positive effect (just smaller than expected). This approach treats inference as a matter of degree, aligning more with logical reasoning under uncertainty. It avoids the semantic oversimplification of calling something simply "significant" or "not significant" and instead talks in terms of probabilities and credible intervals. In essence, it formalises reflexive reasoning – we have prior beliefs, we update them with data, and we quantify our uncertainty (Goodman & Frank, 2016).

Educate decision-makers in interpreting analysis. In business settings, often those who make final decisions (executives, managers) are not experts in statistical logic. Misinterpretations abound – like mistaking a confidence interval for a range that covers all future cases, or seeing a trend where there is none. Part of enhancing logical semantics is communicating results in clear, accurate terms. Instead of saying "This regression proves X causes Y," an analyst should say "This model explains 30% of the variance in Y and suggests X is associated with Y when other factors are constant, but we cannot definitively claim causation." Adding explanations such as "we controlled for firm size and industry to isolate this effect" gives context. By educating stakeholders with phrasing that conveys uncertainty and conditions, we ensure the semantic message that reaches decision-makers is accurate. An analysis might find "75% of employees are engaged," but the report should explicitly state how engagement was measured and what that statistic actually reflects (e.g., "75% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that they feel valued and supported in the organization" rather than implying some absolute truth).

Implementing these practices of logical rigor helps in sabotaging the illusion of neutrality only where it is false, and reinforcing objectivity where it is earned. By making all assumptions explicit, checking them, and being precise with interpretive language, quantitative researchers can prevent many of the missteps that lead to irreproducible or misleading results.

In closing this discussion on logical semantics, it's evident that the language of analysis is as important as the language of data collection. We must pay attention not only to questionnaire wording (input side) but also to how we formulate and communicate inferences (output side). A quantitative analysis is a chain of reasoning; its strength is the strength of its weakest link. Semantic clarity at each link – from construct definition to hypothesis to interpretation – fortifies the chain. With both lexical and logical semantics addressed, we move much closer to truly objective quantitative research in business: not objective in the naïve sense of "free from all human influence," but objective in the sense of being honest, transparent, consistent, and reproducible in how we connect language, numbers, and meaning.

DISCUSSION

Quantitative research in business and management is often portrayed as a neutral, fact-based approach to knowledge. This chapter has demonstrated that, in reality, language and semantics permeate every aspect of quantitative inquiry, shaping what we measure, how we measure it, and how we interpret results. The notion of objectivity, far from being a guaranteed outcome of using numbers, is more accurately a regulative ideal – something researchers strive for by minimising bias and ambiguity, but never perfectly attain (Rescher, 1997). By rethinking objectivity through nuance, we have argued that true rigour in quantitative research comes not from ignoring subjectivity and semantics, but from systematically addressing them.

By exploring how objectivity has been conceptualised and critiqued. Historical perspectives (e.g., positivism's aim for value-free research) collided with postmodern insights that all observation is theory-laden and language-dependent. Especially in the context of business research, which deals with complex human organisations and markets – we saw that researcher subjectivity and participants' interpretations are inescapable. However, rather than viewing this as a flaw, contemporary scholars suggest it can be a strength if approached reflexively. Reflexive quantitative research (Luoma & Hietanen, 2024) embraces the idea that by recognising one's assumptions and carefully choosing one's words and models, researchers can produce more trustworthy results. In short, objectivity is not the absence of subjectivity, but the result of managing subjectivity in transparent ways.

In the realm of lexical semantics, we showed how the wording of survey questions and definitions of constructs can strongly influence data. Key examples – from "sufficient" vs "frequent" feedback in employee surveys to "eco-friendly" vs "sustainable" in consumer research – illustrated that different words yield different responses even when querying the same underlying reality. Case studies highlighted practical consequences: A single adjective dramatically altered measured public

opinion on job availability; phrasing affected employees' stated loyalty intentions; a poorly worded ethics question masked the true rate of unreported misconduct. These examples reinforce a crucial point: quantitative measures are only as good as the language that defines them. Without semantic clarity, the numbers in a dataset can mislead.

We also addressed cross-cultural semantics, noting that in international business research, translation and cultural context can change the meaning of survey items, threatening the comparability of data. Techniques like back-translation and testing for measurement invariance (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998; Van Herk & Goldman, 2022) are essential when working across languages. Overall, the discussion on lexical semantics underscored the need for meticulous instrument design, pre-testing, and researcher training in order to ensure that respondents interpret questions as intended. By implementing best practices (providing definitions, avoiding ambiguity, using mixed methods, etc.), researchers can substantially reduce semantic biases. The outcome is quantitative findings that more accurately reflect the phenomena under study – be it employee engagement, consumer attitudes, or financial performance.

Turning to logical semantics, the chapter examined how we derive meaning from data through analysis and inference. We identified common reasoning errors – confusing correlation with causation, neglecting base rates, succumbing to the halo effect, and over-relying on simplistic metrics – which can lead to flawed conclusions in business research and practice. Each of these errors has a semantic component: how we label relationships (cause vs effect), how we talk about probabilities and samples, how success is defined, and how results are framed. By applying logical rigor and semantic precision, we can avoid these pitfalls. We advocated for techniques like clearly defining theoretical models, using causal diagrams, incorporating checks for assumptions, preregistering hypotheses, and interpreting results with nuance. For example, instead of declaring a strategy "proven effective" because $p<0.05$, a more logically sound statement might be, "We found statistical evidence of a relationship, but the effect size is modest and other factors may be at play." Such careful language aligns with reality and avoids overgeneralization.

An important insight from this discussion is that objectivity in quantitative analysis is not just about crunching numbers correctly; it's about interpreting numbers correctly. That requires semantic vigilance – ensuring that our words (in conclusions, reports, and theories) accurately convey what the data can and cannot tell us. By adopting open science practices and reflexive thinking, researchers and analysts can create a culture where being approximately right is valued over being falsely precise. This leads to more reliable knowledge that can be built upon.

Bringing these threads together, the chapter's thesis can be reiterated: Objectivity in business research is achieved not by pretending language doesn't matter, but by actively managing and clarifying language and logic. In practical terms, this means

business researchers should function as both statisticians and linguists – designing surveys with an ear for phrasing, and drawing inferences with an eye for conceptual clarity. The reward is twofold. First, the validity and reliability of research are enhanced. Studies become more reproducible when others can see clearly how constructs were defined and how conclusions were reached (free of hidden assumptions or ambiguous terms). Second, the ethical foundation of research is strengthened. As researchers, we owe it to stakeholders – whether academic peers, business clients, or the public – to communicate findings truthfully and transparently. Misleading phrasing or overstated claims can erode trust and lead to poor decisions. Conversely, clear semantics promote honesty and accountability.

For example, if a corporate diversity initiative is evaluated quantitatively, a semantically robust approach would ensure that "success" is defined with meaningful metrics (not just a checkbox count), and that any reported improvements are contextualized (perhaps an 5% increase in diversity index with confidence intervals and discussion of other concurrent changes). This level of clarity prevents superficial proclamations and encourages deeper understanding. It is an illustration of how linguistic, philosophical, and management dimensions merge to make quantitative inquiry not only analytically sound but also ethically robust.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, rethinking objectivity through nuance is not a call to abandon quantitative methods – it is a call to enrich them. By fusing lexical and logical semantics into our research methodology, we equip ourselves to handle the multifaceted realities of organisational life. Business phenomena are complex and often cannot be fully captured by numbers alone, but with careful wording and reasoning, our quantitative findings can be made far more illuminating. The chapter's exploration has shown that when researchers pay attention to semantics, they do more than just improve surveys and analyses – they also set the stage for more valid, transparent, and actionable knowledge. This ultimately benefits both scholarship and practice: decisions made on the basis of such research are more likely to be sound, and the cumulative enterprise of knowledge-building in business management becomes more self-correcting and progressive. In an age of data-driven decision-making, the subtle lessons of lexical and logical semantics ensure that data truly drive decisions in the right direction, rather than misdirecting due to hidden biases. Embracing these lessons will help scholars and practitioners alike to produce quantitative insights that are as objective as possible, without losing sight of the human nuances that underpin them.

REFERENCES

Annajigowda, H. H., Mendon, G. B., Cherian, A. V., Wahid, S. S., Kohrt, B. A., Rüsch, N., & Loganathan, S. (2025). Cultural Adaptation Process of Six Stigma Assessment Scales Among Kannada Speaking Population in South India. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health.*, *12*, e8. PMID: 39935734

Antonakis, J., Bendahan, S., Jacquart, P., & Lalive, R. (2010). On Making Causal Claims: A Review and Recommendations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *21*(6), 1086–1120. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.10.010

Bolukbasi, T., Chang, K. W., Zou, J., Saligrama, V., & Kalai, A. T. (2016). Man is to Computer Programmer as Woman is to Homemaker? Debiasing Word Embeddings. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, *29*, 4349–4357.

Borgstede, M., & Scholz, M. (2021). Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Generalization and Replication – A Representationalist View. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 605191. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.605191 PMID: 33613387

Bruine de Bruin, W., & van der Klaauw, W. (2012). Measuring Expectations of Inflation: Effects of Survey Mode, Wording, and Opportunities to Revise. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *33*(4), 749–757. DOI: 10.1016/j.joep.2012.02.001

Caliskan, A., Bryson, J. J., & Narayanan, A. (2017). Semantics Derived Automatically from Language Corpora Contain Human Biases. *Science*, *356*(6334), 183–186. DOI: 10.1126/science.aal4230 PMID: 28408601

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, *65*(2), 81–93. DOI: 10.1509/jmkg.65.2.81.18255

Derrida, J. (2016). *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.; 40th anniversary ed.). Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1967)

Flake, J. K., & Fried, E. I. (2020). Measurement Schmeasurement: Questionable Measurement Practices and How to Avoid Them. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, *3*(4), 456–464. DOI: 10.1177/2515245920952393

Goodman, N. D., & Frank, M. C. (2016). Pragmatic Language Interpretation as Probabilistic Inference. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *20*(11), 818–829. DOI: 10.1016/j.tics.2016.08.005 PMID: 27692852

Hair, J. F., Page, M. J., & Brunsveld, N. (2019). *Essentials of Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780429203374

Harding, S. (1995). Strong Objectivity: A Response to the New Objectivity Question. *Synthese*, *104*(3), 331–349. DOI: 10.1007/BF01064504

Israel, D., & Hay, D. (2006). *Fundamentals of Quantitative Research*. Language Institute. *Chulalongkorn University.*, *1*(3), 1–20.

Kaplan, D. T. (2011). *Statistical Modelling: A Fresh Approach* (2nd ed.). Project Mosaic Books.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Lenzner, T., Hadler, P., & Neuert, C. E. (2024). *Cognitive Pretesting*. GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. DOI: 10.15465/gesis-sg_en_049

Luoma, J., & Hietanen, J. (2024). Reflexive Quantitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.5465/amr.2021.0234

Meindl, J. R., Ehrlich, S. B., & Dukerich, J. M. (1985). The Romance of Leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *30*(1), 78–102. DOI: 10.2307/2392813

Nosek, B. A., Ebersole, C. R., DeHaven, A. C., & Mellor, D. T. (2018). The Pre-registration Revolution. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *115*(11), 2600–2606. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1708274114 PMID: 29531091

Pearl, J. (2009). *Causality: Models, Reasoning, and inference* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511803161

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioural Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879–903. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879 PMID: 14516251

Popper, K. (2005). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge. (Original work published 1959) DOI: 10.4324/9780203994627

Rescher, N. (1997). *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason*. University of Notre Dame Press.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research Methods for Business Students* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.

Schuldt, J. P., Konrath, S. H., & Schwarz, N. (2011). "Global Warming" or "Climate Change"? Whether the Planet is Warming Depends on Question Wording. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *75*(1), 115–124. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfq073

Schuman, H., & Presser, S. (1981). *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question Form, Wording, and Context*. Academic Press.

Schwarz, N. (1999). Self-Reports: How the Questions Shape the Answers. *The American Psychologist*, *54*(2), 93–105. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.54.2.93

Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M., & Baumgartner, H. (1998). Assessing Measurement Equivalence in Cross-National Consumer Research. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, *25*(1), 78–90. DOI: 10.1086/209528

Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. (2000). *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511819322

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science*, *185*(4157), 1124–1131. DOI: 10.1126/science.185.4157.1124 PMID: 17835457

Van Herk, H., & Goldman, S. P. K. (2022). 'The Advancement of Measurement Invariance Testing in Cross-Cultural Research (1999–2020).' H. Baumgartner & B. Weijters Eds. *Measurement in Marketing.* (pp. 95–119). Emerald.

Weber, M. (1949). "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." E. A. Shils & H. A. Finch Eds. & Trans. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences.* (pp. 50–112). Free Press. (Original work published 1904).

Section 3
Ethics and Rationality

Chapter 5
Ethics, Power, and Data Validity in Management Education Research:
A Practical Guide for HE Scholar

Hassiba Fadli

Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Maryam Khodaviren

https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2845-6934

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter reflects on the ethical and methodological challenges that arise when carrying out qualitative research in higher education, particularly from the perspective of a doctoral researcher. It describes how ethics approval, negotiations with gatekeepers, and power relationships can influence the way a study is designed and conducted. Attention is given to strategies that help maintain trust and credibility, such as keeping an audit trail, using triangulation, and engaging participants in meaning-making. Rather than treating interviews as neutral tools, the chapter frames them as spaces where knowledge is co-constructed. Practical lessons are shared, including the value of documenting decisions, being flexible when plans shift, and seeing misalignment as an opportunity for deeper analysis. By combining reflection with methodological guidance, the chapter aims to support doctoral students and higher education scholars as they navigate institutional constraints while safeguarding the credibility and ethical grounding of their research.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) research plays an essential role in advancing our understanding of teaching, learning, and institutional practices. While quantitative research primarily focuses on numerical data and statistical models, qualitative inquiry provides a deeper exploration of student experiences, pedagogical approaches, and academic environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). Through interviews, observations, and thematic analysis, qualitative research reveals the human aspects of education, providing rich, contextualised insights that extend beyond what numbers alone can reveal (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

However, conducting qualitative research in HE presents unique challenges for higher education researchers. They must not only adhere to formal ethical procedures but also remain attentive to subtler issues of power and trust that shape the research relationship. Ethical integrity is central to this process: participants must be fully informed, their data protected confidentially, and their well-being prioritised (Tracy, 2020). Equally important, the power imbalance between the researcher and student participants must be carefully managed, as even unintentional pressure can bias responses and compromise ethical rigour (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). At the same time, researchers must ensure that their findings are credible and reliable. Strategies such as member checking, triangulation, and ongoing reflexivity can enhance the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In recent years, the significance of ethical and interpretive responsibility in qualitative research has grown, particularly in response to shifting institutional landscapes, cultural debates surrounding inclusivity, and the increasing digitalisation of educational contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, intensified concerns about access, participant vulnerability, and virtual power dynamics—factors that complicate traditional models of research engagement. Additionally, global movements for social justice and decolonisation have encouraged researchers to interrogate whose voices are centred, how knowledge is constructed, and what ethical obligations scholars hold toward marginalised communities. These evolving challenges have made ethics not just a procedural requirement but a site of critical reflection and methodological transformation.

This chapter presents a first-hand account of our research journey in HE; we also draw on a doctoral case exploring how creativity in teaching relates to students' intended sustainable behaviour. The doctoral research journey was not without its challenges—ethical approvals, interactions with gatekeepers, concerns over power imbalances, and the unexpected complexities of qualitative data analysis. Through personal experiences, methodological challenges, and key literature, this chapter discusses:

- Navigating ethical approval processes and avoiding common pitfalls.
- Managing gatekeeper relationships and overcoming institutional constraints.
- Addressing power imbalances and fostering an ethical research environment.
- Ensuring data validity and research rigour through qualitative best practices.
- Applying practical strategies for conducting qualitative interviews effectively.
- Reflecting on the PhD journey—highlighting personal lessons and offering advice for future researchers.

By addressing these core issues, this chapter aims to equip doctoral candidates and qualitative researchers in HE with practical strategies and methodological insights to navigate the complexities of qualitative inquiry in academic settings. Ultimately, this chapter explores how meaning is constructed in the researcher–participant relationship, how power influences interpretation, and how ethical reasoning ensures validity in qualitative inquiry.

PREPARING FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Applying for ethical approval is one of the first significant milestones in qualitative higher education research. Too often, it is treated as a procedural hurdle—forms to fill out, signatures to collect, and boxes to check. Nevertheless, as Kvaal (2007) reminds us, ethical practice in qualitative inquiry is never purely procedural: it is interpretive. Choosing how to represent participants, frame the researcher's role, and account for potential ethical dilemmas in the field are all part of the approval application process. Institutional committees, disciplinary traditions, and the researcher's own reflective stance all negotiate what "counts" as ethical rather than having a universally set definition (Tracy, 2010). In this sense, ethics approval is not merely an administrative checkpoint; it is the first stage in meaning-making, shaping how the research will be interpreted, conducted, and defended.

Generally, when PhD researchers first apply for ethical approval, they do so with the excitement of a doctoral student eager to begin fieldwork. They draw their application from internationally recognised frameworks, such as the Belmont Report (1979), the Declaration of Helsinki (2013), and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Code of Ethics (2018), all of which emphasise respect for persons, beneficence, justice, and confidentiality. At that stage, these ethics are often understood as compliance mechanisms, designed to protect participants and institutions.

However, as the application progresses, it becomes clear that ethical applications and interpretive frameworks can articulate relationships of trust, care, and accountability between the researcher and participants. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) dis-

tinguish between "procedural ethics" (formal approval) and "ethics in practice" (the everyday interpretive judgments made during fieldwork). This distinction resonated strongly with the experience of this project.

For example, when drafting a participant information sheet, Fadli (2022) included a line that read: *"I am a PhD student just like you; my status does not give me any seniority over you."* At the time, this seemed like a minor reassurance. Looking back, it was an intuitive action to recognise the different organisational positions involved in research. This recognition was an effort to address the inherent power gap between researcher and participant. For instance, considering Mercer's (2007) insight, such dynamics play out in social research. Researchers standing alongside participants rather than above them can create a more equal interpretive space where participants' voices emerge authentically. This process shows that ethical approval is not merely about securing permission but about embedding ethical reflexivity within the research design.

As a management education researcher, Fadli's organisational position played a critical role. Positioned within the university hierarchy, she occupied a transitional space—neither fully a peer to student participants nor an authority figure with institutional power. The information sheet thus became a site of ethical negotiation. "Was I speaking as a fellow student, as a researcher, or both?" she wondered, and "Who held interpretive authority over the meanings participants shared?" These questions underscore the significance of ethical approval: specifically, that it is not merely a matter of compliance, but one of interpretation; an arena where institutional regulations, researcher reflexivity, and participant autonomy intersect.

Moreover, ethics approval cannot be viewed as a one-off event. According to Tracy (2010), ethical qualitative research requires "ongoing consent" and a commitment to reevaluating participants' consent at various stages of the study. GDPR compliance training underscored the importance of protecting participants' data. Beyond legal obligations, GDPR raises a deeper interpretive question: how can researchers honour participants' trust while preserving anonymity when presenting their stories? Consent, confidentiality, and interpretation are best treated as interdependent processes, with data handling approached as an extension of ethical reflexivity.

Looking back, many investigators realise that early approaches to ethics are often heavily procedural. The university's ethics application template was followed diligently—listing recruitment strategies, drafting consent forms, and outlining data-storage protocols. These documents were important, yet they did not in themselves guarantee ethical integrity. What gave them meaning was reflexive interpretive work, recognising how researcher identity, assumptions, and institutional position shape the research encounter (Finlay, 2002). Ethical approval, then, is both a contract with the institution and an interpretive practice of self-scrutiny, power awareness, and respect for participants.

In sum, preparing for ethical approval is not only about compliance but about laying the foundations for interpretive rigour in research. It is important to recognise that ethical procedures encode assumptions about who counts as a researcher, what counts as valid knowledge, and how participant voices are protected or constrained. For doctoral students in particular, this stage offers an opportunity to engage with ethics not as a barrier but as a form of interpretive responsibility—shaping the meanings created and the trustworthiness of the knowledge produced.

THE ROLE OF THE GATEKEEPER

Gatekeepers in Higher Education Research

In qualitative higher education research, access to participants and data rarely occurs in a vacuum. Instead, it is mediated by individuals and institutions that hold the power to open or restrict entry. These gatekeepers include ethics committees, faculty administrators, department heads, or supervisors, who act as custodians of both institutional interests and participant welfare (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Wiles et al., 2012). At one level, their role is procedural—checking that ethical protocols are followed and ensuring compliance with regulations such as GDPR—while at another, deeper level, it is interpretive. Gatekeepers determine which research projects are deemed legitimate, which participants can be approached, and under what conditions data may be collected. In doing so, they actively shape the meanings and voices that are allowed to enter the research record (Clark & Sharf, 2007).

The "gatekeeper paradox" is well-documented (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). On the one hand, gatekeepers facilitate ethical integrity by protecting vulnerable participants and safeguarding institutional values. On the other hand, they can also act as barriers, imposing restrictions that delay, constrain, or even redirect research. From an interpretive perspective, gatekeeping thus becomes a powerful force in shaping the trajectory of knowledge production—determining not only access but also the meanings that will (or will not) be constructed through the research process.

Gatekeepers as Ethical Mediators and Institutional Gatekeepers

Gatekeepers do more than grant permission; they mediate the interpretive environment of qualitative research. Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) distinction between "procedural ethics" and "ethics in practice" is particularly beneficial in this context. Procedural ethics involve the official approvals that gatekeepers oversee, but ethics in practice involve the day-to-day interpretive judgments made by both

the researcher and gatekeeper in the field. For example, a gatekeeper who insists on anonymised recruitment emails sent via official channels is not only protecting confidentiality but also shaping the tone of participant engagement. Students may perceive the invitation as formal, institutional, and safe—or conversely, as distant and impersonal—thereby influencing how they interpret their own role in the research.

In this way, gatekeepers are co-interpreters of meaning. Their decisions on recruitment strategies, communication styles, and even the language used in invitations significantly contribute to how participants understand the study and whether they feel empowered to participate. Gatekeepers, therefore, are not neutral administrators; they help construct the ethical and interpretive framework within which research unfolds.

However, not all researchers benefit from the unconditional support of their gatekeeper. Consider an alternative scenario in which the supervisor refuses to grant direct access to students, citing institutional concerns related to the participants' mental load, or methodological disagreements over the type of data to be collected. Such a blockage raises major ethical dilemmas, particularly for doctoral students who occupy a liminal position in the academic hierarchy—neither quite students nor fully autonomous (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012; Busher & James, 2012).

In this context, the gatekeeper acts not as a facilitator but as a guardian of meaning, arbitrarily determining the voices that can enter the research field (Clark, 2011). This raises the following question: Who holds interpretive authority over the research? Is it the doctoral student, the bearer of the vision and scientific rigour of their project? Or the supervisor, the institutional but potentially restrictive guarantor? Guillemin and Gillam (2004) point out that so-called "procedural" decisions are, in fact, deeply interpretative, as they shape how participants perceive the research, the researcher, and their own role.

A refusal of access can also mask underlying power relations. For example, a supervisor may seek to steer the research toward expected or politically convenient outcomes within the institution, potentially compromising authenticity and hindering the emergence of critical voices (Israel & Hay, 2006; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The researcher then faces a double ethical constraint: respecting institutional authority while defending the scientific integrity and interpretative autonomy of their work (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

A partial solution could be to propose mediation by an external ethics committee or a program director to reexamine the reasons for the refusal. Alternatively, the researcher could temporarily modify their methodological strategy—for example, by exploring documentary sources, reflexive journals, or practice narratives before obtaining more direct access. However, these adjustments must be made with consideration for the interpretative limitations they entail: the distance from actual participants can dilute the richness of the qualitative fieldwork (Clark, 2011).

This hypothetical scenario underscores the importance of carefully documenting all interactions with gatekeepers, including refusals, disagreements, and negotiations. A reflexive journal can be helpful not only for understanding relational dynamics but also as evidence of methodological integrity during external evaluation (e.g., a viva or editorial review) (Finlay, 2002; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Thus, even in conflict situations, the researcher can demonstrate ethical and interpretative rigour by relying on transparency, reflexivity, and a willingness to engage in institutional dialogue (Tracy, 2010).

Personal Experiences with a Gatekeeper

During Fadli's doctoral research, the second supervisor acted as a gatekeeper. Fadli was required to distribute all ethical forms, consent documents, and participant information sheets through the university's learning platform (Canvas), rather than being allowed direct access to students. At the time, she accepted the arrangement as a procedural matter. In hindsight, she came to see it as a crucial interpretive decision: it positioned student recruitment as an officially mediated process rather than a personal invitation from her as the researcher.

This arrangement had two consequences: first, it created distance between her and the students, which likely reduced the risk of coercion. Students may have felt freer to decline participation when the invitation came through a neutral institutional channel rather than directly from her. Second, it made her dependent on her gatekeeper's collaboration. She had to trust that the supervisor distributed the documents as agreed, and her ability to recruit participants hinged entirely on the supervisor's actions.

This reliance became painfully clear during her viva examination. When asked to provide evidence of ethical recruitment, she realised she had not kept records of the supervisor's emails or Canvas announcements. With university offices closed during the COVID-19 lockdown, she could not access the digital or physical audit trails that proved students had been recruited ethically. The examiners questioned whether the protocols had been followed, casting doubt on the validity of the findings. she was required to undergo a second viva, during which she presented consent forms, Canvas screenshots, and gatekeeper correspondence. Only then was her compliance confirmed.

This experience holds two lessons. First, gatekeepers are essential but not infallible; researchers must maintain their own audit trails of all gatekeeper communications to demonstrate ethical compliance. Second, gatekeeping is as much interpretive as it is procedural. By channelling communication through institutional systems, the supervisor shaped how students encountered the research, how they understood the

invitation, and ultimately, how they chose to participate. From this experience, it is clear that gatekeeping is both procedural and interpretive.

The Researcher-Gatekeeper Dynamic

The gatekeeper–researcher relationship is also a site of power negotiation. As Busher and James (2012) note, gatekeepers hold institutional authority that can both enable and constrain researchers. For doctoral students, who already occupy a liminal position in the academic hierarchy, this power dynamic is particularly acute. Dependence on a gatekeeper for recruitment or access can blur the boundaries of autonomy, leaving the researcher vulnerable to delays, omissions, or institutional priorities beyond their control.

However, this dynamic also highlights an ethical opportunity: gatekeepers can act as protectors of participant autonomy. In the PhD. research case, by controlling access, the second supervisor minimised the risk of students feeling pressured to participate because of the researcher's status. This demonstrates how gatekeeping, when reflexively managed, can enhance ethical integrity by striking a balance between institutional oversight and participant protection.

The Researcher–Gatekeeper Dynamic: An Interpretive Lens

To navigate this dynamic effectively, researchers must view gatekeeping through an interpretive lens. Gatekeepers are not only procedural authorities but also co-constructors of meaning in research. Their choices influence how participants interpret invitations, how they perceive risks and benefits, and how willing they are to share authentic experiences. From this perspective, the gatekeeper is both a facilitator and a filter: opening doors to some voices while unintentionally silencing others.

For qualitative researchers in higher education, this highlights the importance of transparency, meticulous documentation, and open communication with stakeholders. Building trust, maintaining clear communication, and reflexively considering how gatekeeper actions shape meaning are vital strategies. By recognising gatekeepers as both ethical mediators and interpretive actors, researchers can better prepare for the complexities of access, validity, and power in qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, researchers should maintain a dated log of gatekeeper communications, ethical approvals, and participant access confirmations. This documentation strengthens the audit trail and provides transparent evidence during the viva or peer review.

MANAGING POWER RELATIONSHIPS

Understanding Power Imbalances in Research

Power is an inevitable dimension of qualitative research in higher education. It arises not only from structural hierarchies—such as faculty versus student and supervisor versus candidate—but also from interpretive dynamics: who frames the questions, who interprets the data, and whose voices are amplified or silenced. Foucault (1980) reminds us that power is not simply repressive but productive; it shapes what can be said, by whom, and in what contexts. In research, this means that power relations not only constrain participants but also actively structure the meanings that emerge through inquiry.

For example, when researchers occupy positions of authority, students may interpret invitations to participate as expectations rather than opportunities for engagement. Even if the researcher makes participation voluntary, the mere perception of hierarchy can affect how students respond. Mercer (2007) notes that these asymmetries can lead participants to censor their responses, provide "socially acceptable" answers, or disengage altogether. Thus, power in qualitative research is not just an ethical concern; it is interpretive, shaping the very data on which analysis depends.

Ethical Strategies to Mitigate Power

Recognising the interpretive nature of power requires researchers to embed ethics into every stage of their practice. Strategies such as clear consent forms, ongoing negotiation of participation, and the use of third-party recruitment channels are not just protective measures—they are interpretive acts that signal autonomy, trust, and respect to participants (Wiles et al., 2012).

In our research, we emphasised in the information sheets and consent forms that students could withdraw at any time without penalty. At first glance, this reads as a procedural requirement. Framed reflexively, however, it functions as an interpretive reassurance: it invites students to see themselves not as subjects under study but as co-constructors of meaning, with the right to shape their level of engagement. Tracy (2010) describes this as part of an "ethic of care" in qualitative research, where transparency and respect enable more authentic dialogue.

Another effective strategy is third-party recruitment, where participants are approached through neutral channels such as student unions or administrative platforms. This distances the researcher from direct influence, reducing the risk that students interpret participation as compulsory. In the study, the second supervisor acted as a gatekeeper by distributing information through Canvas. While this created challenges for documentation, it also reduced hierarchical pressure and arguably

encouraged more honest responses. Again, this shows how procedural decisions double as interpretive signals that shape meaning making in research.

Reflexivity, Transparency, and Trust

Managing power is not only about structures but also about reflexivity—acknowledging the researcher's influence in every interpretive act (Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity means recognising that the researcher is not a neutral observer but an active participant in meaning-making (Finlay, 2002; Charmaz, 2014; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Researchers' age, cultural background, gender and professional experience inevitably shape how students interpret the researcher, just as participants' responses shape researchers' interpretations of their experiences.

To foster trust, the researchers adopted practices such as disclosing the purpose of the study, clarifying that they were not grading or assessing participants, and encouraging participants to challenge or correct the researchers' interpretations. For example, students were invited to review transcripts (member-checking). This process was not simply a method for enhancing validity but an ethical practice of shared interpretation, where participants had the opportunity to confirm or contest how their words were represented. In doing so, the researchers acknowledged participants' interpretive authority alongside their own.

Transparency extended to the analysis—researchers documented how responses were coded and systematically linked interpretations to direct quotations, which helped counter the perception that meaning was imposed rather than derived. This process aligns with Bourdieu's (1999) call for reflexive sociology, in which researchers acknowledge and disclose their own position within the field to avoid reproducing hidden hierarchies of knowledge.

Case Vignette: From Engineering to Interpretation *(Hassiba Fadli)*

"Before engaging in educational research, my training and professional experience were rooted in engineering. This disciplinary trajectory—based on deterministic models, the search for optimal solutions, and a value placed on objectivity—initially made me sceptical of interpretive approaches. Rigour was associated with technical precision, reproducibility and stability of results. Entering the field of qualitative methods therefore required a profound epistemological reorientation, marked by the acceptance of ambiguity, subjectivity and the importance of context. I had to "unlearn" specific logics of control and linear verification to embrace methodologies that value dialogue, reflexivity and the impermanence of meaning (Finlay, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As Pillow (2003) notes, critical reflexivity involves rec-

ognising that the researcher is never a neutral observer but a situated actor, shaped by her history, discipline and worldview. This disciplinary transition made me particularly attentive to the tensions between structure and interpretation, between norm and experience. It also influenced my perspective on interviews, which I no longer perceived as tools for extracting information but as spaces for co-constructing meanings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

Furthermore, my engineering background sometimes generated a perception of authority among participants, who associated the doctoral status with technical expertise. This dynamic reinforced my need to explain my position as a researcher–interpreter clearly and to adopt ongoing reflexive strategies to reduce relational asymmetry (Berger, 2015). Having to cross this disciplinary barrier also fostered a posture of epistemological humility; I could no longer rely on predefined models: I had to learn to listen, to doubt, and to build my analytical tools from the richness of students' stories. In this way, my initial trajectory became a reflective resource—an anchor for questioning my assumptions and remaining vigilant against the temptation to simplify human complexity."

Rethinking Power as Collaborative Meaning-Making

What emerges from these reflections is that power in qualitative research is not only a risk to be minimised but also a resource for interpretation. When managed reflexively, power relations can create opportunities for collaboration. For instance, some students in the study took leadership roles in group interviews, guiding discussions and encouraging peers to share their views. In these moments, power shifted: authority was redistributed among participants, and the meaning of sustainability education was co-constructed rather than dictated by the researchers.

This demonstrates that managing power is not about eliminating asymmetries—which is impossible—but about making them visible, negotiable, and ethically productive. As Tracy (2010) argues, qualitative research should embrace "situated ethics," where power is acknowledged as dynamic and context-dependent rather than fixed. By doing so, researchers can transform hierarchical relations into collaborative interpretive spaces.

Conclusion: Power as an Interpretive Practice

Managing power relationships in higher education research is not a checklist of procedures but a continuous interpretive practice. Every decision—from how consent forms are written to how interviews are conducted—signals meanings that shape participant engagement and the trustworthiness of the data. By embedding reflexivity, transparency, and ethical care into these processes, researchers can

ensure that power does not distort interpretation but instead contributes to richer, more authentic meaning-making.

ENSURING DATA VALIDITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

Validity as Interpretive Credibility

In qualitative research, "validity" does not mean statistical accuracy or replicability in the positivist sense. Instead, it refers to the credibility and trustworthiness of interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maxwell (2012) distinguishes between validity as a property of data and validity as a property of interpretation. In higher education research, this second meaning is crucial: the same set of student interview transcripts can yield very different interpretations depending on the researcher's positionality, theoretical lens, and reflexive practices.

This highlights that validity is not about confirming an objective truth but about demonstrating that one's interpretations are grounded, transparent, and ethically defensible (Tracy, 2010), and that qualitative validity is achieved not by eliminating subjectivity but by managing it—making visible the interpretive processes that shaped the findings.

Reflexivity and Positionality as Validity Tools

Reflexivity plays a central role in ensuring validity. Researchers must acknowledge how their own identities and assumptions influence data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). During Fadli's doctoral research, she was aware that her position as a mature international PhD student might have influenced how participants responded to her. Some students viewed her as an approachable peer, while others interpreted her role as closer to that of an authority figure. Recognising these dynamics allowed her to interrogate her interpretations more critically and avoid presenting them as if they were neutral.

For instance, she kept a reflexive journal documenting her impressions after each interview. These notes revealed how her own reactions—whether agreement, surprise, or discomfort—might have influenced the direction of questioning or the emphasis in coding. By making these reflections explicit, she sought to enhance the transparency of my interpretive process. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue, auditability of the researcher's thinking is a key component of qualitative trustworthiness.

From this reflection, it is clear that reflexivity and positionality serve as crucial tools for enhancing validity.

Triangulation as Interpretive Depth

Triangulation is often described as a strategy for enhancing rigour through the use of multiple data sources or methods (Denzin, 2012). However, in qualitative higher-education research, it should not be seen merely as a way to verify findings but rather as a process that deepens interpretation. Each source of data offers a different window into participants' experiences, and the value of triangulation lies in examining both points of convergence and divergence among those perspectives.

In the doctoral study, Fadli combined a survey based on Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) with qualitative interviews. The survey provided a structured, theory-driven view of students' sustainability attitudes, whereas the interviews opened a narrative space for students to interpret their own experiences. At first, she assumed triangulation meant confirming one method with another. Over time, she realised that the real insight emerged precisely when the two sets of findings did not align. For instance, while the questionnaire results showed strong declared intentions toward sustainable behaviours, several interview participants candidly admitted that their actions did not always match their ideals. One student reflected:

> *"Yes, I ticked the box saying I'm environmentally conscious…but in reality, I do not always recycle, and sometimes I take the car just because I am lazy. It is bad, but hey... we answer the questionnaire as we would like to be, not as we are."*

This dissonance revealed the social desirability bias often present in quantitative self-reporting and highlighted how institutional norms shape students' self-presentation. Rather than viewing this misalignment as a methodological weakness, she treated it as an interpretive opportunity — a lens for exploring the tension between values and lived practice. As Flick (2018) and Fusch and Ness (2015) observe, these "non-triangulation moments" can enrich understanding by exposing complexity rather than suppressing it.

Triangulation therefore functions as a dialogical practice rather than a confirmation test. Different forms — methodological (surveys, interviews, document analysis), data-source (students, lecturers, administrators), and investigator (peer review or co-analysis) — each extend validity by ensuring that no single viewpoint dominates. The process invites researchers to move beyond seeking consistency and instead embrace contradiction as evidence of the multifaceted realities of educational life.

Ultimately, triangulation contributes to interpretive depth by turning comparison into conversation: a dialogue among perspectives that enhances trustworthiness and ethical sensitivity. In this sense, it is not a mechanical step in validation but an act of reflexive interpretation — one that acknowledges ambiguity, invites multiple voices, and transforms difference into insight.

Documentation and Audit Trails

Transparency is another cornerstone of validity. As Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) emphasise, qualitative research must provide an audit trail of decisions, documents, and communications. For Fadli, this included archiving signed consent forms, saving Canvas announcements distributed by her supervisor, and securing interview recordings and transcripts.

The importance of such documentation became starkly evident during her viva voce. Lacking proof of recruitment procedures initially undermined the perceived validity of her study. Only by presenting audit trails, consent forms, gatekeeper correspondence, and recruitment evidence could she demonstrate ethical and interpretive rigour. This experience illustrates that validity is inseparable from documentation: without a transparent record, interpretations risk being dismissed as anecdotal or biased.

Validity Through Participant Collaboration

Involving participants directly in the interpretive process can also strengthen validity. Member-checking, where participants review transcripts or preliminary analyses, allows them to confirm, challenge, or refine the researcher's interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is not just a methodological safeguard but an ethical practice of shared authority. In Fadli's PhD research, inviting students to review transcripts allowed them to clarify their meaning and ensured that her interpretations did not distort their voices.

Similarly, participatory analysis, where themes are discussed with participants or peer researchers, can enhance interpretive credibility. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that thematic analysis benefits from iterative dialogue, where interpretations are revisited and refined in light of feedback. By sharing provisional themes with peers, Fadli was able to identify blind spots and reduce the risk of imposing her own assumptions uncritically.

Validity as Ethical Responsibility

Finally, validity in qualitative higher education research must be understood as an ethical responsibility. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue that validity is part of "ethics in practice"—it is about ensuring that participants' contributions are represented faithfully and respectfully. This requires not only accurate transcription but also sensitivity to context, tone, and cultural meaning.

For example, in group interviews, students sometimes joked or laughed while discussing sustainability practices. Recording these moments of humour was crucial,

as they revealed both peer dynamics and ambivalence toward sustainability. To omit such details in analysis would have stripped the data of its interpretive richness. Validity, therefore, is not only about accuracy but about honouring the complexity of human meaning-making.

Conclusion: Validity as Interpretive Trustworthiness

Ensuring validity in qualitative research is not about eliminating subjectivity but about making interpretation transparent, reflexive, and ethically grounded. By combining reflexivity, triangulation, documentation, and participant collaboration, researchers can produce credible findings not because they are objective but because they are trustworthy representations of meaning (Tracy, 2010). For higher education scholars, this means recognising validity as less about methodological policing and more about interpretive responsibility—a commitment to producing knowledge that participants, peers, and institutions can trust.

CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Interviews as Sites of Meaning-Making

In qualitative research, interviews are not merely tools for extracting information, but rather arenas where meaning is jointly constructed (Kvale, 2007). Each question, response, pause, and gesture contributes to an interpretive dialogue in which both researcher and participant negotiate what is said and how it is understood. Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) describe interviews as "interviews of meaning" because they are shaped by the interactional context rather than representing a neutral exchange of facts.

For higher education scholars, this perspective is critical. When interviewing students, researchers are not merely collecting reflections on learning or behaviour; they are co-producing narratives of experience that reflect power dynamics, institutional culture, and the interpretive frameworks both researcher and participant bring to the encounter. This means that designing and conducting interviews must be approached not just as a methodological step but as an ethical and interpretive practice.

Designing an Interpretive Interview Guide

Developing a semi-structured interview guide requires more than technical precision—it requires sensitivity to the interpretive space the guide will open.

Core questions should probe not only what students did but also how they made sense of their experiences (Seidman, 2013). For example, in a study on creativity and sustainability, questions that invite reflection such as "How did you interpret the creative activities in relation to your own behaviour?" encourage students to articulate meanings rather than simply describing actions.

Pilot testing the guide is equally important; by trialling questions with a small group of peers, researchers can discover which formulations feel too leading, which elicit confusion, and which generate rich interpretive responses. This iterative process reflects Tracy's (2010) principle of "sincerity," which involves designing instruments that encourage openness and authentic engagement.

Ethical Recruitment and Interpretive Autonomy

Recruiting participants for interviews in higher education settings involves careful attention to ethics and autonomy. As discussed earlier, working with a supervisor as a gatekeeper and distributing invitations through Canvas can limit a researcher's direct control while signalling to students that their decision to participate is protected by institutional safeguards rather than personal obligation.

From an interpretive standpoint, this recruitment strategy also frames how students perceive the study. The institutional channel lends credibility but also formalises the invitation. Some students interpret it as an opportunity to contribute to improving education, while others see it as an optional extracurricular activity. These divergent interpretations highlight how recruitment methods shape not just participation rates but also the meanings participants attach to their involvement.

Creating a Space for Meaningful Dialogue

The interview environment plays a crucial role in shaping participant comfort and interpretive openness. To create a relaxed atmosphere, researchers may provide refreshments, allow time for students to read information sheets, and encourage them to familiarise themselves with the questions before starting. While offering cookies may appear trivial, it can function as an interpretive gesture—a way of signalling hospitality, informality, and mutual respect.

The results can be striking. Students may laugh, debate, and even return with friends to participate in later sessions. In group interviews, one or two students often assume leadership roles, guiding discussion and prompting peers to share. These dynamics illustrate how interviews are not passive information exchanges but interactive performances where meanings emerge collaboratively (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

From an ethical perspective, the researcher's role is to facilitate without dominating: reminding participants of their right to withdraw, seeking consent for recording, and refraining from steering the conversation. These practices reinforce interpretive autonomy, ensuring that students' voices are not overshadowed by researcher authority.

Reflexivity and Power in the Interview Encounter

Despite efforts to create a relaxed environment, power dynamics are inherent in the interview process. Even informal gestures cannot erase the fact that the researcher interprets, records, and ultimately publishes the dialogue. Reflexivity, therefore, becomes essential. After each session, noting moments where researcher identity—for example, being a mature international PhD student—may have influenced the flow of conversation helps avoid presenting interpretations as neutral (Finlay, 2002). Did students defer in ways they would not with a peer? Did they interpret academic status as evaluative?

Acknowledging these dynamics does not weaken the research; instead, it enhances validity by making the interpretive lens explicit. By documenting positionality, researchers signal that findings are not neutral but situated within a relational, ethical, and interpretive framework.

Documenting and Preserving the Interpretive Record

Interviews generate more than transcripts; they generate interpretive records that capture tone, context, and interactional nuance. To preserve this richness, researchers can archive not only transcripts but also field notes describing group dynamics, laughter, and silences. These details provide critical interpretive cues during analysis. For example, when students joke about sustainability posters, their humour can reveal both enthusiasm and scepticism—an important tension in understanding how they relate to behavioural change.

Researchers should also anonymise transcripts and store data securely in line with GDPR requirements. While this is a procedural necessity, it also has interpretive significance: anonymisation symbolises respect for participants' identities and reminds researchers that their interpretations carry ethical responsibilities.

The following examples from Fadli's doctoral study illustrate these principles. In her study on creativity and sustainability, she included questions that invited reflection such as "How did you interpret the creative activities in relation to your own behaviour?" and, after piloting with peers, refined prompts that felt too leading. Working with her supervisor as a gatekeeper, invitations were distributed through Canvas, which reduced perceived obligation while formalising the tone. To create a relaxed atmosphere, she provided refreshments, allowed time for students to read

information sheets, and encouraged them to familiarise themselves with the questions; the results were striking, as students laughed, debated, and even returned with friends to participate in later sessions, and in group interviews one or two students often assumed leadership roles. Despite these efforts, she remained aware of power dynamics and reflected after each session on how her identity as a mature international PhD student might have influenced the conversation. To preserve interpretive nuance, she archived transcripts alongside field notes about group dynamics, laughter, and silences (for example, jokes about sustainability posters that signalled both enthusiasm and scepticism) and anonymised materials in line with GDPR.

Conclusion: Interviews as Ethical-Interpretive Encounters

Qualitative interviews in higher education are not neutral tools but sites where meaning, power, and ethics intersect. Designing guides, recruiting ethically, creating welcoming spaces, and documenting carefully are all practices that shape not only what participants say but how they interpret their role in the research. By approaching interviews as collaborative meaning-making encounters, researchers can move beyond viewing them as methods of data collection and instead treat them as spaces of ethical dialogue, interpretive co-construction, and mutual learning (Kvale, 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

ANALYSING AND REPORTING FINDINGS

Thematic Analysis as an Interpretive Practice

Thematic analysis is one of the most widely used approaches in qualitative research, but it must be recognised as more than a technical procedure—it is an interpretive act. As Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise, coding and theme development involve the researcher's judgements about what is significant, meaningful and representative. This means that analysis is never neutral: it reflects the researcher's positionality, assumptions and theoretical framing. In higher education research, this interpretive dimension is crucial because themes are often derived from student narratives, which necessitates sensitive and ethical representation.

Transparency, Reflexivity, and Ethical Reporting

Validity in analysis depends on transparency. Keeping an audit trail of coding decisions, engaging in peer debriefing, and linking interpretations directly to participant quotations are all ways of demonstrating interpretive rigour (Miles, Huberman

& Saldaña, 2014). At the same time, reflexivity is crucial: acknowledging how the researcher's perspective influences what is coded, which themes are prioritised, and how student voices are represented (Finlay, 2002). Ethical reporting also requires careful attention to participants' meanings. Tracy (2010) highlights "sincerity" and "ethics" as criteria for qualitative quality—researchers must not only present compelling findings but do so in ways that respect participants' contributions. In practice, this includes anonymising quotes, clarifying cultural references, and ensuring that humour or critique are not taken out of context.

From Findings to Meaning

Presenting findings is itself an act of interpretation. It is not enough to display themes; researchers must explain how they contribute to broader understanding. Framing results to show how students interpret activities (e.g., creative tasks) in relation to sustainability—and how those interpretations connect to shifts in behaviour—highlights not just what students said, but how they made sense of their experiences, turning analysis into a process of ethical and interpretive storytelling.

In analysing interview data, Fadli repeatedly listened to recordings and read transcripts, noting how meanings shifted with context and group dynamics; students' humour, silences and emphases often carried as much interpretive weight as direct responses, and documenting these nuances helped prevent the analysis from being reduced to decontextualised quotes. The final reporting drew on thematic maps to illustrate how students interpreted creative activities in relation to sustainability and how these interpretations connected to reported shifts in behaviour.

REFLECTIVE INSIGHTS FROM REAL EXPERIENCES

The PhD journey is a transformative experience marked by intellectual growth, resilience, and adaptability—especially during unprecedented challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most important lessons we learned was the value of flexibility. Qualitative methodologies rarely follow a linear path; they evolve in response to the field. Being open to change not only enhances depth but also fosters a more authentic engagement with participants' lived realities. Time management is equally critical—balancing data collection, analysis, and writing requires structured planning, particularly when unexpected delays or crises occur. Equally, mentorship and peer support proved vital. Seeking guidance not only provided academic direction but also emotional well-being, making the doctoral journey less isolating and more enriching (Lovitts, 2008).

Overcoming Challenges in Qualitative Research

A frequent challenge in qualitative research is data overload. Unlike quantitative research, where datasets are more structured, qualitative inquiry generates large volumes of text, audio, and field notes that require interpretation as much as organisation. Without clear strategies, researchers' risk being overwhelmed by data rather than discerning meaning from it. To manage this issue, we established a rigorous system for categorising and archiving files, drawing on qualitative analysis software such as NVivo to systematise coding and theme development (Silverman, 2020).

However, even with strong systems, the central challenge remained interpretive. Which voices should be prioritised? Which themes carried weight? Here, reflexivity was indispensable. Journaling and peer debriefing helped maintain awareness of biases and assumptions, ensuring that interpretations were not mere projections of the researcher's perspective but rather carefully considered representations of participants' meanings (Finlay, 2002).

Ethical concerns also surfaced frequently. Securing informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and protecting participant well-being were not one-off hurdles but ongoing interpretive responsibilities that required continuing attention. For example, anonymising transcripts was not simply a compliance task; it raised questions about how identities and cultural nuances could be protected without stripping away meaning (Tracy, 2010). This taught us that ethical diligence is inseparable from interpretive integrity.

Embracing the Iterative Nature of Qualitative Research

If quantitative research often privileges linearity, qualitative research requires embracing iteration—moving back and forth between data, theory, and reflection. Rigidity risks closing off insights that only emerge through flexibility. Fadli's own project evolved in unexpected ways: semi-structured individual interviews often transformed into small-group discussions, as students felt more comfortable sharing their experiences collectively. What initially seemed like a deviation from the plan became an interpretive strength, generating richer dialogues and revealing dynamics that individual interviews alone might have missed.

Future researchers should approach iteration as a strength, not a flaw. Joining communities of practice—such as academic writing groups, conferences, and research seminars—provided her with opportunities to test her interpretations and refine her arguments (Wellington, 2013). Documenting reflections throughout the process enhanced both methodological transparency and personal learning, thereby reinforcing the iterative and evolving nature of interpretation. Above all, iteration

underscored that ethical research is a dialogue rather than a fixed script, requiring sensitivity to shifting contexts and participant needs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

As previously discussed in Section 4.3, triangulation played a key role in consolidating interpretive credibility throughout the study, transforming methodological challenges into opportunities for deeper understanding.

DISCUSSION AND SYNTHESIS: RECLAIMING INTERPRETIVE RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter aims to make visible the often-invisible negotiations that structure qualitative research in institutional contexts, particularly within higher education. Through a reflective and situated account of fieldwork, gatekeeping tensions, methodological dissonances, and researcher vulnerability, it becomes apparent that ethical decision-making and knowledge production are not discrete phases but co-constitutive processes. To make sense of this, a unifying concept emerges: interpretive responsibility.

Interpretive responsibility refers to the ongoing, situated work researchers do to ethically navigate access, representation, and the uncertain dynamics of qualitative inquiry (Pillow, 2003; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). This responsibility is not reducible to ethical review forms or data protocols—it is enacted through the micro-decisions made in interviews, in conversations with supervisors, in moments of doubt, and during the solitary process of analysis. Reflexivity becomes not just a tool, but a moral commitment to foreground power, position, and purpose at every stage of the research.

In many ways, doctoral students are caught at the intersection of two tensions: on one hand, the demand for rigour, coherence, and scholarly contribution; on the other, the reality of navigating institutions that may be risk-averse, hierarchical, and ill-equipped to support interpretive methodologies. The gatekeeper conflict described earlier exemplifies this: when methodological innovation is constrained by managerial anxieties or procedural conservatism, it is not only access that is threatened, but epistemic justice (Fricker, 2007).

This raises a broader concern about how institutions define validity. When validity is measured primarily through methodological alignment or protocol adherence, it risks undermining the rich, nuanced insights that emerge from lived student experiences, dissenting voices, and emotional complexity. Triangulation, in such contexts, should not be deployed merely as a legitimating device but as a dialogical strategy—a means to hold competing narratives and explore what they reveal about the social worlds we study (Flick, 2018; Denzin, 2012).

Furthermore, the ethics of representation extend far beyond the principles of participant anonymity and informed consent. Representing others, particularly students within institutional systems, requires constant attention to how narratives are shaped, whose voices are foregrounded, and what institutional logics researchers inadvertently reproduce through the analysis. Here, the reflexive journal serves both as a methodological artefact and as an ethical mirror (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015), enabling researchers to remain in conversation with their own assumptions and interpretations.

Importantly, the tensions encountered throughout this journey are not signs of methodological weakness but indicators of epistemological richness. They underscore that qualitative research is not about mastery, but about learning to sit with discomfort, contradiction, and partial knowing. This is especially relevant for doctoral students transitioning from positivist or technical traditions—who must unlearn habits of certainty and embrace a more dialogical, situated approach to knowledge.

Looking forward, there is space—and need—for further work that rethinks ethical training, supervisory practices, and institutional expectations in doctoral research. Supervisors must be encouraged to view ethics as dynamic, not merely procedural; universities should treat doctoral students as knowledge producers rather than mere learners; and ethics committees should welcome methodological nuance, rather than penalising ambiguity. Without these shifts, doctoral researchers will continue to carry the interpretive burden alone, isolated in their efforts to navigate the institutional terrain.

In sum, this chapter is not a roadmap, but a reflective cartography of ethical dilemmas, methodological ruptures, and identity negotiations that shape qualitative inquiry. By reclaiming interpretive responsibility as a central tenet of ethical research, doctoral students can shift the frame from one of compliance to one of agency, from methodological defensiveness to epistemic humility, and from procedural ethics to a more expansive, relational, and accountable practice of knowledge production. Our reflections therefore invite higher education scholars to view interpretive responsibility not as a burden to be managed, but as a shared ethical practice and collective commitment.

PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PHD STUDENTS

Conducting qualitative research in an academic setting is a multifaceted intellectual, emotional, and ethical endeavour. Drawing on the author's own experience during her doctoral studies, this chapter offers five essential lessons for future researchers, particularly those working in complex and hierarchical academic environments.

Document Everything: Records Save the Research

It is not enough to follow ethical procedures; doctoral researchers also need to be able to prove it. Keep all communications with gatekeepers (including emails, copies of announcements, and proof of consent). A lack of proof can undermine the validity of doctoral research during the final evaluation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the author's case, not keeping copies of the announcements sent via Canvas led to a questioning of the integrity of the recruitment process.

Reflexivity is an Obligation not Luxury

The stance, reactions, and background of doctoral researchers inevitably shape how participants perceive them and express themselves. Researchers should maintain a reflective journal from the earliest stages of the project, even before conducting interviews. Such a journal helps them question their biases, interpretations, and power dynamics in the field (Finlay, 2002; Berger, 2015).

Alignment Between Methods Does Not Guarantee Validity

Doctoral researchers should not interpret misalignment between data as a problem, but as an opportunity for analysis. When quantitative results differ from qualitative narratives, the key is to question why: Is it due to social desirability? Is there a divergence between attitudes and practices? These moments often provide the most profound insights (Maxwell, 2012; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The Field is Alive: Researchers Should be Prepared to Adjust Research Methodology

Rigid plans rarely survive the field. Researchers should be prepared to modify their strategies—for example, transforming individual interviews into group sessions, adjusting the interview guide, or exploring secondary data if access to participants is compromised. Adaptability, therefore, is as crucial a skill as methodological rigour (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Ethics Goes Beyond the Form: It is Practised Every Day

Ethics is not just about checking boxes. Every interaction and every interpretation is an ethical decision. This means listening carefully, anonymising with discernment, and representing voices faithfully. Researchers should adopt a situated ethic (Tracy, 2010): an ongoing commitment to respecting people, contexts, and the complexity

of reality. These lessons do not claim universality. However, they offer doctoral students a framework for reflection rooted in lived experience, where validity, reflexivity, and integrity become the foundations of responsible qualitative research.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A SITUATED ETHICS OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH

This chapter has attempted to uncover the invisible, often silent, dimensions that shape qualitative research conducted by doctoral students: hierarchical tensions, conditional access to the field, demands for validity, and multiple interpretive responsibilities. By revisiting these experiences not as one-off obstacles but as founding moments of an epistemological stance, it becomes possible to reevaluate what it means to "conduct ethical research" in the contemporary academic context. Throughout these pages, a common thread emerges that of interpretive responsibility. It invites us to move beyond a procedural vision of ethics and adopt a reflexive stance, one that is aware of positional effects, relational asymmetries, and situated interpretations. The work of the doctoral student is not limited to collecting data and producing results; it also involves negotiating meaning, accurately representing, and interrogating the very frameworks in which this research takes shape.

From this perspective, the tensions experienced are not methodological failures but markers of complexity, and therefore of richness. They remind us that qualitative research is never neutral or linear: it is affective, political, and situated. Moreover, it is precisely this unstable nature that makes it a critical force, capable of questioning institutional logics, standardised practices, and epistemic routines. For institutions, this interpretation requires recognising doctoral students not as mere "apprentice researchers," but as legitimate producers of knowledge, bringing new perspectives on the mechanisms of knowledge and power. For supervisors, it underscores the importance of support that values reflexivity, nurtures autonomy, and recognises the affective dimension of qualitative inquiry.

Finally, for doctoral students themselves, this story is a call to claim their agency—to acknowledge their vulnerability without letting it hinder them, to turn each tension into an opportunity for critical learning, and to build their rigour not on conformity, but on ethical lucidity and interpretive commitment. In doing so, qualitative inquiry becomes not only a methodological practice but a relational and ethical responsibility—one that can transform both research and researcher alike.

144

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. DOI: 10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219–234. DOI: 10.1177/1468794112468475

Bourdieu, P. (1999). *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing Interviews* (2nd ed.). SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9781529716665

British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th ed.). BERA.

Busher, H., & James, N. (2012). The ethical framework of research practice. *Research methods in educational leadership & management*, 90-104.

Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory (introducing qualitative methods series). *Constr. grounded theory*.

Clark, M. C. (2011). 'Power, Privilege, and the Public: The Dynamics of Gatekeeping in Qualitative Research.' Denzin, N. K. & Giardina, M. D. Eds. *Qualitative Inquiry and Human Rights* (pp. 57–70). Left Coast Press.

Clark, M. C., & Sharf, B. F. (2007). The Dark Side of Truth(S): Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE*, *20*(4), 317–331.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Denzin, N. K. (2012). *Interpretive Autoethnography* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Fadli, H. (2022). *The Impact of Transformational Education Aided by Creativity on Students' Intended Sustainable Behaviour at Anglia Ruskin University, UK: A Mixed-Methods Study.* [Doctoral dissertation Anglia Ruskin University]. ARU Institutional Repository.

Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 209–230. DOI: 10.1177/146879410200200205

Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Pantheon Books.

Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(9), 1408–1416. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research.' Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. Eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* (pp. 105–117). SAGE.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 261–280. DOI: 10.1177/1077800403262360

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (4th ed.). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315146027

Hammersley, M., & Traianou, A. (2012). Ethics in Qualitative Research: Controversies and Contexts. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).* Advance online publication. DOI: 10.4135/9781473957619

Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). Research ethics for social scientists. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Kvale, S. (2007). Doing Interviews. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Lovitts, B. E. (2008). *The Transition to Independent Research: Who Makes It, Who Doesn't, and Why*. Stylus Publishing.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Mercer, J. (2007). The Challenges of Insider Research in Educational Institutions. *Oxford Review of Education*, *33*(1), 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/03054980601094651

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (rev. ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE*, *16*(2), 175–196. DOI: 10.1080/0951839032000060635

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research Methods for Business Students* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Silverman, D. (2020). *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837–851. DOI: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Wellington, J. (2013). *Searching for integrity: The Politics of Ethics in Higher Education Research*. Routledge.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2012). *What Are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury Academic.

World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *310*(20), 2191–2194. DOI: 10.1001/jama.2013.281053 PMID: 24141714

Section 4
Pragmatism and Participatory Research

Chapter 6
Pragmatism as a Practical Philosophy

Chris A. Jones

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3107-3707

Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter positions pragmatism as a global, consequence-driven philosophy of inquiry, tracing its evolution from Peirce, James, and Dewey to contemporary mixed-methods, design-based, and participatory research. It outlines pragmatism's core commitments fallibilism, pluralism, and consequentialism and shows how these enable methodological flexibility across complex, real-world settings. Integrating African relational ethics, Caribbean adaptive creativity, Indigenous ecological holism, Asian practical reasoning, and Latin American praxis, the chapter demonstrates pragmatism's resonance across diverse epistemologies. Reframing objectivity as intersubjective accountability and truth as practice-tested belief, it argues that pragmatism offers a rigorous, socially grounded framework for research amid digital disruption, misinformation, and inequality. Case examples from education, entrepreneurship, management, healthcare, and policy illustrate its applied power. A Pragmatist Researcher's Toolkit is also included for practical applications

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of research and higher education, questions of meaning, interpretation, and responsibility are increasingly urgent. Philosophical traditions have long shaped how scholars conceptualise knowledge, truth, and inquiry, yet few have proved as versatile and enduring as pragmatism. Emerging in the late nineteenth century through the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William

James, and John Dewey, pragmatism offered not merely a theory of knowing but a philosophy of action. It invites researchers to judge ideas by their consequences in lived experience and to treat inquiry as a social practice that develops through experimentation, critique, and adaptation.

This chapter examines pragmatism as both a philosophy and a research orientation. It proceeds thematically, moving from foundations to applications. First, it traces pragmatism's intellectual roots and situates them within the broader history of research philosophy, highlighting how commitments to fallibilism, pluralism, and consequence distinguish it from positivist and interpretivist traditions. Next, it considers the methodological implications of this stance, showing how a problem-centred orientation legitimises mixed methods, design based inquiry, and participatory approaches. Rather than elevating one technique above all others, pragmatism treats methods as tools chosen for their fitness to the problem at hand and judged by the quality of the solutions they enable.

A further theme concerns pragmatism's ethical dimensions. Rather than treating values as external to inquiry, pragmatism insists that responsibility, reflexivity, and accountability are integral to research. This ethos aligns with contemporary debates around responsible research and innovation, democratic participation, and the civic role of scholarship. By foregrounding consequences, pragmatism bridges epistemology with axiology: what counts as knowledge cannot be separated from what we value and the social worlds our inquiries shape. In this view, objectivity is not achieved through detachment but through intersubjective accountability claims are exposed to critique within communities of inquiry, revised in light of evidence, and warranted by their capacity to improve understanding and practice.

The applied significance of pragmatism is illustrated across domains. In education, its emphasis on experiential learning and reflective practice has shaped design-based research and collaborative pedagogy. In healthcare, pragmatism informs patient-centred approaches that integrate clinical evidence with lived experience to guide decisions that are both effective and humane. In business and entrepreneurship, it proves vital in contexts of resource constraint and volatility, where adaptive experimentation, creative problem solving, and stakeholder engagement support resilient innovation. Across these settings, pragmatism functions as a practical philosophy: it connects ideas to consequences and treats knowledge as a tool for navigating complexity.

In presenting these themes, the chapter also engages directly with critiques of pragmatism. It addresses the charge of relativism by emphasising intersubjective accountability and the communal testing of claims over time. It confronts concerns about methodological vagueness by articulating clear design principles oriented to consequences rather than allegiance to any single method. And it recognises historic blind spots regarding power and inequality, noting how contemporary pragmatists

integrate critical, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives to ensure that inquiry remains sensitive to voice, justice, and context. Engaging these critiques is not a defensive exercise; it clarifies pragmatism's boundaries, sharpens its conceptual resources, and demonstrates its capacity for self-correction.

The final theme looks forward. In an era marked by digital disruption, algorithmic decision making, and pervasive misinformation, pragmatism offers tools for living productively with uncertainty. Its fallibilism provides humility and openness to correction; its pluralism legitimises methodological integration across qualitative, quantitative, and computational approaches; and its consequentialism orients research toward practical impact and ethical responsibility. These commitments make pragmatism not a compromise between rival traditions but a dynamic resource for contemporary scholarship one that values rigour without rigidity and relevance without reduction.

Taken together, the chapter unfolds as a coherent narrative linking origins, concepts, methods, ethics, applications, critique, and future directions. It begins by setting out pragmatism's foundations and the philosophical commitments that animate them. It then shows how those commitments shape research design and practice, before turning to ethical questions and illustrative cases from education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship. The discussion of critiques clarifies boundaries and strengthens the argument, while the forward-looking conclusion considers pragmatism's role in a world of accelerating change. Throughout, the chapter aligns with the concerns of this volume meaning, interpretation, objectivity, and the ethics of reason by presenting pragmatism as a philosophy capable of sustaining nuance, grounding objectivity in communal inquiry, and embedding ethics at the heart of research. Its central claim is straightforward: in times that demand both intellectual honesty and practical wisdom, pragmatism equips researchers to integrate diverse forms of evidence, to reason publicly about values and consequences, and to generate knowledge that serves both scholarly understanding and the wider public good.

To aid readers, the chapter includes two visual anchors: a comparative table positioning pragmatism alongside positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism, and a conceptual illustration mapping pragmatism's foundational principle to research and societal contributions. These are not proposed as formal models demanding empirical testing; rather, they are pedagogical devices that clarify relationships and orient the discussion. The chapter is organised by themes rather than numbered sections to reflect the fluid, iterative character of pragmatist inquiry. Transitions signal movement from foundation to method, from ethics to application, and from critique to prospect, mirroring the logic of inquiry that pragmatists defend begin with a problem, assemble the best available tools, test claims in use, and refine them through dialogue. Readers can therefore navigate conceptually while remaining close to practice. For diverse disciplinary and practitioner audiences.

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism emerged in the late nineteenth century in the United States as a distinctly new approach to philosophy. Unlike the dominant European traditions of idealism and empiricism, Pragmatism was born from a context of rapid industrialisation, democratic experimentation, and cultural pluralism. It was, in many ways, a philosophy tailored to a young nation grappling with diversity and change. Its founding figures Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey were united by a dissatisfaction with abstract metaphysics and a conviction that philosophy should concern itself with practical consequences.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) is widely regarded as the originator of Pragmatism, even if his contemporaries did not fully appreciate his contributions during his lifetime. In his seminal essay *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (1878), Peirce proposed what he called the "pragmatic maxim" which states that the meaning of a concept lies in its conceivable practical effects. If we cannot identify what difference a belief or idea makes in practice, then it lacks meaningful content.

This principle shifted philosophy away from purely speculative debate and toward operational definitions. For Peirce, truth was not a static correspondence, but an outcome of inquiry pursued collectively. Truth emerges through a community of inquirers who, over time, converge on beliefs that withstand doubt. This emphasis on communal inquiry became one of the hallmarks of pragmatist epistemology (Peirce, 1878; Misak, 2004). Peirce's commitment to logic and semiotics also ensured that Pragmatism was not simply a philosophy of convenience but a disciplined approach to meaning-making and inquiry.

William James (1842–1910) popularised Pragmatism and extended its reach into psychology, religion, and social philosophy. Where Peirce was a logician with a penchant for technical detail, James was a gifted writer and lecturer who brought Pragmatism to broader audiences. In his lectures on Pragmatism (1907), he defined the approach as "a new name for some old ways of thinking," emphasising that the truth of an idea should be evaluated by its "cash value" in experiential terms. For James, beliefs are not merely descriptions of reality but instruments for navigating it. His radical empiricism underscored the plural and dynamic character of experience: reality is not fixed but continually unfolding, shaped by human interpretation and action. James's openness to plural truths has often been criticised as edging toward relativism, yet his point was that truths must always be tested in the flux of lived experience (James, 1907; Goodman, 1995). James's psychological work also grounded Pragmatism in the lived experience of individuals, particularly in the study of habit, belief, and will.

John Dewey (1859–1952) further developed Pragmatism into what he called "instrumentalism," grounding it firmly in education, democracy, and inquiry. For

Dewey, knowledge was a tool for solving problems, not a mirror of reality. In *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), he argued that inquiry begins in situations of doubt or uncertainty and proceeds through experimentation until a more stable outcome is achieved. This iterative process resembled the scientific method but was broadened to encompass all forms of human problem-solving. Dewey's vision of education as experiential learning and his commitment to democracy as a way of life made Pragmatism not only a theory of knowledge but also a philosophy of social progress (Dewey, 1938; Biesta & Burbules, 2004). He also insisted that inquiry was always embedded in context: problems were not abstract puzzles but lived challenges situated within specific environments.

Together, Peirce, James, and Dewey laid the foundation for Pragmatism as a philosophy of inquiry, action, and consequence. Their writings offered a powerful alternative to the abstractions of European philosophy, establishing Pragmatism as uniquely American yet globally resonant.

Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Pragmatism

Understanding Pragmatism as a research philosophy requires unpacking its ontological, epistemological, and axiological commitments.

- **Ontology (the nature of reality):** Pragmatism rejects metaphysical dualisms such as mind vs matter or fact vs value. Reality is understood as plural, dynamic, and partly constructed through human action. As Dewey argued, the world is not a fixed order waiting to be discovered but a field of ongoing interactions where new possibilities continually emerge (Dewey, 1929).
- **Epistemology (the nature of knowledge):** Knowledge is provisional and fallible, always subject to revision. For Peirce, truth is not correspondence with an external reality but the outcome of inquiry that would eventually be agreed upon by a community of investigators (Peirce, 1878). James emphasised the experiential usefulness of beliefs, while Dewey saw knowledge as the product of inquiry into problematic situations.
- **Axiology (the role of values):** Pragmatism places values at the heart of inquiry. Research is not value-free; it is guided by the purposes, interests, and ethical commitments of researchers and communities. Dewey, in particular, argued that inquiry should aim to improve human life and social conditions (Dewey, 1929).

By bringing these dimensions together, Pragmatism provides a holistic philosophy of research that resists rigid dichotomies. It allows for both objective testing and

subjective interpretation, while foregrounding the ethical implications of knowledge production.

Neo-Pragmatism and Later Developments

While the "classical pragmatists" Peirce, James, and Dewey laid the foundations, Pragmatism did not remain static in the early twentieth century. Instead, it evolved into what is often called Neo-Pragmatism, extending its reach into new philosophical and social debates. This trajectory demonstrates the adaptability of Pragmatism, as it absorbed critiques and reinterpreted its core principles in response to shifting intellectual climates.

One of the most influential figures in this renewal was Richard Rorty (1931–2007). In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Rorty launched a powerful critique of representationalism epistemology - the view that knowledge mirrors an external reality. For Rorty, this metaphor had dominated Western philosophy since Descartes, creating endless debates about whether our ideas correspond to an independent world. He argued instead that truth should be understood in terms of conversation, solidarity, and the vocabularies we use to cope with reality. Rorty's brand of Neo-Pragmatism thus emphasised language, contingency, and culture, aligning Pragmatism with postmodern thought. While some critics accused Rorty of relativism, his project reflected a distinctly pragmatist concern: what matters is not abstract certainty but the usefulness of our descriptions for collective life (Rorty, 1979).

Hilary Putnam (1926–2016), by contrast, steered Pragmatism in a more realist direction. Rejecting both metaphysical absolutism and relativism, he argued for what he called "pragmatic realism" (Putnam, 1995). For Putnam, truth is indeed fallible and context dependent, but this does not mean that "anything goes." Instead, inquiry must be oriented by both practical consequences and the regulative ideal of objectivity. In this way, Putnam attempted to reconcile Peirce's communal inquiry with Dewey's instrumentalism, while resisting the radical linguistic turn of Rorty. His contribution has been especially influential in debates about science, ethics, and democratic deliberation, where Pragmatism is seen as both critical and constructive.

A third influential voice is Cornel West (b. 1953), whose notion of "prophetic Pragmatism" situates the tradition in the struggle for racial justice and social transformation (West, 1989). For West, Pragmatism is not merely a philosophy of inquiry but a tool for confronting oppression. Building on Dewey's democratic ethos and James's pluralism, West argued that Pragmatism must be reinterpreted in light of structural inequality, race, and power. His prophetic Pragmatism emphasises courage, empathy, and solidarity in pursuit of justice, thereby connecting epistemology to ethics and politics in an explicit way. This infusion of Pragmatism with critical

theory and liberation philosophy demonstrates its capacity to remain relevant in diverse contexts.

Together, Rorty, Putnam, and West show that Pragmatism is not a monolithic doctrine but a dynamic and contested field. Where Rorty stressed contingency and language, Putnam defended a form of realism, and West articulated a moral imperative for justice. Despite their differences, each extended the classical insight that inquiry must be judged by its consequences for human life.

PRAGMATISM'S CONTEMPORARY RESONANCE

Pragmatism has also been influential in methodology. Scholars such as John W. Creswell and David Morgan explicitly invoke Pragmatism as the philosophical foundation for mixed methods research (Creswell, 2014; Morgan, 2007). They argue that Pragmatism's rejection of strict dichotomies between quantitative and qualitative methods provides a coherent justification for methodological pluralism. In this sense, Pragmatism has become not just a historical school of thought but an active force shaping how research is conducted in fields ranging from education to healthcare, business, and policy. Moreover, Pragmatism's emphasis on action and consequences aligns with twenty-first century demands for applied and impactful research. Increasingly, universities and funding bodies require that research demonstrate societal value whether through policy influence, business innovation, or community development. Pragmatism provides a philosophical rationale for this orientation by linking inquiry directly to problem-solving and human flourishing.

Classical and Neo-Pragmatism

If the classical pragmatists emphasised experience, community, and problem-solving, and the neo-pragmatists stressed language, pluralism, and justice, what unites them? At its core, Pragmatism is committed to three principles:

1. **Fallibilism:** All knowledge is provisional and open to revision.
2. **Instrumentalism:** Ideas and theories are tools for solving problems, not mirrors of reality.
3. **Consequentialism:** The value of inquiry lies in its practical and ethical consequences.

These commitments have made Pragmatism resilient across different eras. From Peirce's semiotics to James's radical empiricism, and from Dewey's democratic instrumentalism to West's prophetic justice, Pragmatism remains relevant because

it continually adapts without abandoning its central concern: that meaning and truth are inseparable from practice. For contemporary researchers, this synthesis means that Pragmatism offers both flexibility and depth. It legitimises methodological pluralism while grounding it in a coherent philosophy. It affirms plural perspectives while resisting relativism. And it insists that research should not only interpret the world but also contribute to its improvement.

PRAGMATISM AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The practical value of Pragmatism as a research philosophy becomes most evident when considered in the context of the so-called paradigm wars that dominated social science in the late twentieth century. These debates centred on the incompatibility thesis: the idea that quantitative and qualitative research are underpinned by such fundamentally different philosophical assumptions that they cannot be combined without incoherence (Gage, 1989). Quantitative methods, grounded in positivism, sought objectivity, generalisability, and prediction, while qualitative methods, rooted in interpretivism, emphasised depth, meaning, and context. The resulting "war" forced researchers to align themselves with one paradigm or the other, often in ways that limited the scope of inquiry.

Pragmatism emerged as a third way, offering an alternative to this binary. Rather than asking which paradigm is correct, Pragmatism asked what methods would best address the research problem. This problem-centred approach reframed methodology not as an ideological battleground but as a practical toolbox. For pragmatists, methods are not inherently quantitative or qualitative; they are simply strategies for generating knowledge that can help resolve uncertainty and guide action (Morgan, 2007). This shift proved transformative, as it provided a philosophical justification for integrating methods that had previously been considered incompatible.

Methodological Pluralism

Pragmatism's contribution to methodology is often described as methodological pluralism. In practice, this means that researchers can use multiple methods whether surveys, experiments, interviews, ethnography, or document analysis without being accused of philosophical inconsistency. The justification lies in the pragmatist conviction that the research question should drive method selection, not allegiance to a paradigm (Biesta, 2010). This approach allows for richer and more nuanced findings. For example, a study of small business resilience might combine quantitative surveys that measure financial performance with qualitative interviews that explore entrepreneurs' lived experiences of crisis. The survey provides gener-

alisable patterns, while the interviews reveal underlying rationales and meanings. Pragmatism justifies the combination by asserting that both sets of data contribute to solving the practical problem at hand.

Importantly, Pragmatism does not endorse eclecticism for its own sake. It does not suggest that researchers can randomly mix methods without philosophical coherence. Instead, it insists that methods be chosen in relation to the consequences they produce: do they generate insights that are useful, actionable, and ethically defensible? This disciplined flexibility distinguishes Pragmatism from what critics might dismiss as "anything goes" methodology.

Mixed-Methods Research and Pragmatism

Mixed-methods research is perhaps the clearest methodological expression of Pragmatism. Defined as the systematic integration of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study or programme of inquiry, mixed-methods research has become a mainstream approach across social science disciplines (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Pragmatism provides the philosophical foundation by resolving the tension between different forms of evidence.

There are several key designs within mixed-methods research:

- **Explanatory Sequential Design**: quantitative data are collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data that help explain or contextualise the initial findings.
- **Exploratory Sequential Design**: qualitative data are gathered first to explore a phenomenon, followed by quantitative data to test or generalise insights.
- **Convergent Design**: quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding.

Each of these designs reflects pragmatist logic: methods are deployed in ways that maximise their usefulness for addressing the research question. The design is not predetermined by allegiance to positivism or interpretivism but by a concern for problem-solving and meaningful outcomes.

Case Example: Entrepreneurship Research

Entrepreneurship provides a useful example of how Pragmatism informs research design. Consider a study exploring how resource-constrained entrepreneurs develop marketing strategies. A quantitative survey might reveal that a high proportion of entrepreneurs rely on social media as their primary marketing channel. However, without qualitative data, the survey cannot explain why this choice is made, how

entrepreneurs perceive its effectiveness, or what constraints shape their decisions. A follow-up set of interviews could uncover that the preference for social media reflects affordability, accessibility, and opportunities for relational trust with customers. By integrating both forms of evidence, the researcher gains a fuller picture of the phenomenon. This reflects Pragmatism's emphasis on inquiry as a process of resolving problematic situations: the choice of methods must serve the goal of developing insights that help make sense of and potentially improve real-world practice.

BEYOND MIXED METHODS: PRAGMATISM AND RESEARCH INNOVATION

While mixed-methods research is the most prominent application, Pragmatism also encourages methodological innovation more broadly. Researchers working in areas such as digital ethnography, participatory action research, and design-based research often draw implicitly on pragmatist principles. These approaches share a concern with consequences, collaboration, and the iterative refinement of inquiry. For example, participatory action research embodies Dewey's idea of inquiry as collective problem-solving, where researchers and participants co-create knowledge to address pressing issues. In this way, Pragmatism underpins not only established methods but also the ongoing expansion of the methodological repertoire. By emphasising adaptability and responsiveness, it enables researchers to design studies that are both rigorous and relevant. While Pragmatism provides a philosophical foundation for mixed-methods and methodological pluralism, its real power is seen in application. Because it is a philosophy of consequences, Pragmatism must be assessed not only by its coherence but also by how well it informs actual research practices across different domains. Three areas education, business and management, and policy research illustrate its influence.

Education

Pragmatism's roots in education are particularly strong, owing to John Dewey's lifelong concern with learning as inquiry. Dewey rejected rote memorisation and passive knowledge transmission, advocating instead for experiential learning in which students actively investigate problems and reflect on consequences. This has influenced contemporary educational research, which frequently employs mixed-methods designs to evaluate interventions. For instance, a study might combine standardised test data with classroom observations and teacher interviews to assess the impact of a new curriculum. The pragmatist rationale is clear: neither numbers nor narratives alone can capture the full complexity of educational outcomes. Prag-

matism also shapes methodologies such as design-based research, which integrates iterative cycles of innovation, testing, and refinement in real educational settings (Brown, 1992; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). Here, the philosophy of inquiry as problem-solving is operationalised in a systematic way, linking theory-building to practice in a feedback loop.

Business and Management

In business and management research, Pragmatism's emphasis on consequences aligns neatly with the applied orientation of the field. Researchers often face complex questions that require both measurement and interpretation. For example, studies on organisational change may gather survey data on employee engagement while conducting interviews to explore underlying narratives of resistance or adaptation. Pragmatism provides the philosophical license for this combination, arguing that understanding both the scale and the meaning of phenomena is essential for producing actionable insights. Entrepreneurship research also benefits from a pragmatist orientation. Studies of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often combine financial performance indicators with ethnographic fieldwork to capture how entrepreneurs navigate uncertainty. This reflects Dewey's insight that inquiry arises in situations of doubt and moves toward resolution through experimentation. In this context, entrepreneurs themselves can be seen as pragmatist inquirers, testing ideas, learning from consequences, and adapting strategies in iterative cycles.

Policy and Applied Social Research

Policy research represents another domain where Pragmatism has proven influential. Policymakers often require evidence that is both generalisable and context sensitive. For example, evaluating a public health intervention might involve large-scale epidemiological data alongside qualitative interviews with participants to understand barriers to adoption. A purely positivist or interpretivist approach would be insufficient; only a pragmatist orientation justifies and integrates such diverse forms of evidence. Pragmatism also resonates with the contemporary emphasis on impact in research assessment frameworks. Funding agencies increasingly demand evidence of real-world benefits, whether through improved policies, social innovation, or economic growth. Pragmatism provides a philosophical rationale for this shift, grounding research not only in epistemological rigour but also in ethical responsibility.

THE PRAGMATIST CONTRIBUTION TO METHODOLOGY

Taken together, these examples demonstrate how Pragmatism has reshaped methodological practice. Its contributions can be synthesised in three key insights:

1. **Problem-Centred Inquiry:** Pragmatism insists that research begins with a problem and that methods are selected according to their usefulness in addressing it. This positions inquiry as an adaptive process rather than a rigid adherence to paradigm rules.
2. **Integration of Methods:** Pragmatism legitimises the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, not as an eclectic mix but as a principled integration aimed at richer understanding. This underpins the rapid growth of mixed-methods research in recent decades.
3. **Ethical Orientation:** By emphasising consequences, Pragmatism embeds ethics into methodology. Research is not judged only by its internal validity but also by its capacity to contribute to human flourishing, social justice, or practical improvement.

In this sense, Pragmatism does more than offer methodological flexibility; it offers methodological coherence. It provides a philosophical foundation that connects epistemology, ontology, and axiology, aligning them with the realities of applied research. As such, it has become one of the most influential paradigms in contemporary social science methodology.

Table 1 situates Pragmatism alongside positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism. While positivism seeks universal laws, interpretivism emphasises meaning, and critical realism uncovers hidden mechanisms. Pragmatism prioritises what works in practice. Its distinctiveness lies in methodological pluralism, fallibilism, and a strong ethic of consequence. The table demonstrates that Pragmatism bridges objectivity and subjectivity, offering researchers an adaptable yet principled paradigm. This comparative framing clarifies where Pragmatism fits within the wider philosophical landscape, highlighting both its similarities and its unique contribution to addressing real-world problems with methodological flexibility and ethical accountability.

Table 1. Explanatory Comparative Table

Dimension	Positivism	Interpretivism	Critical Realism	Pragmatism
Truth / Knowledge	Objective truth; correspondence with reality	Truth exists but is multiply as mediated by the perceiver	Truth and objective reality exist but, having some unobservable aspects, is/can be socially constructed.	Truth as what works in practice; provisional and fallible
Role of Researcher	Detached observer; neutral stance	Researcher as constructor of meaning	Researcher uncovers hidden mechanisms	Problem-solver; reflexive and adaptive
Methods	Primarily quantitative; experiments, surveys	Qualitative; interviews, ethnography	Mixed methods; depth interviews, case studies	Methodologically plural; mixed, experimental, design-based
View of Reality	Single, external reality	Multiple, subjective realities	Stratified reality (empirical, actual, real)	Reality as experienced and acted upon
Implications for practice control	General laws, prediction	Understanding meaning, context, lived experience	Addressing structures of power and causation	Solutions that are useful, ethical, and consequential

INTERPRETATION AS MEANING-MAKING

If Pragmatism is a philosophy of inquiry oriented toward consequences, then its contribution to interpretation lies in how it conceives of meaning-making. For pragmatists, meaning is not abstract or detached but is always grounded in human practices, interactions, and consequences. This approach rejects both positivist objectivism, which assumes meanings are fixed and discoverable independent of context, and extreme constructivism, which risks suggesting that meanings are wholly arbitrary. Instead, Pragmatism situates interpretation within a dynamic process: concepts acquire meaning through the difference they make in lived experience.

Peirce's semiotics illustrates this approach. Signs gain meaning only within a triadic relation: the sign itself, its object, and the interpretant (Peirce, 1931–58). Interpretation is thus not the recovery of a fixed meaning but the unfolding of significance within a community of inquiry. James's radical empiricism reinforced this by emphasising that experience is never raw data but always interpreted in light of human purposes (James, 1912). Dewey carried this logic into his theory of inquiry, where problematic situations call forth investigation, and interpretation is the process by which possible solutions are generated, tested, and refined (Dewey, 1938).

Nuance as an Epistemological Commitment

Pragmatism's embrace of nuance flows directly from these commitments. Nuance here means recognising the complexity, contingency, and plurality of meanings. A pragmatist interpretation does not seek to eliminate complexity in the name of universal law but to engage with it productively. This is why Pragmatism has proven especially attractive to mixed-methods researchers: nuance is preserved by allowing multiple forms of evidence and perspectives to coexist. For example, Jones's (2024) research with Afro-Caribbean Entrepreneurs (ACEs) revealed that while quantitative data showed entrepreneurs favouring short-duration campaigns and social media, qualitative interviews exposed underlying rationales. Entrepreneurs described financial constraints, the flexibility of social platforms, and the enduring role of word-of mouth as central to their decision-making. A pragmatist reading accepts both findings as valid and complementary, producing a richer understanding of entrepreneurial behaviors.

Nuance as Pragmatist Virtue

The pragmatist emphasis on nuance can be synthesised into three virtues:

1. **Pluralism:** No single method or perspective holds a monopoly on truth.
2. **Integration:** Evidence is combined to enrich understanding rather than fragment it.
3. **Consequentialism:** Interpretations are judged by their implications for action, policy, or practice.

Together, these virtues position Pragmatism as a philosophy uniquely suited to complex, uncertain contexts. By resisting the false choice between parsimony and richness, it frames interpretation as a process of constructing nuanced, actionable insights. Pragmatism's most enduring contribution to philosophy is its reframing of truth and objectivity. Rather than seeking absolute certainty, as in positivist traditions, or dissolving truth into endless relativism, as in some postmodern currents, pragmatism advances a middle ground: truth as provisional, fallible, and judged by consequences.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1878) was the first to articulate this stance, arguing that all human knowledge is subject to revision in light of new evidence. For Peirce, the "fixation of belief" is never final but part of an ongoing community of inquiry. William James (1907) extended this with his notion that truth is "what works," not in a shallow instrumental sense, but in terms of ideas that withstand the test of experience. John Dewey (1938) went further still, framing truth as a process of social

inquiry in which knowledge emerges through experimentation, reflection, and adaptation. This insistence on fallibilism remains highly relevant in the contemporary research environment. In an age defined by rapid technological change, uncertainty, and complexity, pragmatism equips researchers to approach inquiry with humility recognising the limits of current knowledge while still acting decisively on the best available evidence.

OBJECTIVITY RECONSIDERED

Where positivism often equates objectivity with neutrality or detachment, pragmatism reconceives it as intersubjective accountability. For Dewey, objectivity is not the absence of values but the deliberate recognition of them through open dialogue, peer scrutiny, and democratic testing of claims. In this sense, objectivity is a social achievement, not an individual stance.

Recent thinkers have revived this line. Biesta (2010) argues that objectivity must be seen as an outcome of *shared practices of inquiry*, rather than as a transcendent property of knowledge. Similarly, Mingers (2021) shows how pragmatist fallibilism allows for methodological pluralism, reconciling quantitative, qualitative, and computational approaches by demanding that claims be judged against their consequences rather than their adherence to rigid paradigms.

Truth in the Digital Age

The rise of artificial intelligence, algorithmic curation, and misinformation has thrown questions of truth and objectivity into sharp relief. The positivist ideal of an objective reality "out there" is undermined daily by viral disinformation campaigns, deepfakes, and polarised digital echo chambers. At the same time, relativism's "everyone has their own truth" has proven equally corrosive to democratic debate.

Pragmatism offers a vital corrective. By insisting that truth is what survives communal testing, it directs attention away from abstract correspondence theories and toward practices of verification, accountability, and consequence. In an era of misinformation, pragmatism reframes the task of researchers not as adjudicating ultimate truth, but as cultivating trustworthy processes: creating spaces where competing claims can be tested, critiqued, and revised. Owen and Pansera (2023) argue that this pragmatist orientation is central to responsible innovation: researchers must attend to the social consequences of knowledge claims, particularly in contexts shaped by new technologies. Truth, in this account, is not simply about accuracy but about responsibility ensuring that inquiry contributes to democratic resilience rather than eroding it.

Living with Uncertainty

Perhaps the most profound contribution of pragmatism is its ethic of living with uncertainty. By accepting that all knowledge is provisional, pragmatism transforms uncertainty from a threat into a resource. Uncertainty becomes the condition of growth, creativity, and ongoing learning. As James suggested, the universe is not a closed system but a "pluralistic universe" open to novelty and change. For researchers, this has practical implications. It legitimises methodological flexibility the use of mixed methods, design-based research, and participatory inquiry so long as these approaches serve the problem at hand. It encourages reflexivity about values, assumptions, and consequences. And it fosters humility: the recognition that today's insights may be tomorrow's errors, but that inquiry nonetheless remains worthwhile because it moves us closer to workable, ethical solutions.

In sum, pragmatism reframes truth as dynamic and communal, objectivity as accountability rather than detachment, and fallibilism as an ethic of humility and courage. These commitments are particularly urgent in the twenty-first century, where researchers must navigate misinformation, algorithmic bias, and global uncertainty. By rejecting both foundationalist certainty and postmodern relativism, pragmatism provides a pathway for producing knowledge that is not only epistemically credible but also socially responsible.

PRAGMATISM, ETHICS, AND THE MORAL DIMENSION OF RESEARCH

One of the most distinctive features of Pragmatism is its refusal to treat ethics as external to inquiry. Whereas positivism often regarded research as a value-free activity concerned solely with facts, Pragmatism recognises that inquiry is always value-laden. From the formulation of research questions to the interpretation of findings, ethical considerations permeate the process. For pragmatists, ethics is not an afterthought or add-on but a constitutive element of inquiry.

John Dewey was especially forceful in this regard. For Dewey, democracy was not merely a political arrangement but an ethical way of life. Inquiry itself was a moral practice insofar as it aimed to resolve problematic situations in ways that promoted human flourishing. He argued that the purpose of knowledge was not abstract truth but the improvement of lived conditions (Dewey, 1938). This means that researchers bear responsibility for considering how their work affects the communities they study and the societies in which they live. Pragmatism therefore blurs the distinction between epistemology and axiology. Questions of what we can know are inseparable from questions of what we should value. This perspective

resonates with contemporary calls for responsible research and innovation (Owen et al., 2013), which emphasise anticipation, reflexivity, inclusion, and responsiveness. From a pragmatist viewpoint, these principles are not optional additions but inherent features of meaningful inquiry.

Ethics in Research Practice

This orientation has several implications for research practice. First, it challenges the assumption that objectivity requires detachment from values. Instead, objectivity requires that values be made explicit and subjected to communal scrutiny. Second, it reframes the researcher–participant relationship. Rather than treating participants as mere sources of data, pragmatist ethics calls for collaboration, reciprocity, and respect. Third, it extends the horizon of responsibility beyond immediate participants to consider the wider social consequences of research findings.

These commitments can be seen in practice in fields such as participatory action research, which explicitly involves participants in shaping the research agenda, methods, and interpretation of results. Such approaches embody Dewey's vision of inquiry as collective problem-solving oriented toward shared values. Similarly, in entrepreneurship research, scholars who adopt a pragmatist orientation often pay close attention to the ethical dilemmas faced by resource-constrained entrepreneurs, exploring not only what strategies are effective but also what strategies are equitable or sustainable.

Jones's (2024) research with Afro-Caribbean Entrepreneurs reflects this orientation. By examining how entrepreneurs navigate systemic inequities in access to finance and markets, the study highlights not only the mechanics of marketing strategy but also the ethical dimensions of survival under constraint. The emphasis on creativity and compassion as strategic competencies underscores that entrepreneurial practice is as much about values as it is about economics. By situating these findings within a pragmatist frame, the research demonstrates that inquiry into business practices must attend to their ethical as well as commercial consequences.

Pragmatism, Ethics, and the Moral Dimension of Research

If Pragmatism insists that truth and inquiry must be judged by their consequences, then it follows that research cannot be ethically neutral. Knowledge production always has implications: it shapes decisions, allocates resources, and frames possibilities for human flourishing. The moral dimension of Pragmatism lies in this

recognition that research is not only about what we know but also about what kind of world we help to create.

Amartya Sen's (2009) work on *The Idea of Justice* provides a useful complement here. Sen rejects abstract models of perfect justice in favour of a comparative, practice-oriented approach. Justice, for him, lies not in ideals but in the reduction of manifest injustices through democratic dialogue and public reasoning. This aligns with Dewey's pragmatist vision of democracy as inquiry, where ethical responsibility emerges from collective problem-solving rather than universal abstractions.

Martha Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach extends this logic by emphasising the substantive freedoms people require to live dignified lives. By focusing on what people are actually able to do and be, Nussbaum reframes justice in terms of enabling conditions for human flourishing. For pragmatist researchers, this means inquiry should not only generate knowledge but also contribute to expanding capabilities whether through policy, practice, or innovation.

This orientation resonates strongly with the contemporary discourse of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). Scholars such as Stilgoe, Owen, and Macnaghten (2013) argue that research must be anticipatory, reflexive, inclusive, and responsive. From a pragmatist perspective, these principles are not external constraints but intrinsic to inquiry: research is only meaningful if it responsibly addresses the problems of the communities it affects.

Participatory and action research traditions provide concrete illustrations. As Greenwood and Levin (2007) emphasise, research that involves participants as co-creators of knowledge embodies a pragmatist ethic of reciprocity. It treats participants not as passive data sources but as partners in addressing shared problems. This not only produces richer insights but also redistributes power within the research process, aligning method with ethics.

Recent work in management research also reflects these commitments. Romme (2016) argues for "professional pragmatism" in organisational studies, emphasising that inquiry should serve both academic rigour and societal value. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2001, 2022) has urged researchers to "make social science matter" by addressing questions of power, practice, and outcomes. These calls reinforce the pragmatist insistence that research must be ethically accountable, practically useful, and socially engaged.

Pragmatism as Ethical Orientation

Bringing these strands together, Pragmatism offers a distinctive ethical orientation to research:

1. **Consequentialist Responsibility**: knowledge must be judged by the human outcomes it enables.
2. **Democratic Accountability**: inquiry must be open to diverse voices, especially those marginalised by dominant systems.
3. **Capability Expansion**: research should contribute to widening the freedoms people have to act, innovate, and flourish.
4. **Responsibility for Impact**: ethics cannot be confined to consent forms; it extends to the social, cultural, and political consequences of research.

In this way, Pragmatism unites epistemology and ethics, making moral responsibility not a constraint on inquiry but its animating principles.

PRAGMATISM, GLOBAL EPISTEMOLOGIES AND CROSS-CULTURAL RESONANCE

Pragmatism is often narrated as a distinctly American invention an intellectual tradition forged in the laboratories, lecture halls, and democratic experiments of the late nineteenth century. Yet the pragmatist impulse long predates Peirce's semiotic diagrams, James's radically empirical lectures, and Dewey's democratic experimentalism. Across the world, multiple epistemological traditions have treated knowledge as consequential, relational, context-bound, and oriented toward human flourishing. To globalise pragmatism, therefore, is not to stretch it artificially; it is to recognise its deeper affinities with knowledge systems that have always been concerned with what works in lived practice. In a twenty-first-century research landscape characterised by global crises, plural identities, and interdependent systems, a globally expanded pragmatism is not simply desirable it is operationally essential.

African Philosophies of Relational Pragmatism

African philosophies, and particularly the Southern African ethic of *ubuntu*, offer one of the clearest global consonances with pragmatist commitments. *Ubuntu* often glossed as "I am because we are" frames knowledge as relational, iterative, and communally validated (Metz, 2014; Ewuoso & Hall, 2021). Like Dewey's conception of inquiry as a shared social practice, *ubuntu* positions truth as an emergent outcome of collective deliberation rather than an individual cognitive possession.

Recent scholarship has emphasised the methodological implications of this relational ontology. Ewuoso and Hall (2021) argue that *ubuntu*-grounded inquiry requires researchers to prioritise community benefit, reciprocity, and dialogic accountability; a logic directly aligned with contemporary responsible research and

innovation frameworks (Pansera & Owen, 2023). In this sense, African relational epistemology strengthens pragmatism's ethical consequentialism by emphasising not only "what works" but "what works for the collective good."

Caribbean Pragmatics: Creativity Under Constraint

The Caribbean intellectual tradition, evolving through histories of creolisation, resistance, and improvisation, offers another powerful variant of pragmatic reasoning. Caribbean thought treats knowledge as adaptive craft experiential, hybrid, and responsive to real-world constraints (Glissant, 1997; Bogues, 2022). Knowledge here is not a metaphysical category but a practical resource, continually revised to meet the demands of uncertain environments.

Research on Afro-Caribbean entrepreneurs illustrates this pragmatist orientation with particular clarity. Entrepreneurs operating under structural and resource constraints learn through experimentation, interpret consequences rapidly, and recalibrate strategies based on experiential feedback (). This is Deweyan inquiry refracted through the Caribbean's socio-economic and cultural grammar. Incorporating Caribbean pragmatics therefore expands the conceptual boundaries of pragmatism and grounds it in real-world contexts beyond Euro-American abstraction.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Ecological Consequence and Holism

Indigenous epistemologies across Aotearoa, the Pacific, Australia, and the Americas foreground holistic consequence, ecological interdependence, and collective responsibility. Māori epistemology, for example, conceptualises *mātauranga* as knowledge inseparable from land, community, and practice; truth is validated through sustainable outcomes rather than purely logical coherence (Royal, 2012; Hikuroa, 2017). Similarly, Indigenous North American philosophies often treat knowledge as relational action, validated through reciprocal engagement with ecosystems (Cajete, 2000).

Recent work in Indigenous research methodologies (Smith, 2021) reinforces that consequence-based epistemology long central to Indigenous thought aligns deeply with pragmatist consequentialism. It also expands the ethical horizon of pragmatism, shifting attention from human-centred outcomes to socio-ecological accountability.

Asian Pragmatics: Practical Ethics and Situated Reasoning

Across East and South Asia, philosophical traditions emphasise situated judgment, relational ethics, and the practical governance of conduct themes squarely aligned

with pragmatist reasoning. Confucian thought, for instance, privileges responsive judgment (*shi*), the contextual calibration of action to circumstance. This mirrors Dewey's view of inquiry as adaptation within evolving situations (Dewey, 1938; Angle, 2021).

Similarly, Indian Nyāya philosophy offers a striking predecessor to pragmatist truth claims: its theory of *pramā a* (valid knowledge) rests on whether beliefs lead to successful action in the world (Ganeri, 2011). Recent scholarship has revisited Nyāya reasoning as a form of global pragmatics attentive to evidence, inference, and consequence (Kumar, 2022). Such perspectives underscore that pragmatism's emphasis on action and outcome is not unique to America but shared across multiple intellectual lineages.

Latin American Traditions: Praxis, Liberation, and Social Consequence

Latin American traditions especially those shaped by Paulo Freire and broader liberation philosophy place consequence, justice, and transformation at the centre of inquiry. Freire's notion of *praxis* reflection and action upon the world to change it represents a fundamentally pragmatist ethic, foregrounding the inseparability of knowledge and social consequence (Freire, 1970). Contemporary decolonial theorists extend this lineage by emphasising how power structures shape epistemic legitimacy (Walsh, 2020).

These interventions strengthen pragmatism's capacity to address structural inequality, countering the historical critique that pragmatism overestimated the neutrality of inquiry (Seigfried, 1996). They remind researchers that consequences must be interrogated not only for usefulness but for justice.

TOWARDS A GLOBAL PRAGMATISM

Synthesising these traditions reveals a simple truth: pragmatism is not geographically bounded, nor is it culturally proprietary. Across African, Caribbean, Indigenous, Asian, and Latin American contexts, knowledge is judged by its capacity to improve conditions, expand capability, and sustain collective flourishing. A global pragmatism therefore sharpens rather than stretches the philosophy. It enriches methodological pluralism, deepens ethical accountability, broadens the community of inquirers, and equips researchers to navigate the complex, plural, and interdependent world of the twenty-first century.

Pragmatism in Practice: Case Illustrations and Contemporary Relevance

Education has long been a domain where Pragmatism finds natural application. Dewey's insistence that learning arises from problem-solving has shaped entire traditions of pedagogical research. Contemporary examples include design-based research, which integrates iterative cycles of intervention, testing, and refinement within classroom settings (Brown, 1992; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). DBR embodies pragmatist inquiry by explicitly linking theoretical models to practical solutions and refining both through feedback loops.

Mixed methods approach in education further illustrates this pragmatist orientation. For example, evaluating the effectiveness of literacy interventions often requires quantitative measures of reading achievement alongside qualitative classroom observations. By combining these perspectives, researchers produce findings that are both generalisable and sensitive to context. This capacity for methodological integration aligns directly with Pragmatism's concern for nuance and consequence.

Ethical commitments also play a role. Education research has increasingly embraced participatory methods, involving teachers, students, and communities in co-designing interventions. This reflects Dewey's conviction that inquiry is democratic at its core: meaningful research must engage those most affected by its outcomes. Here, Pragmatism provides both the philosophical rationale and the methodological toolkit for bridging the gap between abstract theory and lived practice.

Pragmatism in Healthcare and Policy Research

Healthcare research offers another rich arena for pragmatist practice. Clinical trials, for example, are traditionally quantitative and positivist in design. Yet increasingly, trials are supplemented with qualitative patient-reported outcomes to understand how treatments are experienced in everyday life (Greenhalgh et al., 2017). This blending of evidence types exemplifies the pragmatist principle that no single method is sufficient to address complex problems.

Policy evaluation shows similar dynamics. Consider public health campaigns: large-scale epidemiological data may show declining infection rates, but qualitative interviews reveal cultural or behavioural factors that shaped uptake. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of pragmatist approaches, as researchers had to integrate real-time data with community feedback to design interventions that were not only effective but also socially acceptable (Smith & Judd, 2020).

RRI frameworks, mentioned earlier, further demonstrate pragmatist ethics in policy research. By requiring anticipation, reflexivity, inclusion, and responsiveness (Stilgoe, Owen & Macnaghten, 2013), RRI operationalises Pragmatism's insistence

that inquiry must be judged by its consequences for society. It acknowledges that research is never ethically neutral and must be evaluated for both its epistemic and social impact.

Pragmatism in Business and Management Research

Business and management research is inherently problem-centred, making it a natural home for pragmatist methodologies. Questions about organisational change, innovation, and leadership often demand multiple forms of evidence. For example, studies on organisational resilience frequently integrate surveys measuring employee engagement with qualitative interviews exploring how individuals interpret uncertainty. This combination exemplifies Pragmatism's conviction that truth emerges not from methodological purity but from the consequences of inquiry for action and understanding.

Management scholars have increasingly drawn on pragmatist traditions to justify mixed methods designs. Greenwood and Levin (2007) explicitly connect action research to Deweyan principles, framing organisations as sites of collaborative problem-solving where researchers and practitioners co-create knowledge. Similarly, Romme (2016) calls for "professional pragmatism" in management, where rigour is inseparable from relevance. These contributions argue that business research should not only describe phenomena but also generate solutions that matter for practice. Ethical dimensions are equally significant. Pragmatism challenges management research to ask not only "what works" but also "what matters." For instance, sustainability studies increasingly rely on pragmatic approaches that combine quantitative models of environmental impact with qualitative explorations of stakeholder values (Bansal & Song, 2017). Such integration reflects Pragmatism's ethic of connecting knowledge to consequences for human and ecological flourishing.

Entrepreneurship Research

Entrepreneurship is perhaps the domain most naturally aligned with Pragmatism. Entrepreneurs operate under uncertainty, experimenting, testing, and adapting strategies in ways that mirror Dewey's model of inquiry. Research in this field often combines financial metrics with narrative accounts of entrepreneurial journeys, capturing both outcomes and meanings.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular exemplify pragmatist problem solving. Studies of SME marketing strategies often reveal a blend of resource constraints and creative improvisation (Gilmore, Carson & Grant, 2001). The IPA Effectiveness Awards have showcased SME campaigns that achieved disproportionate impact on modest budgets for example, Concierge Car Wash in New

Zealand, which used localised media and creative messaging to outcompete larger rivals. Such cases highlight the pragmatist emphasis on creativity, consequence, and adaptation.

Jones's (2024) research with Afro-Caribbean Entrepreneurs adds further nuance. The study found that while entrepreneurs often relied on short-duration campaigns and social media, these practices were shaped by systemic inequities in finance and access. Here, Pragmatism provides a lens for interpreting both quantitative patterns and qualitative rationales, showing how entrepreneurial strategies are both constrained and innovative. This case contributes to a broader literature on how under-resourced firms mobilise creativity as a strategic equaliser. Across education, healthcare, policy, business, and entrepreneurship, Pragmatism provides a consistent orientation: problem-centred inquiry, methodological pluralism, and ethical accountability. Its relevance is heightened in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, where no single method or perspective suffices. Pragmatism legitimises integration, embraces nuance, and foregrounds consequences, making it indispensable for applied research that aims to be both rigorous and relevant.

PRAGMATIST RESEARCHER'S TOOLKIT: OPERATIONALISING CONSEQUENCE-LED INQUIRY

If global epistemologies reveal the breadth of pragmatist sensibilities, the researcher's task is to convert that breadth into disciplined action. Pragmatism is not a philosophy of indulgent eclecticism; it is a philosophy of methodological fitness — selecting, combining, and justifying methods based on the consequences the inquiry must produce. The toolkit below codifies this orientation. It offers researchers a structured, repeatable, and accountable way of designing inquiry in a world where complexity is the norm rather than the exception.

1. Pragmatist Problem-Framing Template

All pragmatist inquiry begins with the problem the disruption, uncertainty, or tension that demands explanation or intervention. To prevent premature methodological choices, researchers should articulate:

- **Problem Definition:** What is the situation of doubt? What triggered it (Dewey, 1938)?
- **Stakeholder Landscape:** Who experiences the problem? Who benefits or bears the consequences of action or inaction?

- **Consequence Pathways:** What will change socially, organisationally, ethically if this problem is addressed or ignored?
- **Underlying Values:** Which values shape the definition of the problem and aspirations for resolution (Putnam, 1995)
- **Success Criteria:** What outcomes count as "improvement," "resolution," or "workability" in this context?

This template ensures that inquiry is grounded in lived reality rather than theoretical attachment.

2. Method-Selection Matrix: Consequence-Based Logic

Pragmatist researchers align method with consequence. To make this logic explicit, the matrix below summarises the methodological options available when designing research that must work in practice. As summarised in Table 2, pragmatist inquiry requires researchers to choose methods based not on paradigmatic loyalty but on the functional demands of the problem.

Table 2. Method-Selection Matrix: Consequence-Based Logic:

Research Aim	Most Fit-for-Purpose Methods	Pragmatist Rationale	Typical Designs / Tools
Identify patterns, trends, predictors	Quantitative	When scale, measurement, or inference is required, numerical data illuminate structure	Surveys, experiments, modelling
Understand meaning, experience, interpretation	Qualitative	When nuance, depth, and context matter, narratives illuminate lived process	Interviews, ethnography, case studies
Combine breadth and depth for complex problems	Mixed Methods	Integration produces richer, fuller explanations	Sequential explanatory, exploratory, convergent
Iteratively test and refine interventions in situ	Design-Based Research	Real-world experimentation validates what works in practice	Iterative prototype cycles
Co-create knowledge with affected communities	Participatory/Action Research	Equity, legitimacy, and reciprocity matter; inquiry must be collaborative	PAR cycles, co-design workshops

This matrix reinforces the pragmatist stance that methodological legitimacy is earned through fitness-to-purpose rather than fidelity to any specific paradigm.

CONSEQUENCE-BASED EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Pragmatist evaluation asks one question: *Did the inquiry generate outcomes that meaningfully improve understanding or practice?* Researchers should test their findings against:

1.**Usefulness:** Does it resolve or illuminate the original problem?
2.**Ethical Defensibility:** Are the consequences fair, responsible, and justified?
3.**Contextual Relevance:** Does it account for social, cultural, and structural conditions? 4.**Transferability:** Can the insights travel to comparable contexts without overclaiming universality?
5.**Accountability:** Has the interpretation been exposed to critique within a relevant community of inquiry (Peirce, 1878)?

In pragmatist inquiry, reflexivity is not a confessional exercise but a governance mechanism. It ensures that the researcher remains accountable to evidence, to context, and to the communities embedded in the problem. By systematically interrogating assumptions, inclusions, exclusions, and consequences, the reflexivity protocol closes the loop between philosophical intent and methodological action. It transforms reflexivity from a private reflection into a public commitment: a disciplined practice that safeguards the integrity, relevance, and ethical standing of the research.

CRITIQUES AND LIMITATIONS OF PRAGMATISM

One of the most persistent critiques of Pragmatism is that its rejection of absolute, fixed truths risks collapsing into relativism. By framing truth as provisional and tied to consequences, pragmatists open themselves to the accusation that "anything goes." Critics argue that if beliefs are validated only by their usefulness, then harmful or false ideas could be justified so long as they serve immediate interests.

Richard Rorty, often associated with neo-pragmatism, has been a frequent target of this charge. His rejection of objective truth in favour of "contingent vocabularies" (Rorty, 1979) led some to conclude that pragmatism undercuts the very possibility of critique. If truth is whatever our community of inquirers agrees upon, how do we guard against entrenched prejudices or power imbalances shaping what is accepted?

Pragmatist responses to this critique have varied. Peirce's emphasis on long-run convergence sought to avoid relativism by tying truth to what inquiry would eventually reveal under ideal conditions. Dewey countered that the pragmatic test of truth lies not in expediency but in sustained problem-solving and improvement of conditions. More recently, scholars have highlighted the ethical safeguards embedded in prag-

matist inquiry: communal testing, democratic dialogue, and openness to revision. Nevertheless, the risk of relativism remains a significant critique, particularly for audiences trained in positivist traditions who equate truth with correspondence.

Methodological Vagueness

Another critique concerns the perceived vagueness of pragmatist methodology. Because Pragmatism resists rigid prescriptions, it can be accused of lacking clear guidelines. Positivists may charge that pragmatist inquiry is too eclectic, allowing researchers to pick and mix methods without coherence. Interpretivists, on the other hand, sometimes criticise pragmatism for smuggling positivist assumptions back into qualitative research by giving undue weight to empirical utility.

This "methodological looseness" can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, Pragmatism provides the philosophical grounding for mixed-methods research, legitimising methodological pluralism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). On the other, it risks becoming a catch-all justification for poorly designed studies that merely combine methods superficially. The danger is that researchers may invoke Pragmatism rhetorically while failing to embody its deeper commitments to consequence, reflexivity, and democratic testing.

Efforts to address this critique have included attempts to formalise pragmatist research design principles. For example, Morgan (2007) outlines three key commitments: abductive reasoning, intersubjective justification, and transferability through consequences. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) further systematise mixed-methods pragmatism by distinguishing between philosophical stance, methodological approach, and specific techniques. These efforts suggest that Pragmatism does not imply methodological vagueness but instead requires careful articulation of how chosen methods align with the research problem. Still, the perception of vagueness persists, particularly among scholars who prefer tightly codified frameworks.

Neglect of Power and Inequality

A further limitation concerns Pragmatism's historical tendency to underplay issues of power, inequality, and structural constraint. While Dewey championed democracy as an ethical ideal, critics argue that early pragmatists often assumed overly optimistic views of consensus and dialogue. For marginalised groups, the conditions of inquiry are never neutral; power asymmetries shape whose voices are heard and whose experiences are legitimised.

Critical theorists such as Habermas (1984) and later feminist pragmatists (Seigfried, 1996) have highlighted this blind spot. They argue that without explicit attention to power, pragmatist communities of inquiry risk reproducing dominant

interests. More recent scholars have sought to bridge this gap by integrating prag-
matism with critical theory and postcolonial perspectives, emphasising the need to
interrogate structural inequalities alongside practical consequences. For example, in
entrepreneurship research, focusing solely on the "what works" of entrepreneurial
practice risks obscuring systemic barriers to finance, market access, or legitimacy
faced by minority entrepreneurs. Pragmatism's flexibility allows for such critiques
to be incorporated, but its historical emphasis on consensus over conflict can appear
naïve in contexts marked by deep inequalities.

Another critique is that Pragmatism can appear philosophically incoherent because
of its breadth. From Peirce's semiotics to James's radical empiricism, to Dewey's
democratic experimentalism, pragmatism covers diverse terrain. Neo-pragmatists
like Rorty and Putnam further expanded the tradition, often in divergent directions.
For critics, this pluralism makes it difficult to pin down what Pragmatism stands
for. Is it a theory of truth, a philosophy of action, a methodological stance, or an
ethical framework?

The strength of pragmatism its adaptability can thus be framed as a weakness.
Positivists dismiss it as vague relativism; critical theorists critique its lack of systemic
attention; even sympathetic scholars sometimes worry that Pragmatism risks dilution
when invoked too broadly. If "pragmatism" simply means "whatever works," then
it loses philosophical precision.

Defenders respond that this plurality is a feature, not a flaw. Pragmatism is less
a fixed doctrine than a tradition of inquiry, united by family resemblances rather
than rigid boundaries. Its coherence lies in its commitments: fallibilism, pluralism,
consequentialism, and anti-essentialism. Within these commitments, diversity of
application is not incoherence but vitality. Still, the critique highlights the need
for pragmatist scholars to articulate clearly what version of pragmatism they are
invoking and why.

Practical Limitations in Application

While pragmatism offers flexibility, this very adaptability can create practical
challenges in application. For researchers, pragmatism may provide insufficient
guidance when hard methodological choices must be made. Should a study prioritise
depth or breadth? Which data source carries more weight when findings conflict?
Positivist or interpretivist paradigms provide clearer hierarchies; pragmatism, by
contrast, asks researchers to justify decisions in terms of consequences, which can
be demanding and sometimes ambiguous.

Furthermore, pragmatism's emphasis on context-dependence can limit gen-
eralisability. Findings framed as "what works here" may be criticised for lacking
predictive power across settings. While pragmatists argue that transferability is

the goal, this can frustrate audiences who seek broadly applicable laws. In policy contexts, pragmatism's openness may be politically inconvenient. Policymakers often want clear answers, not nuanced accounts of context and consequence. This creates tension: pragmatism's richness may be sidelined in favour of simpler but less accurate models.

Critiques and Responses

Taken together, these critiques of relativism, methodological vagueness, neglect of power, philosophical incoherence, and practical limitations show that pragmatism is not a panacea. It faces serious challenges, both conceptual and applied. Yet these critiques also illuminate pragmatism's distinctive contribution.

- Against charges of relativism, pragmatism insists on communal testing and democratic accountability.
- Against methodological vagueness, it offers principles of abductive reasoning, pluralism, and consequence-based justification.
- Against neglect of power, contemporary pragmatists integrate critical, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives.
- Against philosophical incoherence, it embraces pluralism as vitality rather than weakness.
- Against practical limitations, it reframes generalisability not as universal law but as situated transferability.

In short, pragmatism acknowledges its own fallibility. Its capacity to absorb critique and adapt to new challenges is itself an expression of pragmatist philosophy. Rather than collapsing under its limitations, pragmatism grows through them.

Implications for Researchers

For contemporary scholars, the lesson is not to treat pragmatism as a ready-made recipe but as a discipline of reflexivity. It requires researchers to:

1. Clarify which version of pragmatism they are drawing on.
2. Justify methodological choices in terms of consequences.
3. Attend explicitly to issues of power, equity, and justice.
4. Frame findings as provisional and transferable rather than universal.

When practised in this way, pragmatism does not evade critique but incorporates it into inquiry. Its limitations become opportunities for richer, more responsible scholarship.

Future Directions for Pragmatism in Research

As global challenges intensify climate change, inequality, technological disruption, and democratic fragility the need for research approaches that balance rigour with relevance becomes urgent. Pragmatism is uniquely positioned to meet this demand. Its commitments to fallibilism, pluralism, and consequence-driven inquiry provide a foundation for research that is both flexible and ethically grounded. Yet to remain vital, pragmatism must evolve. This section outlines future directions for pragmatist research, highlighting areas where it can be expanded, deepened, and applied.

One priority is the integration of critical perspectives. Traditional pragmatism has been criticised for neglecting power dynamics and structural inequality. Future pragmatist research must actively engage with feminist, critical race, and postcolonial theories to address this gap. Doing so not only strengthens pragmatism's ethical commitments but also expands its capacity to analyse contexts where consensus and dialogue are undermined by entrenched hierarchies.

For example, integrating pragmatism with critical race theory can help illuminate how knowledge production is shaped by systemic racism. In entrepreneurship research, this integration could reveal how financial systems disadvantage minority entrepreneurs while also highlighting creative strategies of resistance. Similarly, combining pragmatism with feminist epistemology emphasises relationality, care, and situated knowledge, reinforcing pragmatism's pluralist commitments.

Another direction is methodological. While pragmatism has long underpinned mixed methods research, the rise of big data, digital ethnography, and computational social science presents new opportunities. Pragmatism can provide the philosophical grounding for integrating these novel methods with traditional approaches. For instance, combining algorithmic analysis of social media data with in-depth qualitative interviews would allow researchers to explore both patterns and meanings.

Future pragmatist inquiry should also embrace design science and experimentation. In management and policy studies, design-based research aligns closely with Dewey's vision of inquiry as problem-solving. By framing interventions as experiments, researchers can generate knowledge that is simultaneously theoretical and practical. Pragmatism offers the conceptual framework for justifying such iterative, adaptive methodologies.

Emphasising Ethics and Responsibility

The ethical dimension of pragmatism must also be advanced. As research increasingly intersects with artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and other transformative technologies, questions of responsibility cannot be ignored. Pragmatism's insistence that inquiry be judged by its consequences positions it as a natural ally of frameworks like Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). However, pragmatism must go further, embedding ethical reflection into every stage of inquiry rather than treating it as a parallel concern.

This means developing ethical methodologies that do more than secure informed consent. It involves co-creating research agendas with affected communities, foregrounding issues of justice and equity, and evaluating impact beyond academic metrics. By expanding its ethical commitments, pragmatism can respond to critiques of neutrality and contribute to research that genuinely serves the public good.

Finally, pragmatism's future depends on globalisation. Historically rooted in the United States, pragmatism must broaden its scope to engage with diverse epistemologies worldwide. Comparative dialogues with African, Asian, and Indigenous philosophies of knowledge could enrich pragmatist commitments to pluralism and relationality. For example, African philosophies of ubuntu, with their emphasis on interconnectedness, resonate strongly with pragmatist ideas of community and consequence. By engaging in such cross-cultural conversations, pragmatism can avoid provincialism and position itself as a truly global philosophy of inquiry. This would not only enhance its intellectual robustness but also its practical relevance in addressing global challenges that transcend national and cultural boundaries.

Pragmatism's future also lies in its continued application to real-world challenges in business, education, and health. Each of these domains exemplifies conditions of uncertainty and complexity where no single method suffices. In business and management, pragmatism can provide the philosophical rationale for integrating behavioural insights, econometrics, and qualitative fieldwork. For example, research into sustainable business models requires not only quantitative life-cycle analyses but also qualitative exploration of stakeholder perceptions. Pragmatism legitimises such integration by emphasising that the value of knowledge lies in its capacity to solve problems and generate actionable insight.

In education, pragmatism will continue to inform design-based research and participatory methods. As classrooms become more diverse and digitally mediated, pragmatist approaches enable researchers to bridge theory and practice. For instance, mixed-methods evaluations of digital literacy programmes can combine large-scale test results with qualitative studies of student engagement. Pragmatism ensures that findings are not only statistically valid but also meaningful for teachers and learners.

In healthcare, pragmatism is particularly relevant to patient-centred research. Clinical outcomes are necessary but insufficient; researchers must also attend to lived experiences of patients and caregivers. Pragmatism provides the justification for mixed-method designs that integrate medical metrics with narratives of care, ensuring that health research is both rigorous and humane.

Pragmatism in the Digital Era

The rise of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic governance presents new frontiers for pragmatist research. Digital environments produce unprecedented volumes of data but also raise profound ethical and interpretive challenges. How do we balance predictive power with transparency? How do we ensure that algorithms serve human flourishing rather than entrench bias?

Pragmatism is well-suited to addressing these questions. Its emphasis on fallibilism encourages scepticism toward claims of algorithmic objectivity, while its commitment to pluralism legitimises integrating technical analysis with social critique. For example, combining computational modelling with ethnographic observation of digital communities can produce more nuanced understandings of online behaviour. Pragmatism thus provides a philosophical framework for resisting technological determinism and emphasising human consequences. Looking ahead, the greatest opportunity for pragmatism lies in synthesizing its core commitments with contemporary demands. This synthesis involves:

1. **Methodological integration**: Extending mixed-methods research into computational, design, and participatory paradigms.
2. **Ethical embedding**: Ensuring that all inquiry is accountable to its social, cultural, and political consequences.
3. **Global engagement**: Expanding pragmatism's horizons through dialogue with nonwestern epistemologies.
4. **Practical orientation**: Reasserting that the purpose of research is not abstract truth but the improvement of lived conditions.

The preceding discussion has emphasised how pragmatism's core commitments fallibilism, pluralism, consequentialism, and ethical responsibility can be synthesised to meet contemporary research challenges.

Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of how these foundational principles translate into concrete contributions for research and society. The diagram underscores that pragmatism is not simply an abstract philosophy but a generative framework whose commitments enable methodological integration, contextual sensitivity, practical impact, and social accountability. Importantly, these contributions extend

beyond scholarship to democratic participation and civic responsibility, reinforcing pragmatism's dual role as a research philosophy and a civic ethic.

Figure 1. Pragmatism: Foundational Principles and Contributions to Research & Society
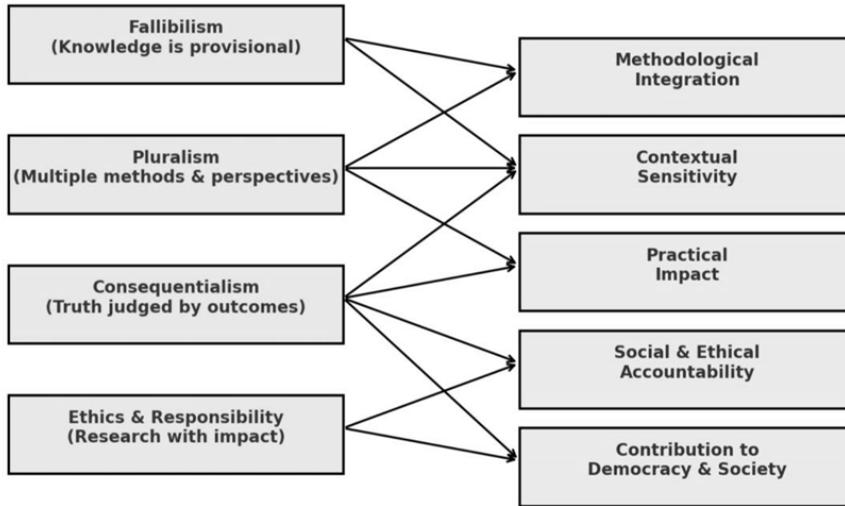
PRAGMATISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Pragmatism emerged in the late nineteenth century as a response to the inadequacies of both positivism and idealism. In the twenty-first century, it remains just as vital, precisely because it offers a philosophy of inquiry attuned to complexity, fallibility, and consequence. By uniting rigour with relevance, pragmatism provides a framework for research that is not only epistemically credible but also ethically and socially responsible. Its future lies in adaptation: embracing new methods, confronting power and inequality, and engaging diverse traditions of knowledge. If these challenges are met, pragmatism can serve as a guiding philosophy for research that is genuinely capable of addressing the urgent problems of our time.

CONCLUSION

Pragmatism endures because it refuses to pretend that inquiry happens in a vacuum. From Peirce's community of investigation, James's experiential truth, and Dewey's democratic experimentalism to contemporary expansions by Rorty, Putnam, and Biesta, Pragmatism treats knowledge as something forged in the pressures of lived experience. Its central commitments fallibilism, pluralism, and consequentialism offer a disciplined alternative to the false certainties of positivism and the inertia of postmodern relativism. Knowledge, in a pragmatist frame, is always provisional, always situated, and always judged by the difference it makes.

The chapter's expanded global perspective demonstrates that this orientation is not exclusively American but resonates across diverse epistemological traditions. Ubuntu's relational accountability, Caribbean improvisational creativity, Indigenous ecological holism, Asian practical ethics, and Latin American praxis all reveal a shared commitment to consequence-based reasoning. When placed in dialogue, these traditions show that pragmatism is not a local philosophy but a global grammar for navigating uncertainty, negotiating values, and advancing human flourishing. This broader lens strengthens, rather than stretches, the pragmatist project by embedding it within a pluriversal understanding of inquiry.

Yet a philosophy lives or dies by its usability. The Pragmatist Researcher's Toolkit included in this chapter translates philosophical commitments into operational guidance. The problem-framing template grounds inquiry in lived disruptions rather than abstract concepts. The method-selection matrix embodies methodological fitness aligning approaches with the practical demands of the problem. The evaluation checklist embeds ethical and contextual accountability, while the reflexivity protocol positions researchers as active stewards of consequence rather than passive observers. These tools articulate pragmatism not as a loose methodological eclecticism but as a disciplined, consequence-driven mode of research design.

In addressing longstanding critiques, the chapter also shows pragmatism's capacity for self-correction. Concerns about relativism are countered by communal accountability and transparent justification. Critiques of vagueness are addressed through the operational frameworks provided. Challenges regarding power and structural inequality are met through engagement with feminist, critical race, Indigenous, and decolonial traditions, which extend pragmatism's ethical horizon. What critics identify as weaknesses pluralism, adaptability, responsiveness are precisely the qualities that make pragmatism suited to a complex, globalised research landscape.

For researchers, the implications are clear. Pragmatism is not a recipe but a discipline: a demand for clarity in problem definition, justification in method selection, humility in interpretation, and responsibility in consequence. It equips scholars to respond to contemporary challenges climate instability, social inequality, digital

transformation with approaches that are rigorous without rigidity and flexible without incoherence. It allows inquiry to be both empirically grounded and ethically alive.

Ultimately, the chapter positions pragmatism as a philosophy of action for a world that cannot afford theoretical detachment. It is an ethic of inquiry anchored in improvement, a methodological orientation grounded in practical usefulness, and a global worldview attentive to the plurality of human experience. Its power lies not in offering certainty, but in enabling thoughtful, adaptive, and justice-oriented responses to the problems that matter. In this sense, pragmatism remains one of the most consequential intellectual resources available to contemporary researchers: a philosophy not only of knowing but of doing and of doing better.

REFERENCES

Angle, S. (2021). *Growing moral: A Confucian guide to life*. Oxford University Press.

Bansal, P., & Song, H. C. (2017). Similar but not the same: Differentiating corporate sustainability from corporate responsibility. *The Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(1), 105–149. DOI: 10.5465/annals.2015.0095

Biesta, G. (2010). Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods research. In Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed., pp. 95–118). SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9781506335193.n4

Biesta, G. J., & Burbules, N. C. (2004). *Pragmatism and educational research*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. DOI: 10.5040/9798216401544

Bogues, A. (2022). *Black critique and the savage: Essays on Caribbean philosophy*. University of the West Indies Press.

Brown, A. L. (1992). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, *2*(2), 141–178. DOI: 10.1207/s15327809jls0202_2

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science*.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Design-Based Research Collective. (2003). Design-based research: An emerging paradigm for educational inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(1), 5–8. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X032001005

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Ewuoso, C., & Hall, S. (2021). A normative analysis of Ubuntu-informed African bioethics. *Developing World Bioethics*, *21*(1), 28–35.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511810503

Flyvbjerg, B., & Gardner, D. (2022). *How big things get done*. Penguin.

Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review*, *40*(2), 205–225. DOI: 10.17763/haer.40.2.q7n227021n148p26

Gage, N. L. (1989). The paradigm wars and their aftermath: A "historical" sketch of research on teaching since 1989. *Educational Researcher*, *18*(7), 4–10.

Ganeri, J. (2011). *The lost age of reason: Philosophy in early modern India 1450–1700*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199218745.001.0001

Gilmore, A., Carson, D., & Grant, K. (2001). SME marketing in practice. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *19*(1), 6–11. DOI: 10.1108/02634500110363583

Glissant, É. (1997). *Traité du tout-monde*.

Goodman, R. B. (Ed.). (1995). *Pragmatism: A contemporary reader*. Psychology Press.

Greenhalgh, T., Hinton, L., & Finlay, T.. (2017). Frameworks for supporting patient and public involvement in research: Systematic review and co-design pilot. *Health Expectations*, *20*(3), 376–391. PMID: 31012259

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change* (2nd ed.). Sage. DOI: 10.4135/9781412984614

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society* (Vol. 1). Beacon Press.

Hikuroa, D. (2017). Mātauranga Māori—The Ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, *47*(1), 5–10. DOI: 10.1080/03036758.2016.1252407

James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking*. Longmans, Green, and Co. DOI: 10.1037/10851-000

James, W. (1912). *Essays in radical empiricism*. Longmans, Green, and Co.

Jones, C. (2024). *Black Magic Marketing, Myth or Material?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sunderland).

Kumar, A. (2022). Nyāya epistemology as global philosophy: Evidence, inference and action. *Philosophy East & West*, *72*(4), 983–1003.

Metz, T. (2014). Just the beginning for ubuntu: Reply to Matolino and Kwindingwi. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, *33*(1), 65–72. DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2014.892680

Misak, C. J. (2004). *Truth and the end of inquiry: A Peircean account of truth*. Clarendon Press. DOI: 10.1093/0199270597.001.0001

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(1), 48–76. DOI: 10.1177/2345678906292462

Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press. DOI: 10.4159/harvard.9780674061200

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P., & Stilgoe, J. (2013). Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. *Science & Public Policy*, *40*(6), 751–760. DOI: 10.1093/scipol/scs093

Pansera, M., & Owen, R. (2023). Embedding justice in research and innovation: Towards a pluriversal responsible innovation framework. *Research Policy*, *52*(2), 104627.

Peirce, C. S. (1878). How to make our ideas clear. *Popular Science Monthly*, *12*, 286–302.

Peirce, C. S. (1931–1958). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vols. 1–8). Harvard University Press.

Putnam, H. (1995). *Pragmatism: An open question*. Blackwell.

Romme, A. G. L. (2016). *The quest for professional pragmatism: Business and management research as a practice*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198737735.001.0001

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton University Press.

Royal, T. A. C. (2012). Politics and knowledge: Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *47*(2), 30–37.

Seigfried, C. H. (1996). *Pragmatism and feminism: Reweaving the social fabric*. University of Chicago Press.

Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Allen Lane.

Smith, J. A., & Judd, J. (2020). COVID-19: Vulnerability and the power of privilege in a pandemic. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, *31*(2), 158–160. DOI: 10.1002/hpja.333 PMID: 32197274

Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (3rd ed.). Zed Books. DOI: 10.5040/9781350225282

Stilgoe, J., Owen, R., & Macnaghten, P. (2013). Developing a framework for responsible innovation. *Research Policy*, *42*(9), 1568–1580. DOI: 10.1016/j.respol.2013.05.008

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). Sage. DOI: 10.4135/9781506335193

Walsh, C. (2020). *Decoloniality and epistemic justice*. Duke University Press.

West, C. (1989). *The American evasion of philosophy: A genealogy of pragmatism*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Chapter 7
Philosophical Considerations in Combining Mixed Methods and Participatory Action Research

Chi Maher

 https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4658-8118

Ravensbourne University, London UK

Sergiu Sidei

University of Greenwich, London, UK

Denisa Abrudan

West University of Timisoara, Romania

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the philosophical foundations and methodological benefits of incorporating mixed methods within Participatory Action Research. Mixed methods research combines qualitative insights with quantitative findings, thus providing a holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation. While Participatory Action Research involves research participants in all stages of the research process, combining both methods broadens perspectives beyond the scope of any single

research methodology. The chapter contributes to the field by helping doctoral researchers who have employed Participatory Action Research and mixed methods in their research understand how to craft and discuss their philosophical stance.

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the philosophical foundations that underpin academic research and highlights their significance for doctoral candidates preparing their studies. Research is anchored in assumptions about what counts as knowledge, what constitutes reality, and how researchers relate to the people and environments they study. Collectively, these assumptions are often described as paradigms. They establish the intellectual environment that shapes research questions, informs methodological decisions, and frames interpretations.

As Groer, Morrissey, and Glatte (2025) suggest, these philosophical orientations influence not only how data are collected but also how research evidence is judged and communicated. A researcher's philosophical stance interrelates with every stage of the research inquiry, from the development of research aims, the justification of the need for the research to its conclusions. For this reason, philosophical positioning should be understood as a central component of research design not just as a preliminary formality.

The chapter begins by examining key research paradigms and the ways in which they influence research interpretation and analytic strategy. It then considers ontology and epistemology, the two dimensions of philosophy most relevant to methodological decision-making. Ontology deals with assumptions about what exists, whereas epistemology concerns how knowledge is produced and validated (Hothersall, 2025)

The chapter also introduces Participatory Action Research (PAR) and mixed methods research. PAR emphasizes collective inquiry, shared power, and community-driven change (Biedermann, Calder, Leitão, & Lette, (2025). While mixed methods design integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to capture complexity (Coe, Waring, Hedges, & Ashley, 2025). We explore how these approaches embody particular philosophical assumptions and how they can be brought together coherently. A discussion of methodological integration follows, showing how philosophical commitments guide the blending of research methods. The chapter concludes with an applied illustration from a social-enterprise context, demonstrating how philosophical reasoning translates into practical research choices and community impact.

2. PARADIGM DEBATE

According to Kuhn (1962) concept of a paradigm underscores how research is shaped by shared beliefs about valid questions and appropriate methods. A paradigm acts as a conceptual filter, amplifying certain aspects of the social world while obscuring others. Awareness of these assumptions is essential for making sound research methodological decisions.

Positivism historically is linked with the natural sciences, privileges empirical observation and quantification . Its roots lie in Enlightenment thought, although authors such as Bacon (1561–1626) articulated empiricism long before Comte (1798–1857) formalised positivist philosophy. Positivists claim that reality can be known through systematic observation and that researchers should maintain distance to prevent bias. Rigour is measured through adherence to procedures to ensure replicability, generalisability, and objectivity. Values, within this tradition, are treated as distortions that must be controlled, and ethical considerations typically remain external to the research logic (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023; Maher & Sidei, 2025).

Post-positivism emerged in response to critiques of absolute objectivity. Popper (1902–1994) argued that scientific claims must be falsifiable, while Kuhn (1922–1996) emphasised the influence of historical and cultural factors on scientific practice. Post-positivists maintain that evidence can never fully confirm a theory, only strengthen or weaken it. Triangulation, the use of multiple data types or perspectives, is encouraged to offset methodological limitations (Denzin, 2012; Marlina, Purwaningsih, Al Hakim & Maryati, 2025). Although post-positivism remains concerned with explanation, it acknowledges that all knowledge is partial (Clark, Foster, Bryman & Sloan, 2021).

Parallel to this, participatory and action-oriented approaches challenged traditional research power structures. Early action research did not adequately address gender or intersectional inequalities. Feminist scholars argued that scientific knowledge often reflected masculinist assumptions, thereby excluding women lived experiences (Peake & Mikhail, 2024; Wilcock, 2024). Later interventions from women of colour highlighted the need to address race and class dynamics in research (Bhati, 2023).

In addition, Marxist theory introduced a different form of critique, asserting that economic structures shape consciousness and that dominant groups control both material resources and cultural meaning (Joseph, 2024). These ideas contributed to the ethical and political commitments now common in Participatory Action Research and other critical paradigms. Both Marxist and feminist perspectives seek to challenge the status quo and bring about change.

Furthermore, decolonial perspectives extend these critiques by interrogating how colonial legacies continue to shape epistemic authority. Decolonial scholars aim to re-centre marginalised knowledge systems and challenge Western dominance in

research design and interpretation (Nwafor, 2024; Bhuda, Setshego & Koitsiwe, 2025). The approach demands an ongoing, reflexive engagement with power, culture, and representation to be more prominent in research (Omodan & Dastile, 2023).

Contemporary philosophical positions add additional nuance. Critical realism proposes a layered reality composed of mechanisms, events, and experiences (Saliya, 2023). These mechanisms cannot always be directly observed; explanation involves theorising how they generate observable outcomes under particular conditions. This stance supports mixed methods research designs that pair quantitative data analysis with qualitative mechanism of exploration (De Oliveira, 2024; Joseph, 2024).

In practice, researchers often combine paradigmatic elements in ways that reflect the evolving needs of their research projects. For example, a realist evaluation might be paired with interpretive fieldwork or participatory action research co-design. Maxwell (2012) outlines three principles for ensuring coherence across such approaches: aligning assumptions with design, applying quality criteria appropriate to the paradigm, and grounding methodological innovation in ethical reflection. These principles echo Åkerblad, Seppänen-Järvelä and Haapakoski's (2021) call for paradigm-appropriate forms of rigour.

Within mixed methods research, debates continue regarding paradigm compatibility. Klassen et al. (2012) reject the assumption that qualitative and quantitative paradigms cannot coexist, arguing instead that integration can strengthen explanatory power. For instance, statistical trends can be contextualised through interviews, while qualitative insights can inform the development of quantitative instruments. Realist mixed methods design takes this further by connecting contextual patterns with causal mechanisms to explore what works, for whom, and in which circumstances (Gillespie, Glăveanu, & de Saint Laurent, 2024).

Ultimately, philosophy is less about drawing boundaries and more about constructing transparent and defensible rationales. A clear philosophical stance illuminates how assumptions, methods, and interpretations relate, allowing researchers to produce work that is both analytically coherent and socially meaningful (Hoda, 2024).

3. ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Ontology concerns what exists and how reality is structured (Klakegg, & Tvedt, 2024). It asks questions about the character of the world, whether it is singular or plural, and whether the social realm can be understood as fixed, variable, or entirely dependent on perspective. Epistemology, in turn, examines how we come to know that reality and the kind of relationship that exists between the researcher and what is known (Roeber, Sosa, Steup, & Turri, 2024). These two philosophical positions are intertwined: assumptions about the nature of reality shape what kinds

of knowledge are considered possible and the ways in which that knowledge can be pursued (Yulianto, 2021). Ontological commitments subtly influence research choices, clarity about one's position becomes essential, guiding decisions about what counts as evidence, what is treated as a cause or mechanism, and how units of analysis are selected (Grass, 2024; Roeber, Sosa, Steup, & Turri, 2024).

The ontology of constructivism adopts a relativist positing that multiple, context-dependent worlds exist and that these worlds are constituted through human interpretation. From this perspective, there is no single external reality that exists independently of human consciousness; instead, individuals inhabit meaning systems that differ across groups and contexts (Ignacio, & Paras, 2024). This position distinguishes constructivism from other paradigms (Montgomery, 2025). Critical realists offer a contrasting view: they argue that an independent reality exists but acknowledge that access to it is mediated by fallible theories. Interpretivists emphasise meaning making as the basis of social reality, while post-structural and new materialist scholars treat reality as relational and continually produced (Saliya, 2023). Positioning researcher's work within this landscape helps avoid errors such as, applying variable-based causation to phenomena that are better understood as situated practices.

Epistemological issues follow from ontological ones. If reality is assumed to be singular and independent of the observer, researchers pursue knowledge that aspires to objectivity and detachment (Aivas, Fatah, Bayz, Karem, Salih, & Hussein, 2025). If reality is seen as constructed, knowledge becomes inherently perspectival: what researchers and participants "know" emerges from interaction. This does not imply that all interpretations are equally defensible; rather, each paradigm employs criteria suited to its assumption's credibility and transferability under constructivism, for example, and validity and reliability within positivist traditions (Yulianto, 2021; Klakegg & Tvedt, 2024). Methodological choices therefore flow from philosophical foundations: assumptions about stable realities support variable control and measurement, whereas assumptions about multiple realities necessitate methods attentive to interpretation and context.

Within constructivism, the response to the question "How do I know?" centres on the co-production of knowledge. Researcher and participant are seen as connected, and findings emerge through their interaction. Epistemology thus addresses the grounds upon which knowledge claims are built and the processes through which understanding is generated (Moon & Blackman, 2014). A clearly articulated epistemic stance helps ensure that data-gathering techniques and analytic strategies align with the research purpose for instance, using case-based strategy within a critical realist study or interpretive interviews within an interpretivist stance (Clark, Foster, Bryman & Sloan, 2021; De Oliveira, 2024).

Epistemological discussions also draw attention to social and political positioning. Intemann (2023) argues that epistemic advantage comes not simply from occupying marginalised positions but from possessing critical awareness of power structures, reframing objectivity as accountability situated within specific contexts. Under a transactional, subjectivist epistemology, values are integral to research rather than sources of contamination. Reflexivity becomes a methodological tool for establishing rigour, documented through positionality statements, analytic logs, and transparency about provides interpretive choices (Yang, 2024; Montgomery, 2025).

Examining quality within this framework requires attention to context and purpose. Research is evaluated according to how well it engages with the historical and social conditions under study that is conducted and whether it contributes to reducing knowledge gaps or enabling action. Such evaluative criteria are especially visible in paradigms oriented toward transformation, where ethical consequences, cultural responsiveness, and shared decision-making form part of quality (Yulianto, 2021; Yang, 2024).

Constructivism differs from positivist and post-positivist positions primarily at the epistemological level. Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2000) argue that research inquiry involves dialogue among stakeholders whose constructions are compared, refined, and sometimes merged. When consensus cannot be reached, mapping the diversity of perspectives becomes the outcome. Accordingly, research findings are joint products of researcher and participant engagement.

Two major sets of criteria guide that quality assessment: trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) and authenticity (fairness, ontological and educative authenticity, catalytic and tactical authenticity) (Maher & Bedwei-Majdoub, 2025). These dimensions are operationalised through thick description, collaborative checking, transparent analytic processes, and attention to the socio-political factors that shape interpretation. Constructivist work treats values as fundamental to knowledge creation and embraces interpretive, phenomenological, and hermeneutic approaches (Clark, Foster, Bryman & Sloan, 2021).

Constructivism argues that knowledge is made rather than found (William, 2024). Meaning arises in the interplay between human consciousness and the objects toward which it is directed, illustrating the intentionality that shapes all understanding (Park, 2023). Post-positivists accepts that social categories are constructed but differ in their commitment to explanation and prediction. Constructivists, by contrast, judge research according to credibility and resonance rather than generalisability (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023; Dulal, 2025).

Although positivists acknowledge that human interpretation affects social life, constructivists take the further step of treating all meaningful reality as constructed. Researchers therefore play an active role in facilitating meaning-making, working iteratively with data by coding, synthesising, and developing themes. Many con-

structivist researchers are involved with participants more directly, inviting their input when developing research questions and co-interpretation processes (Park, 2023). The researcher's responsibility includes recognising their own assumptions, being transparent with participants, and working toward uncovering participants' own meaning structures.

Table 1. Research Paradigms and Associated Characteristics

Paradigm	Ontological / Epistemological Orientation
Post-positivism	A mind-independent reality exists but is understood through human lenses; objectivity is incomplete and mediated.
Pragmatism	Multiple realities shaped by experience; knowledge is judged by its usefulness.
Interpretivism	Reality is produced through subjective interpretation; emphasis on meanings people attribute to events.
Constructivism	Knowledge is jointly constructed by researchers and participants within social contexts.

Choosing a paradigm structures the entire research process and supports doctoral researchers in making coherent methodological decisions.

4. METHODOLOGY

Methodology describes the philosophical and theoretical scaffolding that shapes the design and execution of research (Brown & Kim, 2025). Whereas "methods" refer to the specific tools used to collect or analyse data. Methodology provides the justification for why those tools are appropriate and how they contribute to answering the research question. Maher (2026) describes methodology as the analytical framework that explains how a study is conceptualised, organised, and interpreted.

Methods such as interviews, surveys, or experiments are situated within a broader methodological rationale. They derive their legitimacy from their alignment with the study's epistemological assumptions, theoretical commitments, and practical aims. A coherent methodology ensures that research contributes meaningfully to existing knowledge and that the chosen design is both rigorous and suitable for the phenomenon being examined.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies rest on different assumptions and serve different purposes (Saunders, & Darabi, 2024). Quantitative studies typically involve statistical procedures and standardised instruments to test hypotheses or identify patterns. Qualitative research, on the other hand, prioritises depth of understanding through interviews, case studies, ethnography, or narrative inquiry. The selection of a methodological pathway depends on the nature of the questions

being posed, the kind of knowledge sought, and the philosophical orientation of the researcher (Maher, 2026).

A sound methodology also requires articulating why certain data-gathering strategies are preferred over others why interviews might be more appropriate than surveys, or why observations offer insights that documents cannot. By explaining these choices, the methodology strengthens the credibility and coherence of the study (Gillespie, Glăveanu, & de Saint Laurent, 2024)

Two methodological frameworks that have gained prominence are Participatory Action Research and mixed methods. Participatory Action Research is a collaborative approach in which the people affected by a problem become co-investigators. It seeks both to produce knowledge and to support social transformation, making it particularly relevant to equity-focused research. Mixed methods research integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches, enabling researchers to capture patterns while also understanding meanings and contexts. When used together, these strategies allow researchers to address complex issues holistically (Maher, 2018).

The following section explores how these methodologies translate into specific data collection practices, demonstrating how participatory principles and methodological integration inform real-world research designs.

4.1 Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research traces its intellectual roots to the Highlander Research and Education Centre in Tennessee, founded in 1932 (Lewis, 2001). While the term "participatory research" emerged formally in the 1970s, similar practices developed concurrently in places such as India, Brazil, Colombia, Tanzania, and Appalachia (Stoecker & Falcón, 2022; Mallory, 2024). Its more recent evolution has been influenced by movements in educational action research and post-colonial critiques of development practices (Cornish et al., 2023).

What differentiates Participatory Action Research from other qualitative approaches is the active role of participants. Rather than being studied, participants help shape research design, guide data generation, and determine the relevance of findings. This emphasis on shared inquiry addresses the longstanding tension between producing rigorous research and ensuring that research remains relevant to those it affects (Cornish et al., 2023). Participatory Action Research is grounded in the belief that people should have agency in shaping the knowledge that influences their lives (Attwood, 1997).

To bridge the gap between research and implementation, Participatory Action Research adopts an iterative cycle of planning, action, reflection, feedback, and revision (Stoecker & Falcón, 2022; De Oliveira, 2023). This cyclical process supports learning, fosters collective ownership of findings, and strengthens the sustainability

of interventions. Participatory Action Research has been taken up widely across disciplines education, public health, community development, business, and social work due to its commitment to empowerment and collaboration.

Researchers often identify two central aims of Participatory Action Research:

1. Creating knowledge and action that directly benefits a community, and
2. Enabling participants to gain greater control and insight through the research process.

Through collaboration, community members and researchers jointly identify questions, interpret findings, and decide how knowledge should be used. This approach challenges conventional hierarchies of expertise and opens space for innovative, community-driven solutions. It also serves as a methodological alternative to more prescriptive research traditions (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

While Participatory Action Research poses challenges such as managing power dynamics, time demands, and ethical complexities it offers doctoral researchers a pathway for conducting inquiry that leads to tangible change. Its theoretical and practical commitments rest on the integration of values, reciprocity, and shared governance. In many applied contexts, this involves agreements regarding data ownership, community consent, and feedback procedures.

Participatory Action Research promotes the development of "living knowledge" embedded within the everyday contexts where action occurs. This rests on the ethical claim that communities have a right to participate in research that concerns them (Stoecker & Falcón, 2022; De Oliveira, 2023). Although aligned with constructivist and critical perspectives, Participatory Action Research borrows measurement practices from positivist traditions when useful, such as co-designing surveys or combining qualitative insights with quantitative indicators.

Epistemologically, Participatory Action Research emphasises co-created knowledge and critical subjectivity. Ontologically, it recognises that while people experience multiple constructed realities, a material world still exists. Human perception is therefore an interaction between subjective interpretation and external conditions (Yulianto, 2021; Yang, 2024). These philosophical commitments support a methodology grounded in partnership, joint decision-making, and the blending of qualitative and quantitative approaches when they serve community goals. The rise of mixed-methods Participatory Action Research reflects this pragmatic pluralism and its alignment with transformative research agendas (Stoecker & Avila, 2021).

Early precedents for mixing different forms of inquiry appear as far back as ancient Babylon, where astronomers around 1000 BC paired observational records of celestial bodies with numerical calculations (Goshu & Ridwan, 2024). In modern scholarship, however, the notion of systematically combining methods

did not gain clear recognition until Campbell and Fiske's (1959) seminal work on triangulation. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) note that by the late 1980s and early 1990s researchers from several fields began to articulate designs that went beyond separating qualitative and quantitative approaches. They describe the years from the 1950s through the 1980s as a foundational period in which the basic interest in multi-method inquiry took shape.

Across business, management, and social science disciplines, the integrated use of numerical and interpretive data has gained prominence because of its capacity to illuminate complex processes such as managerial judgement, career decision-making, workplace culture, and organisational routines. Venkatesh, Brown, and Sullivan (2023) provide a set of guiding principles for combining these approaches, stressing their flexibility and the added depth they bring to understanding research problems. Their work reflects the increasing relevance of mixed methods for capturing nuance in contemporary organisational environments.

4.2 Mixed Methods

The use of quantitative with qualitative methods in a single study are increasingly being recognised for their ability to provide deep insights into organisational culture, human resource management and commercial processes. Several researchers (Maher, 2016; Leppens, Chatteur, & Perkins, 2023; Oranga, 2025) outline the principles, strategies, and guidance for effectively combining quantitative and qualitative methods. They emphasise the adaptability of mixed-methods research across various disciplines, highlighting its utility in providing a more robust and nuanced understanding of research questions (Maher, 2018).

Mixed methods research is also designed to address different types of questions and produce varied forms of evidence, thereby offering a more rounded response to the overall research aim. Some scholars, including Aguzzoli et al. (2024), argue that selecting a method inherently reflects a specific stance on ontology and epistemology, as each methodology embodies underlying assumptions about how knowledge is created. Others challenge this view, maintaining that methods carry more philosophical flexibility than previously assumed (Åkerblad, Seppänen-Järvelä, & Haapakoski, 2021; Takona, 2024). This perspective opens the opportunity for combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study. Pragmatism is frequently adopted as the philosophical frame that links methodological choice to practical consequences (Creswell, 2021).

Ongoing debates amongst researchers seeks to broaden the range of voices represented and encourage attention to multiple viewpoints. Recognising the aims, strengths, and limits of each methodological tradition enhances understanding of

the phenomenon under study. This promotes appreciation of the different types of insight each method offers instead of positioning one as inherently superior.

Nevertheless, mixed methods scholarship faces persistent challenges. Dawadi, Shrestha, and Giri (2021) recognise that tensions may arise from incompatible philosophical assumptions, risking superficial integration. Ivankova and Clark (2016) similarly observe that critiques differ across disciplines because of divergent theoretical traditions. Foster (2024) adds that one strand may dominate the other if researchers are more experienced in one paradigm than the other, potentially compromising the study's balance. To address these issues, scholars recommend intentionally identifying the point at which strands interface, using joint displays to make integration visible, and explicitly noting areas of convergence or divergence rather than glossing them over.

Mixed methods designs may involve merging datasets, connecting phases sequentially, or embedding one strand within another. Their value lies in purposeful integration rather than mere coexistence. Each design type for instance, exploratory sequential or explanatory sequential brings particular rationales and standards. Rigorous studies justify the design, clarify how the strands intersect, and explain how philosophical positioning influenced key research decisions (Tang, 2025).

4.3 Mix Method Project Case - One

The interest of the research is primarily in understanding the career anchors and career path preferences of social enterprise managers. Given the limited literature in the area of research and related theory on the subject matter, the author decided to employ a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative). Understanding how managers' career path preferences are influenced by the organisational factors and the environment in which they are employed would lead to theory development.

A purely quantitative approach would not have produced adequate data from which to draw sound conclusions, and it would have been difficult to make anything other than superficial comparisons between the career anchors and career path preferences of these managers. The combination of these methods (survey and semi-structured interviews) produced some important results which would not have been evident had the author used only one approach. For example, the quantitative data which the author collected from managers' career anchors and career path preference survey scores were further explained by the qualitative semi-structured interview data collected from managers.

The author adopts the social constructionist stance (Hoda, 2024) in which the author and the research participants can become an interactive entity, and thus, create new knowledge (Saunders & Darabi, 2024).The author selected this approach because interaction between the researcher and the research participants will influ-

ence both parties and may cause changes in their perceptions by jointly creating new knowledge and understanding of the career anchors and career path preferences of social enterprise managers.

4.4 Mix Method Project Case - Two

A social enterprise whose mission is to generate community benefit by ensuring that service users successfully complete its programme. Quantitative research shows the organisation reporting a completion rate of 90%, which on the surface appears highly positive. Yet qualitative inquiry reveals a different outcome. Many of the organisations' beneficiaries were experiencing extensive delays and finish their appointments without a clear understanding of how to apply the guidance the received in practice.

A Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, co-led with community partners, redesigned the organisation's workflow processes and embedded a brief two-minute "teach-back" technique aimed at improving comprehension and accessibility. Qualitative feedback following these changes indicated stronger engagement, increased inclusion, and enhanced understanding of recommended actions.

Philosophically, the design demonstrates clear alignment. A critical realist stance draws attention to underlying mechanisms such as bottlenecks in workflow that shape observed outcomes. A post-positivist epistemology supports cautious causal claims grounded in systematic evidence. Constructivist and critical approaches address the importance of meaning-making, empowerment, and equity. Pragmatism ensures that insights lead to tangible improvements. Integration is demonstrated through linking emergent qualitative themes (e.g., communication and empowerment) with quantitative indicators showing stable levels of re-engagement and participation. Collectively, the project illustrates how theoretically coherent mixed methods research can validate a social enterprise's capacity to create sustained social value.

5.CONCLUSION

Philosophical perspectives frame assumptions about reality, what counts as knowledge, and how researchers engage with participants and evidence. These perspectives structure how interpretations are formed and what kinds of claims can be made. Following the Enlightenment, positivism became dominant because it offered the promise of certainty through observation, experimentation, and the search for general laws. Over time, however, researchers recognised that many social and organisational problems cannot be fully captured using positivist assumptions alone. This realisation led to the development of alternative perspectives including

post-positivism, constructivism/interpretivism, and critical traditions such as feminist and Marxist approaches which sought to address these limitations.

Critiques of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in Participatory Action Research often stress that each method reflects particular philosophical commitments. While this is true, it does not necessarily rule out integration. If researchers clearly articulate their ontological and epistemological positions, acknowledge the limits of each strand, and design integration points that honour these assumptions, mixed methods can be used coherently.

A shift away from treating philosophy as a strict gatekeeper and toward viewing research methods as tools has supported wider acceptance of combining strands. From this perspective, philosophy affords clarity about how and why methods should be brought together for a specific problem and context, rather than restricting their use (Adhikari & Timsina, 2024; Russell, 2025).

Doctoral researchers typically begin with clearly formulated questions and consideration of the data required to address them. Researchers also need to identify relevant ethical issues during data collection. In practice, this involves writing concise statements on ontology (what exists and in what form), epistemology (how knowledge is obtained, including the researcher's position), and methodology (the strategies and procedures guiding the investigation). Quality criteria must match the chosen paradigm: validity and reliability for post-positivist work, and credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity for constructivist and participatory designs (Pretorius, 2024; Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Each strand must meet its own standards of rigour, but this alone is insufficient. Researchers must also specify how the strands are brought together to support meta-inferences (Younas, Fàbregues, & Creswell, 2023; Bazeley, 2024). Techniques such as joint displays enhance transparency by making links between strands auditable (Nessle et al., 2023). Divergences between findings should be interpreted as analytical opportunities potentially revealing subgroups, hidden mechanisms, or social desirability effects rather than problems to be smoothed out (Younas, 2025).

Philosophical clarity should function as a practical design tool, helping align sampling, instruments, analysis, ethical procedures, and quality criteria. When coherence is achieved whether through Participatory Action Research cycles of collaborative action or mixed methods' disciplined integration the resulting research becomes both principled and practically meaningful.

Ultimately, ethical practice, rigour, and philosophical consistency reinforce one another. Participatory Action Research enables empowerment and accountability within iterative cycles of inquiry, while mixed methods position integration as the basis on which credibility and depth are judged. Philosophy thus operates both as a compass guiding coherent design and as an anchor grounding the rigour and trust-

worthiness of the study. In doing so, it enables research that explains, interprets, and contributes to positive social change

6.DISCUSSION

This chapter offers a practical guide for doctoral researchers designing studies in fields such as social science, business management, health, or education especially when mixed methods are combined with Participatory Action Research. The intention is not to revisit historic paradigm debates but to show how ontological and epistemological positions translate into specific decisions about design, ethics, quality, and reporting.

Mixed methods and Participatory Action Research are often selected for research problems that involve multiple stakeholders, high stakes, and both measurable and meaning-based outcomes. In such contexts, philosophical ambiguity can undermine coherence. If a researcher implicitly assumes a single external reality while simultaneously inviting participants to co-construct meanings, decision-making becomes confused. Similarly, assuming multiple realities but framing findings as universal generalisations will attract methodological critique. The solution is clear: declare a philosophical orientation and apply it consistently.

Philosophy plays an essential role in the use of mixed methods within Participatory Action Research. Post-positivism provides a moderated view of objectivity, using triangulation and replication to reduce bias (Fodouop Kouam, 2025). This foundation is particularly important in mixed methods research, which requires the two strands to interact without one dominating the other. Constructivism strengthens the participatory dimensions of Participatory Action Research by emphasising co-constructed meaning while maintaining evaluative standards such as credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Critical approaches including feminist and Marxist traditions further prompt researchers to consider questions of power, representation, and benefit: who frames the research problem, whose voices shape the analysis, and who gains from the findings (Onwuegbuzie & Abrams, 2025). Mixed methods scholars now explicitly link these philosophical positions to design typologies convergent, sequential, embedded, transformative paired with planned integration points (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As mixed methods Participatory Action Research continues to grow, researchers must also anticipate potential tension within research teams when philosophical and methodological backgrounds differ. Mutual learning and clarity of purpose are critical for producing coherent outcomes.

Mixed methods within Participatory Action Research will remain an influential approach across diverse fields. Its success depends not only on integrating data

strands effectively but also on bridging philosophical positions in a way that supports collaboration and maintains rigour.

REFERENCES

Adhikari, R., & Timsina, T. P. (2024). An educational study exploring the application of the mixed methods approach as a research methodology. OCEM Journal of Management, Technology &. *Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 94–109.

Aguzzoli, R., Clark, T., Kappen, P., & Tempel, A. (2024). Paradigms in qualitative international business research: Trends, analysis, and recommendations. *Management International Review*, *64*(3), 379–406.

Aivas, S. A., Fatah, N. A., Bayz, H. A., Karem, L. E., Salih, H. H., & Hussein, K. Q. Y. (2025). Critically Discuss Epistemological Issues by Examining the Claim to 'Truth'. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies*, *5*(1), 78–83. DOI: 10.55677/ijssers/V05I01Y2025-12

Åkerblad, L., Seppänen-Järvelä, R., & Haapakoski, K. (2021). Integrative strategies in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *15*(2), 152–170. DOI: 10.1177/1558689820957125

Bazeley, P. (2024). Conceptualizing integration in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *18*(3), 225–234. DOI: 10.1177/15586898241253636

Bhuda, M. T., Setshego, M. V., & Koitsiwe, M. (2025). The role of Indigenous participants in participatory action research: Applying a decolonial approach. In *Enabling Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Action Research and Action Learning* (pp. 291–308). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-3542-0.ch015

Biedermann, B., Calder, S., Leitão, S., & Lette, H. (2025). Combining Participatory-Action-Research With Single-Case-Experimental-Designs: A New Promise for a Mixed-Methods Approach. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, *6*(4). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.35844/001c.146371

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Brown, L., & Kim, S. U. (2025). Methodology. In *Politeness Metapragmatics: Inductive Research, Multimodality and Critical Theory* (pp. 75–91). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-81643-7_4

Clark, T., Foster, L., Bryman, A., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Coe, R., Waring, M., Hedges, L. V., & Ashley, L. D. (Eds.). (2025). *Research methods and methodologies in education*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Comte, A. (1853). *The positive philosophy of Auguste Comte* (Martineau, H., Trans.). John Chapman.

Cornish, F., Breton, N., Moreno-Tabarez, U., Delgado, J., Rua, M., de-Graft Aikins, A., & Hodgetts, D. (2023). Participatory action research. *Nature Reviews. Methods Primers*, *3*(1), 34. DOI: 10.1038/s43586-023-00214-1

Creswell, J. W. (2021). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: Types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, *2*(2), 25–36. DOI: 10.46809/jpse.v2i2.20

De Oliveira, B. (2023). Participatory action research as a research approach: Advantages, limitations, and criticisms. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *23*(3), 287–297. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-08-2022-0101

De Oliveira, B. (2024). Philosophical foundations of participatory action research: Pragmatism, critical theory, constructivism, feminist epistemology, and participatory democracy. *Qualitative Research Journal*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-07-2024-0151

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *6*(2), 80–88. DOI: 10.1177/1558689812437186

Dulal, T. D. (2025). Application of positivism and post-positivism approaches in contemporary research. *International Journal of Applied Research and Sustainable Sciences*, *3*(4), 305–314.

Fodouop Kouam, A. W. (2025). Post-positivism and critical realism as epistemological frameworks in educational research: A systematic review. *International Journal of Changes in Education*, *2*(2), 115–122. DOI: 10.47852/bonviewIJCE52024338

Gillespie, A., Glăveanu, V., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2024). *Pragmatism and methodology: Doing research that matters with mixed methods*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781009031066

Goshu, B. S., & Ridwan, M. (2024). Ancient Ethiopian astronomy: Cultural foundations, indigenous timekeeping, and scientific contributions. *Lakhomi Journal Scientific Journal of Culture*, *5*(4), 242–264.

Grass, J. (2024). Why your ontology matters: Ontological awareness and research. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 28–48.

Groer, R., Morrissey, P. J., & Glatte, T. (2025). Research design: Historical industrial buildings and their real estate utilization in Germany and the United Kingdom. In *Historical Industrial Buildings and their Real Estate Utilisation* (pp. 37–42). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-89417-6_3

Hoda, R. (2024). Research philosophy. In *Qualitative Research with Socio-Technical Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide to Qualitative Data Analysis and Theory Development in the Digital World* (pp. 93–112). Springer International Publishing. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-60533-8_5

Hothersall, S. J. (2025). Social work: Ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In *Handbook of Research Methods in Social Work* (pp. 27–38). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781035310173.00010

Ignacio, A. G., & Paras, P. S. (2024). A critical analysis of epistemological and ontological assumptions in constructivism. In *Building Resiliency in Higher Education: Globalization, Digital Skills, and Student Wellness* (pp. 1-20). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-5483-4.ch001

Ivankova, N. V., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2016). Mixed methods research: A guide to the field. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Joseph, J. (2024). Gramsci, post-Marxism and critical realism. In *The Elgar Companion to Antonio Gramsci* (pp. 240–260). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781802208603.00023

Klakegg, O. J., & Tvedt, I. M. (2024). Ontology, epistemology, and axiology: Understand your philosophy and approach. In *Design methods and practices for research of project management* (pp. 3–18). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003469513-2

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Leppens, M., Chatteur, F., & Perkins, P. (2023). Mixed methods studies in design practice and suggestions for business and management research. In *Handbook of Mixed Methods Research in Business and Management* (pp. 394–410). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781800887954.00035

Maher, C. (2018). *Understanding managerial career anchors and career path preferences: A case study of third sector social enterprise managers*. Scholar's Press.

Maher, C. (2026). Planning, writing, and defending a doctoral thesis: Strategies and recommendations. In The Dissertation Research Guide for the Doctoral Scholar (pp. 239–266). IGI Global.

Maher, C., & Bedwei-Majdoub, C. (2025). Semi-structured qualitative interview guide: Process and considerations for doctoral students. In Qualitative Research Methods for Dissertation Research (pp. 195–220). IGI Global.

Maher, C., & Sidei, S. (2025). Application of multiple case study design to identify digital marketing managers' career path preferences. In *Methodological Application of Multiple Case Study Design* (pp. 180–204). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-7698-0.ch015

Maksimovic, J., & Evtimov, J. (2023). Positivism and post-positivism as the basis of quantitative research in pedagogy. *Research in Pedagogy*, *13*(1), 208–218. DOI: 10.5937/IstrPed2301208M

Mallory, D. B. (2024). Participatory action research. In *Elgar Encyclopedia of Organizational Psychology* (pp. 468–474). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781803921761.00093

Marlina, E., Purwaningsih, M., Al Hakim, S., & Maryati, I. (2025). Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research: The role of triangulation techniques. In *Qualitative research methods for dissertation research* (pp. 347-376). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Montgomery, R. M. (2025). *Ontological and Epistemological Challenges in Contemporary Multidisciplinary Research: Towards an AI-Enhanced Framework for Academic Knowledge Production and Evaluation. Preprints.*

Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2014). A guide to understanding social science research for natural scientists. *Conservation Biology*, *28*(5), 1167–1177. DOI: 10.1111/cobi.12326 PMID: 24962114

Nessle, C. N., Ghazal, L. V., Choi, S. W., & Fetters, M. D. (2023). Joint display of integrated data collection for mixed methods research: An illustration from a pediatric oncology quality improvement study. *Annals of Family Medicine*, *21*(4), 347–357. DOI: 10.1370/afm.2985 PMID: 37487720

Omodan, B. I., & Dastile, N. P. (2023). Analysis of participatory action research as a decolonial research methodology. *Social Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, *12*(9), 507. DOI: 10.3390/socsci12090507

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Abrams, S. S. (2025). Critical dialectical pluralism as a transformative multidimensional metaparadigm and metaphilosophy for mixed methods research. Methods in Psychology, 12, 100178. Nwafor, U. M. (2024). On the decolonial paradigm of development. In Beyond Decolonial African Philosophy (pp. 196–211). Routledge. DOI: 10.1016/j.metip.2025.100178

Oranga, J. (2025). Mixed methods research: Application, advantages and challenges. *Journal of Accounting Research. Utility Finance and Digital Assets*, *3*(4), 370–375.

Park, S. (2023). Constructivism. In International Organization and Global Governance (pp. 133–143). Routledge.

Peake, L., & Mikhail, M. (2024). Feminist methodologies and methods. In *Doing Feminist Urban Research* (pp. 175–189). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781032668727-16

Popper, K. R. (1959). *The logic of scientific discovery*. Hutchinson.

Pretorius, L. (2024). Demystifying research paradigms: Navigating ontology, epistemology, and axiology in research. *The Qualitative Report*, *29*(10). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2024.7632

Roeber, B., Sosa, E., Steup, M., & Turri, J. (Eds.). (2024). *Contemporary debates in epistemology*. John Wiley & Sons.

Russell, B. (2025). *Logic and knowledge*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003605096

Saliya, C. A. (2023). Research Philosophy: Paradigms, world views, perspectives, and theories. In *Social research methodology and publishing results: A guide to non-native English speakers* (pp. 35-51). IGI Global.

Saunders, M. N., & Darabi, F. (2024). Using multi-and mixed methods research designs. In *Field guide to researching employment and industrial relations* (pp. 71–87). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781035313891.00018

Stoecker, R., & Avila, E. (2021). From mixed methods to strategic research design. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 627–640. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2020.1799639

Stoecker, R., & Falcón, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Handbook on participatory action research and community development*. Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781839100970

Takona, J. P. (2024). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach. *Quality & Quantity*, *58*(1), 1011–1013. DOI: 10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2

Tang, G. (2025). Using mixed methods research to study research integrity: Current status, issues, and guidelines. *Accountability in Research*, *32*(5), 807–828. DOI: 10.1080/08989621.2024.2449041 PMID: 39749792

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S. A., & Sullivan, Y. W. (2023). *Conducting mixed-methods research*. VT Publishing.

Wilcock, A. (2024). Shifting consciousness: Challenges to ontological assumptions in feminist research. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *50*, 101004. DOI: 10.1016/j.emospa.2024.101004

William, F. K. A. (2024). Interpretivism or constructivism: Navigating research paradigms in social science research. *Interpretivism or Constructivism: Navigating Research Paradigms in Social Science Research*, *143*(1), 5–5.

Yang, Y. (2024). Complexity theory for complexity reduction? Revisiting the ontological and epistemological basis of complexity science with critical realism. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *54*(4), 368–383. DOI: 10.1111/jtsb.12412

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., & Creswell, J. W. (2023). Generating meta-inferences in mixed methods research: A worked example in convergent mixed methods designs. *Methodological Innovations*, *16*(3), 276–291. DOI: 10.1177/20597991231188121

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2025). Framework for types of meta-inferences in mixed methods research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *25*(1), 1–14. DOI: 10.1186/s12874-025-02475-8 PMID: 39856568

Yulianto, H. (2021). Philosophy of management science: Ontology, epistemology, and axiology perspectives. *Cross-Border Journal of Business Management*, *1*(1), 152–162.

ADDITIONAL READING

Andrews, M., Davis, M., Esin, C., Harrison, B., Hydén, L. C., Hydén, M., & Squire, C. (2025). *Narrative research: Research methods*. Bloomsbury Publishing. DOI: 10.5040/9781350319073

Brännback, M., Carsrud, A., Hechavarria, D., & Kickul, J. (Eds.). (2025). *Handbook of research methods and applications in entrepreneurship and small business*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Millar, G., Volonterio, M., Cabral, L., Peša, I., & Levick-Parkin, M. (2025). Participatory action research in neoliberal academia: An uphill struggle. *Qualitative Research*, *25*(2), 478–498. DOI: 10.1177/14687941241259979

Mwita, K. (2025). Understanding research philosophies and designs: A guide for early-career researchers. *Eminent Journal of Social Sciences*, *1*(1), 43–52. DOI: 10.70582/28z5p186

Small, S. F., Sinha, A., Mackett, O., & Braunstein, E. (2025). Diversity in feminist economics research methods: Trends from the Global South. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, ●●●, 1–25. DOI: 10.1080/1350178X.2025.2460221

Yaohui, H. (2025). Philosophy as Theoretical Practice: A Reinterpretation of Althusser's Marxist Philosophical Perspective. *Teaching and Research*, *59*(6), 124.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Epistemology: The study of knowledge, exploring what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and its limitations, particularly in social and group contexts.

Explaining Relationships Between Variables: Quantitative data often identifies relationships between variables, which can be further explored through qualitative inquiry.

Exploring Micro and Macro Levels: Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches allows analysis at multiple levels, from individual experiences to broader systemic patterns.

Fill Gaps: A single methodology may not capture all the information needed to fully answer a research question; combining methods can address these gaps.

Ontology: The branch of philosophy that examines the nature of social reality, asking what kinds of social entities exist and how they relate.

Provide Hypotheses: Qualitative data can be used to generate hypotheses that may later be tested through quantitative methods, such as surveys.

Screening: Quantitative data can identify participants with specific characteristics for more in-depth qualitative study.

Snapshot Versus Process: Quantitative data provides a point-in-time snapshot, while qualitative data offers detailed insights into processes and dynamics over time.

Solving a Problem: Employing a different research strategy than previously used can help investigate unexpected or puzzling outcomes.

Section 5
AI, Participation, and the Subject–Object Divide

Chapter 8
AI in the Creative Industries:
Enhancing Work, Research, and Collaboration

Phillippa Beasley-Swanson
https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1054-252X
Ravensbourne University, London, UK

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines artificial intelligence's (AI's) transformation of the creative industries, particularly the way professionals work, conduct research, and collaborate. Positioned within the broader discussion of Meaning and Interpretation in Research: Nuance, Objectivity, and the Ethics of Reason, it interrogates the interpretive tensions that arise when human creativity intersects with algorithmic systems. The chapter explores AI both as a technical tool and active collaborator whose outputs require critical evaluation, contextual understanding, and ethical scrutiny. With examples from contemporary creative practice it considers how AI can enhance productivity, expand aesthetic possibilities, and support more inclusive and informed research processes. Ultimately, this chapter argues for an ethically grounded, nuanced approach to integrating AI in creative workflows. One that preserves human interpretive agency while using the technological capacities that increasingly shape the cultural landscape.

INTRODUCTION

The creative industries are experiencing a profound transformation driven by the rapid development and integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Gajjar & Jeary, 2024;

Armaah, 2025). Tools once considered experimental algorithmic image generators, script-writing models, and automated editing platforms are now widely accessible and increasingly embedded in professional practice. From Netflix's personalised recommendation systems that reshape viewing experiences (Basilico et al., 2025), to AI generated screenplays such as *Sunspring,* design tools like Midjourney and DALL·E that produce compelling visuals from simple prompts (Guinness, 2023), AI has become a collaborator, assistant, and provocateur in the production of culture.

This integration of AI raises pressing questions not only about efficiency or innovation, but also about meaning, interpretation, and the conditions under which creative knowledge is produced. To study AI in creative industries is therefore to enter a space where technology, culture, and ethics intersect. Therefore, the central task of this chapter is to explore how AI can enhance work, research, and collaboration.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

Before exploring the above issues, it is useful to consider a range of compelling real-world examples of how AI tools (also summarised in Table 1 below) can actively enhance practice in the creative industries:

1. **Adobe Firefly:** A generative AI platform for visual content image creation, video, and mood boarding built exclusively on Adobe Stock, public domain, and licensed media (Tsao et al., 2025). By foregrounding transparency and legal clarity in its training data, Firefly shows how ethical and nuanced AI integration can empower creators without compromising interpretive integrity (Cornish, 2025).
2. **Stability AI & Hollywood Studios:** Provides AI tools for previsualization and visual effects in film production – as developed with major industry figures including James Cameron and studios like Netflix (Hemraj, 2025). Such tools enhance creative workflows in alignment with human vision but still under cautious, ethical aware adoption (Schiffer, 2025).
3. **The Wizard of Oz at Sphere:** Enhances classic cinema via AI powered resolution restoration and visual fidelity, integrating modern immersive effects (drones, 4D, etc.) while preserving the original performance and rights. This balances innovation with interpretive respect and ethical transparency in reimagining cultural heritage (Chmielewski, 2025).
4. **RocketAir:** A design and strategy firm uses AI (ChatGPT, Notion, Otter.ai, etc.) to automate routine tasks, enabling deep creative thinking during a compressed four-day workweek. It demonstrates how AI can elevate human nuance and

interpretation rather than replace it, promoting ethical collaboration (Madell, 2025).

5. **TBWA's Collective AI:** An AI toolkit co-developed with OpenAI, Adobe, and Google to rapidly prototype creative concepts for Australian brands. This highlights how AI can democratise fast ideation but underscores the necessity of human strategic input to keep cultural relevance and emotional depth (Long, 2024).

6. **Figma:** The introduction of AI tools like Figma Sites (web builder), Figma Make (prototype to code), Figma Buzz (marketing assets), and Figma Draw (vector illustration). These seamlessly integrate interpretive and collaborative AI assistance across the creative process, potentially enhancing objectivity and reasoning by offering informed suggestions while preserving human agency (Weatherbed, 2025).

7. **Runway ML:** Offers AI powered video editing, scene detection, background removal, and visual effects through an accessible interface integrated with mainstream tools (Armaah, 2025). Streamlines workflow while allowing creators to retain nuanced editorial decisions and uphold ethical interpretation.

Table 1. Summary of AI Tools in Use in Creative Industries

Use Case	Nuance	Objectivity	Ethics of Reason
Firefly	Transparent data sources preserve meaning	Clearly licensed	Safe, accountable design
Stability AI tools	Previsualization aligned with vision	Studio oversight	Human-led interpretation
Sphere immersive	Restores heritage with fidelity	Retains original rights	Cultural responsibility
RocketAir	Frees up creative time	AI as assistant	Human insight remains key
TBWA AI toolkit	Fast prototyping	Strategy-informed usage	Human strategic control
Figma	Prompts design creativity	AI suggestions, human control	Transparent tool assistance
Runway ML	Speeds editing	Supports but does not replace	Editors maintain moral judgment

Taken together, these examples demonstrate how the integration of artificial intelligence within creative industries embodies and challenges approaches to meaning in research. Each case reveals how AI, when implemented transparently and reflexively, can strengthen interpretive integrity rather than diminish it, enabling

practitioners to work, research, and collaborate with greater precision and ethical awareness. The tools and practices discussed across design, film, architecture, and digital production illustrate a shared commitment to preserving human agency while embracing computational assistance. In doing so, they reaffirm the chapter's central argument that AI's true value lies not in replacing human creativity, but in amplifying the conditions through which meaning, objectivity, and ethical reasoning can co-exist. The evolving relationship between human creators and intelligent systems signals a change in basic assumptions in how interpretation is negotiated in contemporary creative research. One that demands both nuance and responsibility in equal measure.

THE DUAL PROMISE AND RISK OF AI

AI is often introduced into creative workflows under the promise of acceleration and optimisation. Editors save hours through automated scene detection. Sound designers experiment with AI-driven mixing assistants, and researchers can analyse vast corpora of cultural texts with computational methods (Stubbs, 1996). These efficiencies create space for practitioners to focus on interpretive and imaginative dimensions of their work.

Yet alongside this promise lies the risk of reduction. The very features that make AI powerful - pattern recognition, scale, and statistical prediction - also carry the danger of flattening creative nuance. A dataset can reveal trends, but it cannot articulate irony, metaphor, or cultural resonance without human interpretation. Similarly, an AI generated film script may intrigue as an artefact of machine logic, but without human intervention it lacks coherence, intentionality, and meaning. The challenge then, is not simply whether AI works, but whether it works well in ways that authentically illuminate human existence and respect the interpretive richness of creative practice (Rozental1 et al., 2025).

AI and the Question of Objectivity

Equally significant is the question of objectivity: AI is often framed as neutral; a machine-led perspective that can circumvent human bias. However, AI systems are deeply entangled with the cultural and social assumptions embedded in their training data, including ChatGPT's implicit Western and Anglo-American cultural assumptions (Shwartz, 2024). Generative platforms such as Lensa or DALL·E reveal

this in striking ways, reproducing regressive stereotypes of gender, race and style rather than offering an objective view (UNESCO, 2024).

In the creative industries, where meaning is always context dependent, the myth of objectivity is particularly problematic. Netflix's recommendation algorithm, for example, not only reflects audience preferences but actively shapes them (Shruthi & Srihari, 2025), curating what counts as visible or desirable content. Far from neutral, such systems operate as cultural gatekeepers. If AI is to serve creative research effectively, its outputs must be examined critically, with objectivity reconceived not as neutrality but as transparency.

THE ETHICS OF REASON IN HUMAN-AI COLLABORATION

The ethics of reason compels us to ask who remains responsible in an AI assisted creative process. If an AI system generates a painting, edits a film, or curates a playlist, who is the author? And how should audiences interpret the output? These questions are not merely legal but ethical, for they speak to the values that underpin creative practice. The proposed answer here is that responsibility cannot be outsourced to machines (UNESCO, 2023). Human practitioners remain accountable for how AI is deployed, disclosed, and attributed. Without clear ethical frameworks, AI risks obscuring authorship, diminishing accountability, and reinforcing cultural inequities. With them, however, AI can become a powerful tool for expanding collaboration, enabling creators across disciplines and geographies to share, adapt, and build upon another's work.

The use of AI in creative industries can be explored through three interconnected lenses. First, it considers how AI enhances work by automating repetitive tasks and opening new avenues for interpretive focus. Second, it explores AI's role in research, where computational tools enable new scales and forms of cultural analysis. Third, it investigates how AI supports collaboration, breaking down disciplinary and geographical barriers while raising questions about shared authorship and responsibility.

Across these dimensions, the analysis will return to the framing concerns of this book: how to preserve *nuance* in the face of automation, how to reconceptualise *objectivity* beyond the myth of neutrality, and how to sustain the *ethics of reason* as AI becomes more deeply embedded in cultural production. In this sense, the chapter is less about AI as a technology and more about AI as a site of interpretation. The creative industries remind us that technology does not simply generate outputs; it produces contexts for meaning. By examining AI not only as a tool but also as a collaborator and interlocutor, we can better understand how to harness its potential while reaffirming the irreplaceable role of human interpretation at the heart of creativity.

The discussions across this section highlight the delicate balance between the efficiencies promised by artificial intelligence and the interpretive, ethical complexities it introduces into creative practice. While AI offers unprecedented acceleration and analytical capacity, it simultaneously risks diminishing the subtlety and intentionality that define human creativity (Zhang et al., 2025). The assumption of AI's neutrality particularly in systems shaped by biased data and algorithmic curation reveals that objectivity must be reconceived not as detachment, but as a practice of transparency and reflexive accountability.

In alignment with the wider framework of *Nuance, Objectivity, and the Ethics of Reason* this section contends that the ethics of reason remains central to any human-AI collaboration. Creativity demands responsibility, and authorship must remain anchored in human discernment and disclosure. When deployed thoughtfully, AI can extend interpretive capacity, foster collaboration, and enable new modes of cultural production. Yet its value depends on our willingness to engage critically with its limitations to preserve nuance amid automation, to pursue objectivity through reflexivity, and to ensure that ethical reasoning continues to guide creative innovation in an increasingly computational age.

AI IN DESIGN: CROSS-DISCIPLINARY FACILITATION

AI's influence in design spans rapid prototyping, style variation, and collaborative ideation. For instance, in visual and interactive design, teams employ AI for mood board generation, layout suggestions, and iterative prototyping, enabling cross-disciplinary work among technologists, storytellers, and designers even when physically remote. While specific academic case studies may be fewer, industry reports and practitioner experiences consistently show AI enhancing the speed, range, and exploratory quality of design innovation (Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2025).

AI as Collaborative Catalyst

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be conceptualised as a *collaborative catalyst*, facilitating innovative intersections between creative disciplines. AI tools increasingly enable cross-disciplinary creativity by linking domains such as music theory, visual composition, narrative storytelling, and design thinking in adaptive and flexible ways (Deckker & Sumanasekara, 2025). For example, AI systems like OpenAI's MuseNet and DALL·E allow creators to generate musical compositions and visual artworks in parallel, providing opportunities for richer multimedia storytelling.

Case Study: *The Next Rembrandt*

In 2016, a collaborative project between Microsoft, Delft University of Technology, and several Dutch museums used AI to analyse Rembrandt's entire oeuvre and generate a new, AI created painting in his style (*The Next Rembrandt*). The system synthesised data on brushstroke patterns, composition, and subject matter, integrating visual composition with narrative intent (Microsoft, 2016). This project exemplifies how AI can merge art history, computer vision, and design thinking, producing content that transcends the boundaries of any single discipline.

AI in creative practice can be framed as *augmented* rather than purely automated creativity. In this paradigm, AI functions as a generative partner, supplying raw material such as images, text, music, or 3D models while human creators keep agency in shaping, interpreting, and situating the outcomes within cultural and contextual frameworks (Shneiderman, 2020; Runco & Acar, 2012). This co-creative process uses the strengths of both parties: AI's computational ability to generate vast possibilities, and human capacity for aesthetic judgment, narrative cohesion, and ethical consideration.

Case Study: *Sunspring*

The short film *Sunspring* (2016), directed by Oscar Sharp and created in collaboration with AI researcher Ross Goodwin, used a neural network ("Benjamin") to generate the screenplay (Sabahrwal et al., 2024). While the AI provided the raw dialogue and scene descriptions, the human creative team interpreted and adapted the output, deciding on actors' performances, visual tone, and editing style. The result was a work that retained human storytelling sensibilities while highlighting the unpredictable generative potential of AI (The Guardian, 2016). This demonstrates how AI can serve as a collaborator rather than a replacement, with the human role focusing on creative curation and meaning making.

The integration of AI into creative practice raises significant *ethical considerations*, including issues of authorship and attribution, emotional authenticity, and perceptions of quality when the extent of human contribution is unclear or obscured (Floridi & Cowls, 2019). AI is not an autonomous, solitary creator but a dynamic collaborator, whose value depends on the ways in which humans engage with, contextualise, and remain accountable for its outputs. As with other creative tools where we do not blame video cameras to produce harmful material the responsibility lies with the human prompter, director, or curator (McCosker & Wilken, 2020). AI systems always require human initiation, whether through textual prompts, parameter settings, or curation of datasets, meaning the ethical and creative agency remains fundamentally human (Resseguier, 2021).

AI's Transformative Role

In pre-production AI is used for script analysis with tools such as Dramatify or Sudowrite, casting decisions with Cinelytic and visual effects enhancement, and even generative storyboarding with LTX Studio or Storyboarder AI as shown in Table 1. In design, tools powered by machine learning assist with rapid prototyping, layout suggestions, and style transfer, enabling designers to iterate more efficiently and creatively.

In music, AI driven platforms compose original scores, assist with mastering, and generate adaptive soundtracks for games or films with AI tools such as Soundful or Musicfy. In writing, large language models like ChatGPT help generate dialogue, plot ideas, marketing copy, and even full-length novels. These are often in collaboration with human creators (Murphy, 2024). In post-production, AI automates time-consuming tasks such as colour grading, audio syncing, noise reduction, and even editing rough cuts based on scripts or scene recognition.

When artificial intelligence (AI) enters the realm of creative work, it challenges our traditional understandings of nuance, objectivity, and reason. This intersection raises profound ethical questions about authorship, authenticity, and the role of human intention in art and expression.

AI systems, particularly those trained on vast datasets, often reflect the dominant narratives present in their training data. This can lead to the reinforcement of existing biases and the marginalization of underrepresented voices. For instance, if an AI model is trained on Western art, it may inadvertently sideline non-Western artistic traditions leading to a homogenised output that lacks cultural diversity (Gondola, 2024). AI generated content may lack the subtlety and depth that human creators bring to their work. The absence of lived experience and emotional context can result in creations that, while technically proficient, feel hollow or devoid of genuine meaning (Thomas, 2024).

Beyond questions of emotional depth, these limitations also intersect with broader ethical concerns, as the data-driven nature of AI introduces its own biases that further complicate its role in creative practice. AI is often perceived as objective: however, these systems are only as unbiased as the data they are trained on. Algorithmic bias can manifest in several ways, from reinforcing stereotypes to perpetuating systemic inequalities. This challenges the notion that AI can serve as a neutral tool in creative endeavours (Visual Alchemist, 2024).

Margaret Mitchell, a prominent voice in ethical AI, critiques the concept of artificial general intelligence (AGI) as lacking scientific rigor and being driven more by ambition than by a genuine understanding of intelligence. She emphasises the need for AI development to prioritise societal wellbeing over mere technological advancement (Heikkilä, 2025), and highlights how AI complicates our under-

222

standing of creativity, authenticity, and the ethical responsibilities embedded in contemporary research practice. AI's capacity to process and generate content at unprecedented scales offers both opportunities and challenges. While it can augment human creativity, there is a risk that over-reliance on AI could diminish the role of human reasoning and intentionality in the creative process.

Ethical considerations also extend to issues of authorship and ownership. When AI generates art or literature, questions arise about who holds the rights to these creations, the developer, the user, or the AI itself? This ambiguity complicates existing frameworks of intellectual property and challenges our understanding of creativity (The Data Scientist, 2024). To address these challenges, several strategies could be proposed:

1. Transparency: Clearly disclosing the use of AI in creative works helps maintain trust and allows audiences to make informed judgments about the content they engage with.
2. Inclusive Training Data: Ensuring that AI models are trained on diverse and representative datasets can help mitigate biases and promote a more fair and creative landscape.
3. Human AI Collaboration: Positioning AI as a tool to assist rather than replace human creators can preserve the unique value of human insight and emotional depth in art (AI News International, 2025).

By thoughtfully integrating AI into creative processes and strategies as suggested above, its capabilities can be harnessed while ethical standards that honour the richness and diversity of human expression be upheld. Indeed, recent empirical research demonstrate that human AI interaction in writing generates a 'hybrid human AI adaptive flow of continuous ideation, feedback, analysis, and refinement,' where meaning is negotiated through an ongoing dialogue between human intent and AI suggestions (Parker et al., 2024). This dialogic model aligns with Rancière's notion of decentring authorship whereby creative conventions are actively reinterpreted and challenged through collaborative engagement with AI (Tsao & Nogues, 2024).

Experimental studies indicate that generative AI can enhance individual creativity, and that stories guided by AI were judged more creative and engaging. But also that AI guidance often leads to reduced collective diversity and produces outputs that converge stylistically (Doshi & Hauser, 2024). Thus, AI serves as a catalyst for individual innovation yet may constrict the broader creative landscape. Studies in creative writing contexts show that collaboration design matters: systems that foreground human initiation and iterative interplay lead to higher quality, greater satisfaction, and richer diversity, compared to AI led or confirmatory systems (Hosanagar & Ahn, 2024). In design domains, non-linear collaboration frameworks

such as OptiMuse reveal a shift in perception from AI as a tool to an 'opinionated colleague' thereby fostering reflection and co-agency (Zhou et al., 2024).

Qualitative research with designers and artists highlights the nuanced expectations and anxieties around generative AI, underscoring the need for participatory designs that empower practitioners rather than subsume their ability (Inie et al., 2023). This is echoed in broader theoretical treatments of computational creativity, which frame AI's role as combinatorial and augmentative merely one part of a wider creative process. Moreover, the advent of generative AI has intensified debates over copyright and cultural sovereignty. In the UK, creative sector leaders argue that wholesale data mining exemptions threaten both economic viability and cultural integrity, advocating instead for consent, attribution, and remuneration frameworks (Naughton, 2025). The House of Commons and cross industry groups call for regulatory structures that respect creators' rights while harnessing AI's potential.

AI's capacity to, on the level of skill, democratise, creative production is widely acknowledged offering access to sophisticated tools for those lacking technical expertise (Avlonitou & Papadaki, 2025). Yet this democratisation prompts philo-sophical and economic concerns: does art risk losing its performative "aura"? Could this undermine the human depth that imbues creative expression with contextual meaning? These issues echo debates on technological reproducibility dating back to Benjamin but now reframed within co-creative digital ecologies. The integration of AI into creative industries is not merely a technological shift but a reconfiguration of human-machine epistemologies. AI takes part in meaning making, challenging authorship, amplifying individual creativity, and prompting new collaborative practices. However, absent robust ethical and regulatory frameworks, the gains in efficiency and inclusion may come at the expense of interpretive depth, cultural diversity, and creator agency.

THE INTERPRETIVE NATURE OF CREATIVITY AND RESEARCH

Creative work, like academic research, is fundamentally interpretive. Artists, editors, and designers make choices grounded in context, emotion, and cultural memory. Similarly, researchers in the humanities interpret data not as fixed truths but as flexible narratives shaped by perspective (Habermas, 2019). When AI enters this domain, it challenges the boundaries of authorship and meaning (Srisubashini et al., 2024). Unlike humans, AI lacks cultural intuition and cannot comprehend the symbolic significance of a specific camera angle, colour grade, or musical cue. While it can mimic form, it often fails to grasp subtext. The rise of generative AI capable of producing scripts, images, or music raises questions about whether the

resulting outputs are genuinely meaningful or simply derivative echoes of training data (University of Berkeley, 2023).

Enhancing Creative Work with AI: Productivity Vs Meaning

AI has proven valuable in automating time-consuming tasks such as transcription, auto-reframing, and tagging. In editing software like Adobe Premiere Pro, tools like Auto Reframe can reformat content for multiple platforms with minimal user input (Broder, 2025). In DaVinci Resolve, Magic Mask enables object tracking in seconds. Such innovations can boost efficiency, enabling creators to focus on aspects of their creative output or life outside of work (Zhang et al., 2025). However, they may also tempt practitioners and companies to prioritise speed over depth. Rapid workflows can flatten the iterative, reflective process that traditionally characterises meaningful creative development. Also, speed and automation can remove the need to entry level positions into the creative industries (Braden, 2024). As such, the adoption of AI must be balanced with a commitment to preserving interpretive integrity.

AI and the Question of Objectivity in Creative Research

One of the most pervasive myths surrounding AI is its presumed objectivity (University of Minnesota, 2024). Proponents often claim that AI generates neutral, data-driven outputs. AI systems reflect the biases embedded in their training data. For instance, generative tools trained on Western aesthetics may marginalise non-Western styles, reinforcing colonial or normative standards. In visual media, this bias manifests in the algorithmic preference for certain colour palettes, facial structures, or compositional norms. Such tendencies present ethical challenges: who defines what is beautiful, representative, or valuable in creative research (Shuaib et al., 2025). The illusion of objectivity must be critically dismantled to ensure that AI enhances rather than erodes diversity and nuance. AI is often presented as a "data-driven" alternative to human subjectivity, capable of producing unbiased outcomes. Yet in practice, AI systems inevitably reflect the social, cultural, and linguistic biases embedded in their training data. In the creative industries, this becomes especially visible, where questions of beauty, representation, and value are always culturally mediated.

Generative tools trained on Western aesthetics often marginalise non-Western artistic traditions. Image generators, for instance, tend to reproduce European portrait conventions, privileging lighter skin tones, symmetrical facial structures, and established colour palettes. The result is not neutral creativity but the algorithmic reinforcement of colonial and normative standards of beauty. This bias has real implications for creative research: whose culture is centred, and whose is rendered

invisible? The illusion of objectivity must be critically dismantled to ensure AI supports diversity rather than erodes it (Chekuri, 2025). A striking case study is Netflix's recommendation algorithm. While presented as objective, it curates viewing experiences through patterns of engagement that amplify certain genres, stars, and narratives while suppressing others. Independent and non-Western films, for instance, may become less visible to global audiences despite their cultural significance. The 'objectivity' of the algorithm is thus inseparable from its commercial and cultural biases, shaping not only what audiences watch but also how cultural value is distributed (Kasula, 2020).

This problem extends beyond visual or media content into language itself. In dialogue with ChatGPT in 2025 questions about multilingual capabilities revealed a structural bias toward English (Yo et al., 2025). While highly proficient in English, with rich nuance, idioms, and stylistic variety the model acknowledged weaker performance in non-English languages, especially those with less digital presence. The training imbalance creates data volume bias, cultural bias, and stylistic mismatches, reinforcing Western-centric norms even when operating in other linguistic contexts, and reproducing existing inequities in global knowledge systems that favour languages and cultures with greater digital representation (Agbon, 2024).

Together, these examples demonstrate that AI does not stand apart from culture but is deeply entangled with it. Its outputs cannot be considered objective, because they always appear from partial, historically situated datasets. For creative research, this requires a reframing of objectivity not as neutrality, but as transparency, reflexivity, and accountability. Researchers must interrogate how AI systems are trained and, what assumptions they reproduce, and how their outputs are interpreted: they must avoid the AI generated black hole (Davis, 2024). Only then can AI serve as a meaningful collaborator, enhancing diversity and nuance rather than flattening them.

COLLABORATION AND CO-CREATION: RETHINKING HUMAN-AI RELATIONS

According to Margaryan (2025) AI is more autonomous agent than inanimate tool: the first technology in the history of the world, making its own decisions and independently offering inventive and innovating ideas that are often considered more superior than human creations. Thus, Margaryan foregrounds the ethical and interpretive tensions at play and highlights how AI's growing agency is transforming not only creative workflows but also the design process itself where designers must now negotiate, co-create, and critically evaluate outcomes produced in partnership with intelligent systems. In design, platforms like Midjourney allow artists to generate conceptual sketches from text prompts. In writing, tools such as ChatGPT

offer structural or editorial suggestions. These forms of human AI co-creation raise legal and ethical questions around authorship and ownership. Who owns a design partially generated by AI? Can a machine claim intellectual contribution? More importantly, is the final product a synthesis of human intention and algorithmic output, or a compromised artefact devoid of authenticity? Understanding AI as a partner in meaning-making demands new frameworks for collaboration that respect both creative autonomy and technological assistance.

While these technologies enhance efficiency and expand creative possibility, they also raise questions of who holds rights to AI assisted work and whether algorithmic contributions can be considered genuine creative input. As Smith et al. (2024) note, emerging forms of co-creation require new ethical and legal frameworks that acknowledge both human intention and technological agency, and provide clearer direction on how AI can be, legally or ethically, a partner in human meaning-making and creative practice.

AI AS DATA-DRIVEN OBJECTIVITY

The allure of AI lies partly in its statistical foundation. Machine learning algorithms detect patterns across vast datasets, producing outputs that appear free from the subjectivity of human judgment. For example, a recommendation system such as Netflix's analyses billions of viewing decisions to predict what a user might enjoy, creating the impression of personalised but impartial curation. Similarly, generative AI tools such as DALL·E, Stable Diffusion, or Midjourney create images that feel detached from any single artist's perspective, as though the machine were presenting the 'average' of culture itself (dos Santos & Williamson, 2024). In research contexts, these same features promise new modes of cultural analysis. Scholars can map patterns across thousands of films, novels, or artworks, identifying trends that would be impossible to detect manually. Here, AI seems to function as an extension of objectivity, revealing insights without interpretive bias.

However, as previously mentioned, while the statistical processes of AI may be impartial in their logic, they are never impartial in their inputs. Training data is not universal but selective, reflecting the cultural landscapes from which it is drawn. Thus, the claim of 'objective' AI dissolves once we ask whose data, whose patterns, and whose values are being represented (Tsourgianni, 2025)?

Biases in Training Data

Tendencies for AI systems to reproduce dominant aesthetic traditions further underscore the chapter's central argument that creative AI is never culturally neutral;

instead, it actively extends existing hierarchies, reinforcing the need for critical, ethically informed practices. Creative outputs generated by AI often replicate dominant aesthetic traditions. For instance, generative art models trained primarily on Western standard works tend to reproduce European portraiture styles - light skin tones, symmetrical facial features, and historically dominant colour palettes. The neutrality of AI is revealed instead as the reinforcement of long-standing cultural hierarchies.

A practical example is the use of AI in visual media production. Design tools often produce images that conform to Hollywood or advertising aesthetics: glossy surfaces, cinematic lighting, Eurocentric facial structures. While efficient, these outputs risk narrowing rather than broadening creative diversity, subtly marginalising non-Western traditions, or experimental approaches. Far from 'objective,' AI becomes an amplifier of existing aesthetic norms. This effect was evident in the AI generated screenplay *Sunspring* (2016). While celebrated for its novelty, the script was filled with nonsensical yet oddly familiar fragments of dialogue; an uncanny echo of science-fiction tropes already common in its training corpus. The result was not an 'objective' reimagining of the genre but a distorted mirror of its clichés. Human interpretation by actors and directors was required to turn statistical patterns into meaningful performance. The case demonstrates how AI reflects to us what it has consumed, and how it reinforces dominant conventions rather than offering genuinely fresh perspectives (Chetty, 2025).

Such biases, evident in generative portrait tools like Lensa, directly align with the wider concerns about objectivity, as they reveal how claims of technological neutrality collapse under scrutiny. AI driven creative tools can inadvertently perpetuate gendered and racialised distortions, underscoring the need for more ethical, critically informed approaches to design and collaboration (cf. Toor, 2025). Beyond aesthetic norms, AI reproduces social biases. Studies of facial recognition systems have shown higher error rates for darker skin tones, while text-based models often replicate gender stereotypes embedded in training data. In creative research, this can manifest in AI generated images or texts that reinforce marginalising assumptions: women portrayed in stereotypically domestic roles, or non-Western cultures depicted through exoticising tropes (Hardesty, 2018).

The Ethical Question: Can AI Interpret Creatively?

The key concern raised above is that AI cannot interpret creatively; rather, it merely recombines patterns without understanding. Human creativity involves not only detecting structure but also attributing meaning, context, and intentionality. AI, by contrast, produces statistical approximations of culture. While outputs may appear coherent, they lack the interpretive depth that defines creative research

(Gupta et al., 2024). If we accept that AI cannot interpret in any meaningful sense, then responsibility for interpretation always remains with humans. The risk lies not in AI generating outputs but in humans mistaking those outputs for neutral or authoritative insights. This is particularly dangerous in research contexts, where AI produced analyses might be taken at face value without critical scrutiny (Dans, 2025). The broader ethical challenge, therefore, is accountability. Who is responsible when an AI system produces biased or harmful creative outputs? Is it the developers who designed the model, the institutions that deploy it, or the researchers and artists who utilise its outputs? In practice, accountability must be shared, but transparency about training data, decision making processes, and interpretive frameworks is essential to ensure ethical use (Balasubramaniam et al., 2023).

REFRAMING OBJECTIVITY: TRANSPARENCY AND REFLEXIVITY

If AI cannot be trusted as a neutral interpreter, how should we approach its role in creative research? One solution is to reconceptualise objectivity. Rather than seeking neutrality, objectivity in AI assisted creativity should be framed as transparency and reflexivity. This involves:

1. Acknowledging bias: Recognising that all datasets reflect cultural, linguistic, and aesthetic contexts.
2. Disclosing limitations: Clearly communicating where AI tools perform well and where they falter, especially across languages, genres, or cultural traditions.
3. Practising reflexive interpretation: Treating AI outputs not as authoritative but as prompts for human analysis, requiring critical engagement to extract meaning.
4. Ensuring accountability: Maintaining human responsibility for decisions, attributions, and ethical implications of AI assisted work.

Such a reframing, positions AI not as an objective authority but as a collaborator, an 'opinionated colleague' whose suggestions must be interpreted, contextualised, and, at times, resisted (Schmager et al., 2025). The myth of AI's objectivity must be dismantled if creative research is to benefit from technological innovation without losing interpretive richness. As the case studies of Netflix, *Sunspring*, generative art tools, and multilingual dialogue with ChatGPT illustrate, AI consistently reflects the biases of its training data. These biases shape aesthetic norms, reinforce cultural hierarchies, and marginalise less-represented voices.

The ethical imperative is clear: AI cannot be left to interpret creatively on its own. Responsibility lies with human practitioners to question its outputs, disclose

its limitations, and ensure that diversity and nuance are not eroded. By reframing objectivity as transparency and reflexivity, researchers can use AI to enhance rather than diminish creative inquiry. In this sense, the question is not whether AI can be trusted as neutral, but how humans can remain accountable for its role in shaping meaning. Only then can AI serve as a productive partner in creative research, rather than an unexamined authority.

The Illusion of Neutrality

The discussion so far shows that AI does not operate in a vacuum: it mirrors and often magnifies the norms embedded in its training inputs. As already indicated, generative image platforms reveal alarming representational harms: sexualised female and individuals from non-white racial groups rendered as lighter skinned or anglicised reinforcing white normativity. As Yang (2025) notes, users of Lensa reported that male avatars often appear in suits, while female avatars skew towards bikinis or sexually suggestive attire, an example of entrenched gender stereotyping reproduced by the AI. Moreover, that such systems also exhibit racial distortion. In multi-person photos, AI tools may fail to accurately preserve the true racial identities of individuals. White individuals often dominate in final outputs, while Asian or Black individuals are misrepresented or erased entirely. These patterns reflect broader societal biases, where whiteness operates as the 'unmarked norm.'

Cultural and Stylistic Flattening in Design AI

Bias in creative AI is not limited to standard depictions. It also flattens cultural nuance. In fashion design, researchers encountered what they called a 'curb fence effect:' improvements intended to enhance representation for marginalised groups sometimes led to unintended performance declines elsewhere. This highlights the intricate balance required when attempting to correct bias in AI models (Algorithm Activism, 2025). Moreover, attempts to faithfully render culturally specific designs such as West African attire often result in generic outputs. Simplified or inaccurate representations emerge when AI relies on datasets lacking cultural diversity, erasing rich stylistic elements and symbolic meaning. This is not neutrality. On the contrary, it is a form of visual imperialism, simplifying complex traditions into digestible, stereotyped visuals.

The belief in AI as unbiased hinges on the assumption that it functions like a transparent, explainable collaborator. Yet, without clear visibility into how models operate what data they prioritise, how they process prompts, what biases they encode users are left in the dark. As Holitschke (2023) argues, ethical guidelines stress the need for AI systems in creativity to disclose influences, limitations, and

underlying assumptions to their users and stakeholders Moreover, value alignment also matters. If AI systems are misaligned with the values of creators especially those from marginalized communities, they may actively perpetuate harm. Designers and researchers need to embed fairness, inclusion, and cultural sensitivity into the very architecture of creative systems. Claims of AI authority in interpretation and the perception of its objectivity pose accountability challenges. The creative outputs are not purely machine made; they are services built on human coded datasets and modelling choices. Therefore:

1. Model designers must ensure diverse, representative training data and build in transparency. Avoid the black hole of where the AI generated output come from.
2. Creative researchers must critically assess AI generated outputs, interrogating them rather than treating them as neutral truth.
3. Institutions should establish oversight frameworks capable of auditing bias and ensuring users understand limitations and risks.

Claims of AI authority and perceived objectivity raise significant accountability challenges in creative practice. AI outputs are shaped by human coded datasets and modelling choices rather than being purely machine generated. This underscores the need for designers to ensure diverse and transparent training data, for creative researchers to critically evaluate AI outputs rather than accept them as neutral, and for institutions to implement oversight frameworks that audit bias and communicate the limitations and risks of AI assisted creativity.

A Reconceptualised View of Objectivity

True objectivity in creative research is not about one actor (human or machine) being neutral. Instead, it is a property of a system that is transparent, reflexive, and accountable. AI can be a valuable creative partner, but only if deployed within a framework that acknowledges its cultural and data driven embeddedness and builds in mechanisms for critique and correction. In this light, the promise of AI lies not in its neutrality, but in its potential to stimulate critical reflection. When AI generated ideas are used as points of provocation rather than final conclusions, they can help recalibrate creative questions highlighting assumptions, uncovering biases, and inviting human oversight.

Collaboration and Co-Creation: Rethinking Human-AI Relations

AI tools facilitate forms of collaboration previously unimaginable across geographies, disciplines, and time zones. In music composition, for instance, composers

have employed AI driven systems (like generative models) to offer thematic variations or structural suggestions, allowing human creators to refine or remix ideas asynchronously. Similarly, in visual media and interactive design, AI assists in brainstorming, mood boarding, and iterative prototyping enabling cross-disciplinary teams (e.g., designers, writers, technologists) to build on one another's inputs. These emergent practices exemplify what some scholars (e.g., Wählisch, 2024) call 'shadowed agency:' AI acting as a latent collaborator shaping creative flows behind the scenes, mediating between disconnected human contributors and disciplines. While explicit academic case studies in this realm remain nascent, industry examples speak to its transformative potential (e.g., interactive media studios leveraging AI for iterative design processes).

Augmented vs. Automated Creativity

The distinction between automated and augmented creativity remains foundational:

- Automated Creativity: AI independently generates artifacts musical compositions, visual art, narrative prompts with minimal human input. Humans act as selectors or curators.
- Augmented Creativity: The ideal model of co-creation. Here, AI offers generative momentum proposals, variations, stylistic prompts while humans provide context, evaluation, and cultural grounding.

In this latter model, AI acts not as a replacement but as a stimulus: enhancing human creativity by diversifying the idea pool, while human creators guide and interpret the outcomes providing meaning, coherence, and emotional resonance.

Co-Authorship & Authorship Ethics

Academic and publication ethics frameworks are clear: AI systems cannot be listed as co-authors. They do not satisfy fundamental criteria such as taking responsibility, granting final approval, or possessing legal and moral agency. LLMs (large language models), by their nature, cannot 'consent' or stand accountable key requirements in established authorship guidelines like those from COPE and ICMJE. As one recent study argues, allowing AI as a co-author could disrupt accountability and further stress the competitive publishing ecosystem (Moffatt & Hall, 2024; Hosseini et al., 2023). Additionally, COPE (2025) and other bodies affirm that AI cannot be credited as an author, as they lack responsibility and legal personhood. Current copyright law does not recognise non-human agents as rights holders (Intellectual Property Office, 2024). As such, AI generated content typically defaults to the public domain

or must be assigned to a human. This legal grey area raises important concerns regarding ownership, licensing, and derivative rights. Researchers and creators must clarify and ethically manage AI contributions, lest confusion over authorship jeopardize legal clarity.

Ethical deployment of AI in creative work asks for transparent documentation of AI's role as collaborator. Researchers and creators should disclose the extent and nature of AI involvement in methods, acknowledgments, or metadata ensuring that audiences understand human contributions remain central. Failure to do so risks misattributing ideas and undermining moral rights of human creators.

Examples in Creative Co-Creation

In music composition, composers using AI generative models often report that AI introduces unanticipated melodic or harmonic ideas sparking human insight. These AI contributions become a resource to be shaped rather than final compositions, exemplifying augmented creativity over automation. Interactive media and design teams use AI tools for rapid prototyping and ideation. For instance, AI may generate visual style frames or narrative arcs that inform, rather than supplant, human design direction. This iterative augmentation supports co-creation across designers, storytellers, and technologists (Alharthi, 2025).

These examples underscore that AI functions best as a creative partner not in autonomous agency, but as an intelligent tool that deepens human creativity without replacing its judgment.

Table 2. Who or What is the Creative Partner?

Dimension	AI as Tool	AI as Creative Partner
Agency	Executes user prompts	Generates suggestions within human-guided framing
Accountability	User holds full responsibility	Human retains responsibility, but AI adds creative input
Legal Recognition	Not applicable	Emerges through nuanced crediting and disclosure
Ethical Role	Assistive	Augmentative requires transparency and oversight

Table 2 shows the distinction between AI as a tool and AI as a creative partner. It reflects differing degrees of agency, accountability, and ethical responsibility in human-machine collaboration. When functioning as a tool, AI merely executes user defined prompts, positioning the human as the sole agent and bearer of accountability. In contrast, when AI operates as a creative partner, it contributes suggestions and interpretations within a human-guided framework, introducing a shared yet asymmetrical form of agency. While the human retains ultimate responsibility for

outcomes, the AI's creative input necessitates more nuanced recognition, including appropriate crediting and disclosure. Legally, AI tools require no attribution, but as creative partners, their involvement challenges traditional notions of authorship. Ethically, the tool model is assistive and straightforward, while the partnership model is augmentative, demanding transparency and oversight to ensure responsible and informed integration of AI generated contributions. In practical and ethical terms, AI in creative research is best framed as an *augmented collaborator*; a source of generative stimuli whose outputs call for human interpretation, validation, and contextualisation.

THE ETHICS OF REASON: DECISION-MAKING, AGENCY AND VALUE

As AI takes on more interpretive functions, it influences decision making in profound ways. Algorithms curate content, suggest edits, and even recommend plot structures. Platforms like Netflix use AI to select thumbnails that maximise user engagement, sometimes at the expense of narrative accuracy (Abishek & Judi, 2025). These choices, while minor, shape how audiences understand and relate to content. Delegating such decisions to AI raises the ethical concerns about reinforcement of racial and gender stereotypes already discussed above. Ultimately, the key issue is that reasoning cannot be ethical when it is outsourced to non-sentient systems without transparency, explainability, and a reaffirmation of human oversight in creative processes.

Future Directions: Towards Nuanced, Ethical Integration

The future of AI in creative industries lies in intelligent augmentation. To achieve this, creators, engineers, and ethicists must collaborate to develop tools that foreground transparency and respect for human interpretation. For instance, scriptwriting tools could offer alternative plot suggestions. Interactive design software might alert users to visual clichés or stereotypical representations, prompting more intentional choices. Embedding media literacy and ethical reasoning into AI assisted workflows ensures that creative practice remains grounded in human values. To resist simplistic or mechanistic uses of AI in creative research, strategies that weave nuance and reflective interpretation into every stage of the AI pipeline are needed. For example, and according to Morley et al. (2021), 'Ethics as a Service' in practice will build tools and interfaces that actively ask users to reflect on algorithmic suggestions, prompting them to question bias, mode of interpretation, or cultural assumptions. However, developers critique current ethics toolkits as 'either too flexible (and thus

vulnerable to ethics washing) or too strict (i.e., unresponsive to context)' suggesting the need for more balanced frameworks.

Integrated critical checkpoints in workflows, embed moment to moment checkpoints such as bias audits, interpretive annotations, or impact prompts that ask, 'What cultural norms might this reinforce?' or 'Are there alternative interpretive lenses? In general, there is a call for an interdisciplinary dialogue, bridging creativity, ethics, and technology which demands deliberate, cross-disciplinary engagement. A sustained dialogue must include but cannot be limited to ethicists (for framing AI outputs within cultural, human-rights, and moral contexts), creative practitioners (who understand interpretive nuance, aesthetic diversity, and cultural narratives) and the technologists and engineers (who build and refine systems for transparency, adaptability, and interpretability) driving AI technology forward. As Rosenberg (2017) notes, the AI Now Institute advocates for regulation tailored by domain and call for "diverse experts beyond computer science and engineering" to shape AI systems with full accountability. AI Tools must allow for explainability and traceability. They should align with UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d.) recommendations for human oversight and accountability, and respect creators' agency (Creative Commons, 2023).

For instance, a tool for screenwriters that puts human values and critical reflection at the centre, rather than AI heuristics, and that enhances creative agency by supporting writers without substituting their interpretive authority, should include the following:

1. Trope detection: The AI flags overused narrative tropes e.g., the 'damsel in distress' or cultural stereotyping offering brief context or alternative directions (e.g., 'consider inverting this trope for stronger agency').
2. Suggestive alternatives: Alongside the flagged trope, it proposes structurally and culturally diverse options unconventional character motivations, reframed relational dynamics, or non-linear plot structures.
3. User override with rationale: The writer can override the suggestion but must add a rationale either a brief note (for transparency) or by selecting "I intend this trope but reframe it because…" creating accountability.
4. Reflective log: Outputs a metadata trail of decisions what was flagged, what was accepted or overridden, and why so collaborators, readers, or reviewers can trace interpretive choices.

In short, creative AI must facilitate nuanced interpretation and reflection throughout workflows; interdisciplinary collaboration melding insight from ethics, creativity, and technology; and transparent, agency-supportive tools that proactively invite user oversight and accountability. These principles can guide us toward AI systems that

enrich creative research responsibly, rather than diminish its ethical and cultural complexity. Indeed, AI has the power to transform creative industries with new efficiencies and possibilities for collaboration. However, it also complicates how we interpret, value, and understand creative work. As AI increasingly contributes to meaning-making, practitioners must approach it not as an objective tool, but as a partner whose outputs require scrutiny. By centring nuance, interrogating objectivity, and upholding the ethics of reason, the creative industries can integrate AI in ways that enhance rather than diminish our shared cultural imagination (Erickson, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined how AI reshapes creative industries by expanding workflows, enabling new forms of research, and supporting collaboration. AI offers speed, efficiency, and computational power, but these capacities do not constitute creativity. True meaning arises only when humans interpret, contextualise, and make ethical decisions about AI generated outputs. To ensure AI enhances rather than diminishes creative practice, three principles must remain central.

First, nuance: AI can generate forms, but the subtlety of interpretation belongs to humans. The AI written film *Sunspring* illustrates this. While the script was novel and provocative, it only became meaningful only when human actors and directors reshaped it into narrative performance. Nuance, in this sense, is not optional but foundational. However, nuance is central to both creativity and research. It arises in the subtle choices that define cultural production: the pacing of an edit, the symbolism of a colour palette, the cadence of a musical phrase. These are not data driven outputs, but interpretive acts grounded in human experience, cultural memory, and affective resonance.

AI, by contrast, operates through statistical approximation. It can imitate form but struggles with subtext. For instance, while AIVA can generate harmonised melodies, the emotional depth of human composition still exceeds algorithmic arrangement. Similarly, AI generated screenplays, provide intriguing raw material but lack narrative coherence until humans intervene. Without human interpretive labour, such outputs risk flattening meaning into hollow replication (Sternberg & Kaufman, 2010). Therefore, the future of AI in creative research depends on embedding nuance at every stage. Tools should not simply accelerate workflows but also provoke reflection. They must flag stereotypes, reveal cultural assumptions, and invite creators to critically examine their decisions. Nuance must remain the condition that distinguishes creative research from automated production (Ruszev et al., 2024).

Second, objectivity: AI is often assumed to be neutral, yet platforms such as Netflix demonstrate otherwise. Its recommendation algorithms, designed to maximise engagement, subtly shape what audiences see and how cultural narratives circulate. Far from impartial, such systems reveal the need to reconceptualise objectivity as transparency, reflexivity, and accountability (Kunwar, 2025); because AI systems are never neutral. They are trained on human created datasets that do not represent impartial creativity but the reproduction of historical bias at scale. Far from transcending subjectivity, AI entrenches it under the guise of neutrality. True objectivity in creative research cannot therefore be equated with machine output. Instead, it must be reconceptualised as transparency, reflexivity, and accountability. Researchers and practitioners must interrogate AI generated artefacts, situating them within their cultural and ethical contexts. Objectivity becomes less about producing 'bias-free' outputs and more about ensuring that processes are open to scrutiny and critique.

Third, the ethics of reason: Responsibility for AI assisted creativity rests with human agents. Disclosure, attribution, and critical oversight ensure that creative intent is not eclipsed by algorithmic automation. Without this grounding, AI risks reinforcing bias and eroding intentionality (Kohno et al., 2025). The ethics of reason reminds us that creative decision making is always value laden. When AI systems suggest edits, generate scripts, or curate recommendations as with Netflix's algorithmic tailoring of trailers their influence shapes interpretation and audience engagement. The ethical question is not whether AI makes decisions, but whether humans remain accountable for them (Agrawal et al., 2025). Ethical responsibility in AI assisted creativity requires transparency, attribution, and agency. Creators must disclose how AI has been used, ensuring that audiences understand the balance between human input and machine assistance. Attribution matters not only for legal clarity but also for safeguarding the moral rights of human creators whose interpretive labour remains central.

Equally, AI systems should be designed to foreground reflection rather than obscure it. Interactive checkpoints, explainability mechanisms, and participatory frameworks can ensure that practitioners remain conscious of the ethical stakes in their choices. Without these, the danger is not only misattribution but also the erosion of intentionality, where creative decisions are quietly outsourced to algorithms.

When guided by these principles, AI becomes a collaborator and 'opinionated colleague' provoking innovation, broadening participation, and enriching cultural dialogue. The task for researchers and practitioners is therefore not to resist AI, nor to embrace it uncritically, but to integrate it with nuance, objectivity, and ethical responsibility. Only then can AI reaffirm the irreplaceable role of human interpretation at the heart of creativity and research (Sun et al., 2025).

REFERENCES

Abishek, N., & Judi, E. K. (2025). 'A Study on Exploring Consumer Engagement with Ai-Driven Experiences on Netflix Streaming Platform.' *International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Commerce and Management*. 93–100. DOI: 10.34293/ICAICM-25.ch013

Agbon, G. (2024). Who speaks through the machine? Generative AI as discourse and implications for management. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, *100*, 102761–102761. DOI: 10.1016/j.cpa.2024.102761

Agrawal, A., Gupta, G., Agrawal, A., & Gupta, H. (2025). Evaluating Diversity and Stereotypes Amongst AI Generated Representations of Healthcare Providers. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, *7*, 1537907. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3389/fdgth.2025.1537907 PMID: 40352327

AI News International. ' (2025, March 16). 'The Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Industries. *AI News International.* https://www.ainewsinternational.com/the-ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-industries/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Alharthi, S. A. (2025). Generative AI in Game Design: Enhancing Creativity or Constraining Innovation? *Journal of Intelligence*, *13*(6), 60. DOI: 10.3390/jintelligence13060060 PMID: 40558810

Armaah, D. (2025, February 3). 'How Artificial Intelligence Will Reshape Content Creation by 2030.' *The FutureList.* https://www.thefuturelist.com/how-artificial-intelligence-will-reshape-content-creation-by-2030/

Avlonitou, C., & Papadaki, E. (2025). AI: An Active and Innovative Tool for Artistic Creation. *Arts*, *14*(3), 52–52. DOI: 10.3390/arts14030052

Balasubramaniam, N., Kauppinen, M., Rannisto, A., Hiekkanen, K., & Kujala, S. (2023). Transparency and Explainability of AI Systems: From Ethical Guidelines to Requirements. *Information and Software Technology*, *159*(159), 107197. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950584923000514. DOI: 10.1016/j.infsof.2023.107197

Basilico, J., Feng, Y., Bhattacharya, M., Lamkhede, S., Hsiao, K.-J., & Oh, S. (2025, July 15). 'FM-Intent: Predicting User Session Intent with Hierarchical Multi-Task Learning.' *Netflix.* https://research.netflix.com/publication/fm-intent-predicting-user-session-intent-with-hierarchical-multi-task

Braden, Z. (2024, October 16). 'AI Will Replace Entry Level Creative Positions.' *Medium*. https://medium.com/@zacharybraden./ai-will-replace-entry-level-creative-positions-10ebb3be1877

Broder, M. (2025, June 16). 'Keeping Up with Modern Media: The Role of AI in Video Production.' *Iconik*. https://www.iconik.io/blog/keeping-up-with-modern-media-the-role-of-ai-in-video-production

Chekuri, K. (2025, September 8). *The myth of Neutral AI — Beneath the layers of complexity*. Medium. https://medium.com/@keeruchekuri/the-myth-of-neutral-ai-beneath-the-layers-of-complexity-acde70a49573

Chetty, Z. (2025, May 24). 'The Mirror We Built: What AI is Really Showing Us'. *Medium*. https://medium.com/@zahara_chetty/the-mirror-we-built-what-ai-is-really-showing-us-5484dd149de6

Chmielewski, D. (2025, August 21). 'Hollywood's Biggest AI Debut? Las Vegas Sphere's "Wizard of Oz."' *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/technology/hollywoods-biggest-ai-debut-las-vegas-spheres-wizard-oz-2025-08-21/

COPE. (2025, February 12). 'Artificial Intelligence and Authorship.' *COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics.* https://publicationethics.org/news-opinion/artificial-intelligence-and-authorship?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Cornish, K. (2025, August 22). 'Adobe Firefly can Erase Photo-Bombers, Make you Fluent in French, and More.' *New York Post*. https://nypost.com/shopping/adobe-firefly-review-the-best-creative-ai-tool-for-creators/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Creative Commons. (2023, October 7th). 'Making AI Work for Creators and the Commons.' *Creative Commons*.https://creativecommons.org/2023/10/07/making-ai-work-for-creators-and-the-commons/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Dans, E. (2025, November 11th). 'When AI Gets it Wrong: Why Responsibility Still Lies with Us.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/enrique-dans/when-ai-gets-it-wrong-why-responsibility-still-lies-with-us-d6d1890f395d

Davis, J. P. (2024, December 9th). 'How Businesses Can Survive the AI "Black Hole."' *INSEAD Knowledge*. https://knowledge.insead.edu/strategy/how-businesses-can-survive-ai-black-hole

Deckker, D., & Sumanasekara, S. (2025). A Review of AI-Powered Creativity: The Intersection of AI and the Arts. *International Journal of Global Economic Light*, *11*(4), 10–24. DOI: 10.36713/epra20968

Dos Santos, J. F. P., & Williamson, P. J. (2024). Beyond Connectivity: Artificial Intelligence and the Internationalisation of Digital Firms. *Information and Organization*, *34*(4), 100538. DOI: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2024.100538

Doshi, A. R., & Hauser, O. P. (2024). Generative AI Enhances Individual Creativity but Reduces the Collective Diversity of Novel Content. *Science Advances*, *10*(28), eadn5290. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.adn5290 PMID: 38996021

Erickson, K. (2024). AI and Work in the Creative Industries: Digital Continuity or Discontinuity? *Creative Industries Journal*, •••, 1–21. DOI: 10.1080/17510694.2024.2421135

Floridi, L., & Cowls, J. (2019). A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society. *Harvard Data Science Review*, *1*(1). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1162/99608f92.8cd550d1

Gajjar, D., & Jeary, L. (2024, October 7). *'Artificial Intelligence and New Technology in creative Industries.' UK Parliament*. https://post.parliament.uk/artificial-intelligence-and-new-technology-in-creative-industries/

Gondola, J. (2024, April 5). 'AI and the Future of Art: Ethical Considerations for Creativity.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/%40jamesgondola/ai-and-the-future-of-art-ethical-considerations-for-creativity-84ea06fc4eff?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Guinness, H. (2023, September 12). 'The Best AI Image Generators in 2023.' *Zapier*. https://zapier.com/blog/best-ai-image-generator/

Gupta, P., Ding, B., Guan, C., & Ding, D. (2024). Generative AI: A Systematic Review Using Topic Modelling Techniques. *Data and Information Management*, *8*(2), 100066. DOI: 10.1016/j.dim.2024.100066

Habermas, T. (2019). *Emotion and Narrative: Perspectives in Autobiographical Storytelling*. Cambridge University Press.

Hardesty, L. (2018, February 11). 'Study Finds Gender and Skin-Type Bias in Commercial Artificial-Intelligence Systems.' *MIT News.* https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-finds-gender-skin-type-bias-artificial-intelligence-systems-0212

Heikkilä, M. (2025, June 19). 'Margaret Mitchell: Artificial General Intelligence is "Just Vibes and Snake Oil."' *Financial Times.* https://www.ft.com/content/7089bff2-25fc-4a25-98bf-8828ab24f48e?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hemraj, S. (2025). AI and the Future of Creative Development: Redefining Digital Media Production. *AI and Ethics*, *5*(5), 5105–5119. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s43681-025-00765-x

Holitschke, S. (2023, September). 'The Ethics of Using AI For Creativity: Opportunities and Challenges.' *LinkedIn.* https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ethics-using-ai -creativity-opportunities-challenges-stefan-holitschke?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hosanagar, K., & Ahn, D. (2024). 'Designing Human and Generative AI Collaboration.' *Cornell University.* https://arxiv.org/abs/2412.14199?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hosseini, M., Resnik, D. B., & Holmes, K. (2023). The Ethics of Disclosing the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Writing Scholarly Manuscripts. *Research Ethics*, *19*(4), 449–465. DOI: 10.1177/17470161231180449 PMID: 39749232

Inie, N., Falk, J., & Tanimoto, S. (2023). 'Designing Participatory AI: Creative Professionals' Worries and Expectations about Generative AI.' *Cornell University.* https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.08931?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Intellectual Property Office. (2024, December 17). 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence.' *GOV.UK.* https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/copyright-and -artificial-intelligence/copyright-and-artificial-intelligence

Kasula, C. P. (2020, June 28th). 'Netflix Recommender System — A Big Data Case Study.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/data-science/netflix-recommender-system-a -big-data-case-study-19cfa6d56ff5

Kohno, K., Caliskan, A., & Cheong, C. (2025). Safeguarding Human Values: Rethinking US Law for Generative AI's Societal Impacts. *AI and Ethics*, *5*(2), 1433–1459. DOI: 10.1007/s43681-024-00451-4 PMID: 40352581

Kunwar, A. (2025, October 9th). 'The AI-Driven Evolution of Netflix: Personalization at Scale.' *Times of AI.* https://www.timesofai.com/industry-insights/ai-in -netflix-personalization/

Long, D. (2024, December 8th). 'TBWA Creative Boss Says AI Will Boost Aussie Brands Globally.' *The Australian.* https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/growth -agenda/ai-will-boost-aussie-brands-globally-as-agencies-harness-tech-tools/news -story/b276b5222ca67b90034f719357c2edc1?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Madanchian, M., & Taherdoost, H. (2025). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Research Efficiency. *Results in Engineering*, *26*, 104743. DOI: 10.1016/j. rineng.2025.104743

Madell, R. (2025, April 14th). 'How AI Helps This Company Have a 4-day Work-week.' *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/4-day-workweek-ai-tools-efficiency-2025-4?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Margaryan, A. (2025, May 6th). 'AI is Not an Agent – AI is a Tool.' *Oxford University.* https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/news-events/ai-is-not-an-agent-ai-is-a-tool/

McCosker, A., & Wilken, R. (2020). *Automating Vision*. Routledge., DOI: 10.4324/9780429341175

Microsoft. (2016, April 13th). 'The Next Rembrandt: Recreating the Work of a Master with AI.' *Microsoft News Centre Europe.* https://news.microsoft.com/europe/features/next-rembrandt/

Moffatt, B., & Hall, A. (2024). Is AI My Co-author? The Ethics of Using Artificial Intelligence in Scientific Publishing. *Accountability in Research*, ●●●, 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/08989621.2024.2386285 PMID: 39109816

Morley, J., Elhalal, A., Garcia, F., Kinsey, L., Mökander, J., & Floridi, L. (2021). Ethics as a Service: A Pragmatic Operationalisation of AI Ethics. *Minds and Machines*, *31*(2), 239–256. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s11023-021-09563-w PMID: 34720418

Murphy, D. (2024, July 18th). 'How to Humanize ChatGPT written content for better fiction (and to pass AI detection).' *Creativindie.* https://www.creativindie.com/how-to-humanize-chatgpt-written-content-for-better-fiction-and-to-pass-ai-detection/

Naughton, J. (2025, February 22nd). 'Creative Industries are Among the UK's Crown Jewels – And AI is Out to Steal Them.' *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/22/creative-industries-are-among-the-uks-crown-jewels-and-ai-is-out-to-steal-them?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Netflix. (n.d.). 'How Netflix's Recommendations System Works.' *Netflix Help Center*. https://help.netflix.com/en/node/100639

Parker, J. L., Richard, V. M., Acabá, A., Escoffier, S., Flaherty, S., Jablonka, S., & Becker, K. P. (2024). Negotiating Meaning with Machines: AI's Role in Doctoral Writing Pedagogy. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, *35*(3), 1218–1238. DOI: 10.1007/s40593-024-00425-x

Resseguier, A. (2021). *Thinking AI with a Hammer. Kate Crawford's Atlas of AI.* AI and Ethics., DOI: 10.1007/s43681-021-00115-7

Rosenberg, S. (2017, November). 'Why Artificial Intelligence is Still Waiting for its Ethics Transplant.' *WIRED.* https://www.wired.com/story/why-ai-is-still-waiting-for-its-ethics-transplant/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Rozental1, S., van Dartel, M. & de Rooij1, A. (2025). 'How Artists Use AI as a Responsive Material for Art Creation.' *ISEA.* (p. 477). https://www.isea-symposium-archives.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025_Rozental_How-Artists-Use-AI-as-a-Responsive-Material.pdf

Ruszev, S., Rogers, L., Gurgun, S., Stockton-Brown, M., Gee, M., Davis, T., Yang, X., Griffiths, C., Zhang, K., Cheng, B., Slaymaker, J., & Prajitna, S. (2024). 'Shared-Posthuman Imagination: Human-AI Collaboration in Media Creation White Paper.' *Bournemouth University.* https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/40681/7/10.18746_epxn-da67.pdf

Sabahrwal, D., Sood, R. S., & Sood, S. (2024). 'Media and Al: Navigating the Future of Communication.' *Researchgate.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381229239_Media_and_Al_Navigating_The_Future_of_Communication

Schiffer, Z. (2025, August 20th). 'AI Isn't Coming for Hollywood. It's Already Arrived.' *WIRED.* https://www.wired.com/story/artificial-intelligence-hollywood-stability/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Schmager, S., Pappas, I. O., & Vassilakopoulou, P. (2025). Understanding Human-Centred AI: A Review of its Defining Elements and a Research Agenda. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *44*(15), 1–40. DOI: 10.1080/0144929X.2024.2448719

Shruthi, B., & Srihari, M. (2025). *Understanding Algorithmic Bias in Movie Recommendation Systems: A Study on User Experience and Cultural Representation.* SJCC International Journal of Communication Research., https://sjcc.ac.in/journal/articles/vol-2-issue-1/article-5.pdf

Shuaib, A., Arian, H., & Makhseed, A. (2025). 'Beyond the Algorithm: A Perspective on Tackling Bias and Cultural Sensitivity in AI-Guided Aesthetic Standards for Cosmetic Surgery in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region.' *National Library of Medicine.* https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12416507/

Shwartz, V. (2024, February 13th). 'Artificial Intelligence Needs to be Trained on Culturally Diverse Datasets to Avoid Bias.' *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/artificial-intelligence-needs-to-be-trained-on-culturally-diverse-datasets-to-avoid-bias-222811

Smith, N., Georgiou, M., Jalali, M. S., & Chastin, S. (2024). Planning, Implementing and Governing Systems-Based Co-Creation: The DISCOVER Framework. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *22*(1), 6. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1186/s12961-023-01076-5 PMID: 38191430

Sternberg, R. J., & Kaufman, J. C. (2010). Diverse Perspectives on Creativity. *Cambridge Core, /*(), 91–318. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-handbook-of-creativity/diverse-perspectives-on-creativity/4CAC17BCAC0DE5D0841757745A754945DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511763205

Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Blackwell.

The Data Scientist. (2024, December 24). 'What Are the Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Fields?' *The Data Scientist.* https://thedatascientist.com/what-are-the-ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-fields/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The Guardian. (2016, June 10). 'This is What Happens When an AI-Written Screenplay is Made into a Film.' *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/10/artificial-intelligence-screenplay-sunspring-silicon-valley-thomas-middleditch-ai

Thomas, D. (2024, July 12th). 'Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Industries.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/aimonks/ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-industries-9b9174dd21e0?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Toor, K. (2025). *Is That Me?": Gendered Online Violence Through AI-Generated Images*. Simon Fraser University. [Masters Thesis], https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2025-10/etd24026.pdf

Toor, K. (2025). *Is That Me?": Gendered Online Violence Through AI-Generated Images*. Simon Fraser University. [Masters Thesis], https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2025-10/etd24026.pdf

Tsao, J., Liang, C. X., Nogues, C., & Wong, A. (2025). Perceptions and Integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Creative Practices and Industries: A Scoping Review and Conceptual Model. *AI & Society*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s00146-025-02667-2

Tsao, J., & Nogues, C. (2024). Beyond the Author: Artificial Intelligence, Creative Writing and Intellectual Emancipation. *Poetics*, *102*, 101865. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2024.101865

Tsourgianni, A. (2025). *The Human Perspective on Artificial Intelligence (AI): How Do People Perceive and Relate to AI in the Social Sphere?* University College London. [PhD Thesis], https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10210891/1/Tsourgianni _10210891_thesis.pdf

UNESCO. (2023, April 21st). 'Artificial Intelligence: Examples of Ethical Dilemmas.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation -ethics/cases

UNESCO. (2024). 'Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/ articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender -stereotypes

UNESCO. (n.d.). 'Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco .org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics

University of Berkeley. (2023, October 10). 'Artificial Imagination: The Rise of Generative AI.' *University of Berkeley Exec Ed.* https://executive.berkeley.edu/ thought-leadership/blog/artificial-imagination-rise-generative-ai

University of Minnesota. (2024, May 17th). 'Debunking 5 Artificial Intelligence Myths.' *Minnesota Carlson.* https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/graduate/resources/ debunking-5-artificial-intelligence-myths

Visual Alchemist. (2024, September 8). 'Ethical Implications of AI Art in a Creative Future.' *Visual Alchemist.* https://visualalchemist.in/2024/09/08/ethical-implications -of-ai-art-in-a-creative-future/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Wählisch, M. (2024). 'AI and the Future of Mediation.' *University of Birmingham*. https://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/255472364/Accord_30_Still_Time _to_Talk_-_Adaptation_and_innovation_in_peace_mediation_0.pdf

Weatherbed, J. (2025, May 7th). 'Figma's big AI update takes on Adobe, WordPress, and Canva.' *The Verge.* https://www.theverge.com/news/662678/figma-buzz-draw -make-sites-announcement-availability?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Yang, Y. (2025). Racial Bias in AI-generated Images. *AI & Society*, *28*(3), 5425–5437. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s00146-025-02282-1

Yo, M. H., Song, S., & Kim, J. (2025). 'Multilingual Capabilities of GPT: A Study of Structural Ambiguity.' *National Library of Medicine*. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih .gov/articles/PMC12233270/

Zhang, C., Shao, Y., Yuan, Y., & Shen, W. (2025). Artificial Intelligence Reshapes Creativity: A Multidimensional Evaluation. *PsyCh Journal*, pchj.70042. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1002/pchj.70042 PMID: 40764253

Zhou, J., Li, R., Tang, J., Tang, T., Li, H., Cui, W., & Wu, Y. (2024). 'Understanding Nonlinear Collaboration between Human and AI Agents: A Co-design Framework for Creative Design.' *Cornell University.* https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.07312?utm_source =chatgpt.com DOI: 10.1145/3613904.3642812

Chapter 9
Participation and Ethical Reasoning in Text–Based Research:
Crossing the Great Subject–Object Divide From Interpretation to Meaning

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub
 https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5735-305X
Ravensbourne University, London, UK

Augustin Bado
 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2760-4042
Univesitat Ramon Llull, Spain & Université Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Burkina Faso

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the challenges to meaning objectivity faced by text-based researchers. It considers how the subject-object divide interferes with the validity and reliability of research claims. With a mixed methods approach, the chapter shows that subjectivity has a significant impact on the meaning and interpretation of text, and that external influences on subjectivity can be, but are not enough, to stabilise meaning. It argues that researchers working with words should, as part of the fundamental research, establish a base line of meaning among their participants. Taking this approach would enhance research axiology. Accordingly, this chapter proposes a signification grammatology, the SOPHIC (Subject-Object Participation in

Hermeneutical Interpretation and Conceptualisation) framework, for the instantiation of participation and ethical reasoning in text-based research. This framework aims to provoke and stimulate evaluation and legitimation of text-based research claims.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The problem of contradictory findings from apparently similar research questions is evident in several disciplines. In science and medicine, for example, resolving this problem is urgent as findings often impact on how diseases are treated or on how often patients are tested. Within biomedical research, Rosemblat et al (2019) highlight successes that were later contradicted, e.g., studies claiming that Vitamin E had positive effects on patients with coronary disease, or that aspirin reduces the risk of heart attacks. In both cases, other studies investigating the *same phenomenon using the same research questions* arrived at contradictory (opposite) results.

Implying that the problem arises from semantical and conceptual differences, Alamri and Sevenson (2016, p8) point out that contradictions obscure understanding of the current state of knowledge about specific research questions and 'present a challenge to evidence-based evaluation into the effectiveness of approaches.' Ioanndis (2005) had, before them, highlighted bias and ambiguity in 'designs, *definitions* [added emphasis], outcomes, and analytical modes' as key reasons for contradictory or false claims. However, Kannan and Gowri (2014) suggested that intentionality of consciousness was the real culprit as researchers, knowing what they are after, influence the findings or publish only the results supporting their hypothesis.

These possible causes (Ioanndis, 2005; Kannan & Gowri, 2014; Alamri & Sevenson, 2016) are not unique or exclusive to science and medicine. They are endemic to research in general. More specifically to the intersubjective contexts that research takes place in; and when research and rationality are needed to establish agreement in understanding of the appearance of an object to distinct conscious minds. In this process, researchers of every discipline, including the social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, business management, etc.), must be clear on which object they are speaking of whenever they present it to either those they question (in focus groups, semi-structured interviews, survey questionnaires, etc.) or to those they want to impact with their findings. This clarity is, however, elusive: and it is so because, as Kannan and Gowri (2014) have insinuated, the intentionality of consciousness is such an influential driver of perception, action and meaning (cf. Searle, 2002) that in the face of mounting pressure to establish reputations on publications, there is a higher chance that findings support researchers' hypothesis or agendas. Not because researchers wilfully falsify or mislead those who access their work, but because

without an overtly participatory and ethically rational stance, a person's intentions (no matter how well-meaning) can blind them to alterity or difference.

Indeed, this phenomenon – the subconscious tendency for readers (or listeners) to make the meaning they find agreeable or to project themselves into the text they read (or the words they hear) - has long been explored outside of empirical research. In empirical research, language is still seen as an instrument for communicating information (Taylor, 2016); a process of thought by which knowledge is anchored in reality (cf. Frege, 1993, cited in Moore, 1993). However, in the more theoretical fields, e.g., poststructuralism (Harland, 1987), deconstruction (Culler, 2008; Derrida in McQuillan, 2018), and reader-response criticism (Tompkins, 1981), the resounding position is that the subjectivity of language-users can hardly, if ever, be separated from the meaning they draw out of language-based communications.

In these fields, language is an interplay of presences and absences in consciousness and words. Knowledge, explicitly meaning and interpretation, is at best an arbitration between experience (subject) and reality (object) (Benson, 2014). Indeed, thinkers in these fields (e.g., Culler, 2008) view the textual contexts that researchers work in (e.g., literature reviews, surveys, interview guides, transcriptions of focus groups and semi-structured interviews, written materials, emails, social media posts, etc.) as generative of performative and constructed meaning. On their long-standing debates, researchers, their audiences and the disciplines that assume that truth, knowledge and/or meaning are discoverable, are merely deluding themselves. According to Sarup (1993, p3) poststructuralism, deconstruction and reader-response criticism, are 'highly critical of the unity of the stable sign' and the connection between signifier and signified; they take a 'perpetual detour' from a 'truth that has any status or finality,' and claim that 'the human subject does not have a unified consciousness but is structured by language.'

Against this background, this chapter offers a cohered evaluation of these arguments and proposes an analytical tool for text-based researchers wishing to operate with greater transparency, ethicality, and within 'objective' contexts. Utilising empirical data on the impact of subjectivity on meaning, the chapter offers an exemplative instantiation of subject-object participation in hermeneutic interpretation and conceptualisation (SOPHIC) that facilitates an ethical and reflexive design of research methodology and evaluation of findings.

To this end, the research questions guiding this chapter are:

1. How does subjectivity influence the interpretation and meaning of words and what impact could such influence have on text-based research claims?
2. How do text-based researchers address the problem of subjectivity in meaning and interpretation in their methodologies?

3. What signification grammatology could help researchers moderate (and explain) the influence of subjectivity on meaning and interpretation in their text-based research?

LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore these areas, this section reviews literature on subject-object interaction with particular emphasis on the import of that interaction on the meaning and interpretation of words (concepts, phrases, etc.) used in text-based research.

Subject-Object Debates: Reality vs Appearances

Philosophical debates concerning distinctions between reality and appearances have a long tradition from Plato to Kant. In the context of text-based research, such debates take on practical dimensions. Text-based researchers must decide to treat their object of study as either an entity in the world or as an interpreted mind-dependent construction. Indeed, the question all researchers should begin with is how to access a supposed stable reality when the *instruments of investigation* – language, concepts, interpretations to create research objectives, questionnaires, interview questions, etc. – are intrinsically subjective?

Researchers' and participants' subjectivity, often set in tension with the exigences of neutrality and objectivity, asks a central question to contemporary epistemology in the human and social sciences: can we truly access a "pure" meaning? One without any trace of the knowing subject? This interrogation calls for a radical reflexion on the very nature of knowledge, its production, its conditions of possibility, and especially its elusive character in a world saturated with interpretations.

Indeed, the ideology of objectivity, inherited from 19th-century positivism, has long dominated the scientific imagination. It assumes a clear separation between the subject (researcher) and the object (phenomena studied) that allows for a neutral, descriptive, and cumulative apprehension of the real (Come, 1848). To guarantee objectivity, positivist traditions prioritised methods that discounted the researcher's subjectivity and gave access to universality through generalisable results (Rockwell, 2011). However, the uncritical use of the processes and measures from this tradition received intense scrutiny particularly from critics working in hermeneutics, phenomenology and poststructuralist disciplines. Soon, different epistemological and theoretical perspectives from sociology and anthropology required the integration of subjectivity as a fundamental component of the research process (Devereux, 1977). Thereafter, the social science researcher was regularly interrogated at theorical and epistemological levels.

A key concern was how could such researchers continue to operate with conceptions of science and scientific knowledge that were assumed to be rooted in objectivity and understood as synonymous with neutrality (Cruz et al., 2012). Because in mistaking appearance for reality, subjectivity - defined as feelings, emotions, and intuitions shaped by persons' social contexts and interactions, the media they access, their culture and beliefs, and their social locations such as race, age, gender, etc. (Fisher et al., 2016; Schiffer, 2019; Sharp, 2020) - absolutizes acts of consciousness. Therefore, it raises the ethical questions of how much of the subject's intervention is in the research claims and if it is even possible for a researcher to be detached from them. Indeed, reality does not easily give itself. It is often reconstructed from a methodological invention. Subjects (individuals, actors, agents) elaborate versions of reality for themselves and for others in a process whose consequences change according to the discursive mechanisms that intervene between them and their interlocutors. This process permits projections and memories that make dialogue, a key aspect in qualitative research, possible (Cesca, 2013).

As Denzin and Lincoln (2012) note, subjectivity is generally acknowledged in qualitive research, particularly its impact on the interpretation of significations. Qualitative researchers are transparent about the codes, categories and themes they apply when interpreting text. Even when utilising software packages like NVivo, they take pains to set out the same as they move through transcripts and the like. As an epistemological position and a methodological orientation, qualitative research implies that knowledge construction can be realized from careful study of singularity and not through identification of regularities. Singularity refers to both the person interviewed and a singular researcher whose subjectivity participates in the construction of the object, e.g., the reality they speak of. This intertwined relationship between the subject and object of research is called implication. According to Derrida (1967), researchers can never situate themselves "outside" of their object. They are *implicated*, affected, and often blinded by their (socially, culturally, and temporal) learned conceptual schemes and semantic systems and these make ambiguity and nuance inescapable: hence the qualitative researcher's approach to coding, categorising and drawing themes out of the data they work with. In this space, knowledge, far from being transparent, emerges from power relationships and historical contradictions that determine what can be said, thought, and known.

However, subjectivity has also been a problematical theme often associated with two poles: either a Cartesian vision of the rational thinking subject or the idea that the subject is without epistemological value because it conspires against the objectivity of knowledge. Here, it is good to differentiate between subjectivity and the more extreme subjectivism. The former is a development of the human mind (feelings, emotions, beliefs, opinions) within cultural conditions. But the latter, akin to solipsism, is the position that knowledge objectivity is impossible; that there can only be

a *mind-dependent* truth and appearances that cannot be abstracted from lifeworld. Thus, for subjectivists, knowledge can never be independent of the human senses, and researchers' subjectivity *is* the meaning of their research (González Rey, 2017).

But recognising the challenge of determining a static meaning is not the same thing as claiming (as per subjectivists or solipsists) that research is impossible or without value. Rather, that it requires a more modest and reflexive epistemological posture. This posture, the "epistemology of doubt" if imbued with scepticism (Stengers, 1997) or "reflexive research" (cf. Bourdieu et al., 1921), invites researchers to perceive research as a space of questioning not of certitude. Researchers' and participants' subjectivity then become heuristic resources obliging researchers to explain the limits of knowledge in their research, i.e., to make visible their blind spots.

While making visible blind-spots does not equate to objectivity (that which is exterior and *mind-independent)*, it is a move *towards* it because it is an acknowledgment of the limitations of what becomes known through the research. Thus, it calls other researchers to investigate what was left uncovered and to go beyond their own subjectivities. Even when objectivity is described as situated 'between myth, exigence and ideal,' (Ouattara, 2017) or as 'discursive construction' (Barthes, 2004), it is understood or examined as such because of the shared nature of language and lexicons. The words, punctuations, grammatical rules etc. that have been agreed upon and communicated intersubjectively, and that make lexicographical clarity in research both possible and essential. Analytical norms (lexicographic, psychological, structural) are codes based on preexisting models, and objectivity itself is a model operating between appearance and reality because of the role of conceptual schemes and semantic systems in researchers' process *towards* knowledge.

Subject-Object and the Role of Conceptual Schemes and Semantic Systems in Interpretation

Conceptual schemes are cognitive structures through which people organize and interpret information. Graham (2018) suggests that these schemes form our hypotheses, and consequently, the way we approach research objects. Semantic systems, for their part, constitute mental networks of connected words, concepts and significations. Together, these elements profoundly influence how researchers and their participants build significations, and ultimately, their results. They are responsible for divergences of interpretation between participating individuals.

Indeed, linguistic interpretation is based on conceptual (or cognitive) schemes and semantic systems. They actively shape the signification of words. For Kant (2006), schemes serve as mediators between the categories of understanding and sensible intuitions; they allow the subject to organize and structure experience into recognizable forms. A *conceptual* scheme is therefore an abstract mental structure

that organizes knowledge around a theme or experience. For instance, the scheme of the concept 'conflict' can structure how a political debate or a tense social interaction is perceived. Therefore, when interpreting 'political debate' or 'tense social interaction' the concept 'conflict' is activated (perhaps in conjunction with other conceptual schemes, e.g., 'argument' 'resolution' etc.) in response to a perceived stimulus, *depending on the interpreter's cultural, cognitive or affective contexts* (Fillmore, 1982).

According to Johnson (1987), conceptual schemes are not merely linguistic. They emerge from our experience. For example, when researchers use the metaphor 'path' in relation to a career ('career path') or to a project ('the path of that project'), their corporeal experience of moving comes into play. Put simply, language mobilizes preconceptual structures to generate meaning, while conceptual schemes organize their cognition and semantic systems and frames how significations circulate within their given cultural universe.

By definition, a semantic system is a coherent and often normative set of significant relations that determine what can be said, thought or imagined within the user's culture (Eco, 1976). Indeed, language gives access to reality as it is perceived, processed and understood. Whereas linguistic meaning is a signification of an interlocutor's conceptual structure; the mental representations formed about reality. The conceptual structure emerges from corporeal experience of the world. Thus, semantic cognition arises from the relations between our corporal experience, our social experience and language.

In linguistic structuralism, particularly in Saussure (1971)'s work where a sign has value only from its difference from other signs in a language system, interpretation depends not on the intrinsic meaning of words, but on their position within a network of differential relations. Likewise with Greimas's (1966) framework which sees semantic analysis as based on deep structures such as binary oppositions organizing narratives, values and norms. These underlying semiotic structures guide interpretation, often unconsciously. Meaning is not automatically given, but rather produced through oppositional dynamics such as life/death, active/passive, sacred/profane, etc. Therefore, interpretation is a mediating act between internal (often subjective) cognitive schemes and shared (broadly objective) semantic systems. Interpretation is the use of mental structures to read cultural configurations. As Barthes (1970) or Ricoeur (1986) have shown, it is never neutral. Rather, it is embedded in relations of power, ideologies and social positioning. This thinking appears in contemporary cognitive sciences, for example, in Fauconnier and Turner (2002) who argue that meaning emerges from 'conceptual blending:' mental spaces fused by the mind (subjective) to generate new signification via normed language contexts (objective).

In sum, interpretation is based on mental structures (conceptual schemes) and sociohistorical signification networks (semantic systems). Interpretation is therefore

always situated, personified and mediated between subjectivity and objectivity. Defining interpretation as a simple decoding operation is ignoring the cognitive and cultural depth that renders meaning both intelligible and dynamic. Recognizing the complexity of meaning is an epistemological position that demands the type of reflexive hermeneutic being proposed in this chapter.

Impact of Subjectivity on Validity and Reliability in Text-Based Research: Poststructuralism, Reader-Response Criticism, and Deconstruction

Poststructuralism rejects the idea of a unique, stable and objectively accessible meaning in texts. Reader-response criticism and deconstruction go even further. Thinkers in these fields assert that the reader plays as active a role as the author in constructing meaning. If so, researchers' validation or reproduction of results becomes problematic. As the reader of the research instrument and the reader of a researcher's results are as active as the researcher in producing specific research claims. That is, for thinkers operating in the stated fields, there is an impossibility to analytic neutrality, to positivists' definitions of reliability and validity. Indeed, in text-based research, found in social and human sciences, literature, history, linguistics etc., the notions of validity and reliability are called into question from the moment the subjectivity of the researcher, the reader or the interpretant is recognized as irreducible.

Poststructuralists like Foucault (1971) and Derrida (1967) are radically removed from classical epistemologies that ground validity in semantic stability or reliability in reproducibility. For them, text, any text, does not contain intrinsic, stable and objectifiable meaning. Derrida's (1967) notion of language is marked by a differential play in which meaning is never totally given: it is always deferred and produced *in* difference. Thus, every reading is a rewriting and any claim of the validity of a textual truth is impossible. His infamous statement, 'there is nothing outside the text' (p. 227) indicates that interpretation never emerges from a neutral outside. It is, for Derrida, always a situated subjectivity. Textual validity is no longer the verification of a contained meaning. It is the critical *pertinence* of a reading: its capacity to open new perspectives and to enable its reader to see differently. In turn, reliability no longer refers to repeatability. Rather, it is argumentative coherence and the reflexive consciousness of one's assumptions.

In reader-response approaches, there is again emphasis on the active role of the reader in meaning. Fish (1980), for example, states that 'signification of a text is never independent of its readers, but is constituted by the interpretative strategies they mobilize,' (p. 2). Similarly, Jauss (1978) argues that each reader deploys a horizon of expectation formed by contexts, norms, and reading habits. Therefore,

text is no simple product. It is society's production. It rallies social, ethical and esthetical values and contributes to transforming and perpetuating society as it is.

In qualitive text-based research, the standards of validity and reliability cannot be transposed directly from experimental sciences. To this end, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose an alternative paradigm. A "naturalistic" method in which they offer alternative notions aligned to customary interpretative paradigms: i) credibility is the qualitative equivalent of internal validity and based on the *plausibility* of interpretations in light of context and data; ii) transferability is the possibility to apply the results to other similar contexts; iii) confirmability is the transparency in interpretative choices and recognition of bias; and iv) reliability is the stability of the methodological *process*, and not the results. Thus, researchers' and participants' subjectivity are epistemic resources recognized, documented and framed by a rigorous reflexive posture (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018).

In text-based research, subjectivity is neither a default nor an obstacle, but a foundational component of the interpretative process. Deconstructionist, hermeneutic and poststructuralist frameworks offer a fecund rereading of the notions of validity and reliability. These redefine themselves as pertinence, argumentative coherence, reflexivity, and critical impact. In this context, the researcher is no longer a neutral observer, but a producer of meaning that is situated, responsible and conscious of interpretative frameworks.

Possibility of Objectivity in Text-Based Research: Participation, Reason, and Ethics

Simply put, a certain form of objectivity can be achieved through the conscious participation of the research subject in the interpretative process. This participation entails an ethical and reflexive effort that recognizes the inherent biases it seeks to either limit, control, or make explicit. Reason becomes a framework for such participation and a means of subordinating interpretations to a discursive, transparent and shareable logic. Indeed, in social and human sciences, researcher objectivity is a tension between critical reason which ensures scientific rigor, and of interpretative ethics which recognizes the plurality of worlds and the responsibility of the interpreter. To reconcile true knowledge based on rational criteria, with a reflexive consciousness of interpretative limits and the power effects embedded in scientifical speech, it is useful to consider the ethical and epistemological conditions under which a researcher may arrive at a form of objectivity. This form is not absolute neutrality: it is rigor, reflexivity and responsibility in the production of meaning.

This view of objectivity differs from the rationalist tradition inherited from Descartes and extended to positivism. Rationalism and positivism conceive reason as the foundation of scientific objectivity. Bachelard (1938), for instance, has the

researcher overcome 'epistemological obstacles' to rationally *construct* experience. Reflection on the direct observation of an empirical fact leads to abstraction and the mathematisation of physical phenomenon; and this enables avoidance of the biases inherent in human nature. Objectivity, in this framework, is understood as methodological distancing based on experimentation, verification, and formal logic. However, as Dilthey (1942) argued, there is still a hermeneutics of meaning: an interpretation of actions, discourses, and representations, that are themselves bearers of significations. Thus, the object of recognition is already and intrinsically charged with subjectivity.

In Haraway (1988) the so-called neutrality of science masks power relationships and the model of pure objectivity is one that has been imposed by dominant groups, historically white men without marginalised experiences. She therefore reconceives objectivity as 'situated knowledge:' no longer an absolute omniscient view but a partial perspective consciously aware of its own position. More usefully, Weber (1992) proposes an objectivity based not on axiological neutrality, but on methodological clarity, argumentative coherence and explicit recognition of presuppositions. Researchers make visible their theoretical choices and interpretative categories and rationally justify them. Similarly, Bourdieu (2006) describes a 'participant objectivation' where the researcher faces the object by living in or among the experiences which the researcher intends to understand. Rockwell (2011) proposes an attitude of 'emotional control and consideration of unconscious effects' in the subject-object relationship, especially in ethnographical experience. Therefore participation – a concept with a philosophical history extending to Plato wherein particulars (e.g., a circle) *participate* in universals (e.g., the form of circle), or imperfect material objects *participate* in perfect immaterial forms – remains the interaction between the immaterial subjective and the experienced or observed object in the world which, in the case of persons, would also have an immaterial aspect. (Hence the interaction becomes intersubjective).

In all research involving human subjects, researchers exercise a power of nomination and interpretation. They attribute meaning, select, hierarchize, reformulate, etc. This invests them with ethical responsibility, not only towards the persons involved, but also towards the meaning they contribute to. Thus, interpretation must engage in an ethics of recognition (Ricoeur, 1990), because recognizing the other as a subject, is to admit that all meaning is partial, situated and revisable. The researcher must construct a provisional meaning that is argued for and then opened to discussion. Objectivity takes the form of this type of dialogical commitment. It is respect of sources, methodological transparency and listening to others. Derrida (1990) adds to this ethical posture the notion of 'hermeneutical justice' according to which all interpretation must answer for its effects. Thus, objectivity becomes an ethical vigilance on the power to interpret and the consciousness of exclusions.

Objectivity, then, is not given. It is a Kantian regulator ideal that guides the researcher's practice but is never completely reached. It requires a double posture of methodological rationality and hermeneutical responsibility and as Bourdieu (2001) insists, it emerges from the necessity of epistemological reflexivity. Only then can knowledge claim legitimacy. Not as absolute truth, but as responsible and rigorous research of meaning within a plural interpretative world. Objectivity therefore becomes an ethical and critical path at the heart of research.

Signification as Ethical Reasoning and Participation: Cohered Characteristics

Signification (meaning), therefore, is not the product of passive reading. Signification is an act of ethical and reflexive participation in which researchers are not external to their objects but are actively implicated in its construction. The SOPHIC model (Subject-Object Participation in Hermeneutical Interpretation and Conceptualisation) illustrates this implication and is a framework for integrating rigor, transparency and responsibility into text-based research.

From this optic, researchers' signification is a shared experience situated within an intersubjective framework and guided by an ethical aim. It is not merely the correspondence between signs and objects but a dialogical process and ethical commitment to right interpretation. It is codified, decontextualized, and analysable in relation to its uses. Indeed, pragmatic philosophy (Peirce, Dewey), phenomenology and hermeneutics (Heidegger, Gadamer) and interactional language sciences (Austin, Searle) have redefined meaning as a relational event. Hence why Heidegger's (1986) notion of subjectivity as being-in-the-world emphasises external influences while also arguing that to understand the meaning of a phenomenon is to be involved in it through the shared world of Dasein. Rather than an abstraction, signification is an action embedded within a horizon of comprehension. Thus, it is fundamentally participative and constituted by an open chain of interpretations wherein a sign signifies a *communal process* of interpretation.

In Bakhtine's (1977) dialogism and Benveniste's, (1974) theories of enunciation, each act of language is addressed to someone and is therefore a form of responsibility. Signification becomes what is said, understood, received, *and* reformulated in a space of ethical negotiation; and ethical reasoning is the capacity to consider the other as a co-interpreter by assessing the word-meanings against interpretations in relation to the ethicality (rightness) of research claims. This consideration of the other follows Levinas' (1990) position that 'language is the establishment of a relation with alterity, not merely the transmission of information' (p. 202). Therefore, to signify is to respond to a context, a responsibility. Words engage positions and place value on researchers' assumptions about the other and knowledge.

In sum, then, the cohered characteristics of signification as ethical reasoning and participation are as follows:

Table 1. Characteristics of Signification

Characteristic	Explanation
Contextuality	All signification is situated, dependent on enunciative context and on relationships between subject and object (Bakhtine, 1977; Austin, 1962).
Intersubjectivity	Meaning is co-built, produced through interpretative interaction (Gadamer, 1996).
Dialogical Responsibility	Understanding is answering the other, opening-up to the other's world (Levinas, 1990).
Undecidability	Meaning is always in process, never totally closed (Derrida, 1967).
Ethicality	Every act of signification is a manner of being in the world, a posture towards the other (Levinas, 1967, Merton, 1942).

Together, these characteristics may be described as a signification grammatology and an analytical tool for research that facilitates evaluation of the logical coherence or methodological work; its openness to alterity, its reflexivity and its capacity to articulate significations in the face of ethical challenges. By replacing signification with dynamic participation and ethical reasoning, classical epistemologies have been subordinated to more relational, dialogical and situated conceptions. This transformation invites researchers to reinterrogate the foundations of their interpretative methods and to conceive signification and knowledge as a co-elaboration imbued with responsibility. In this way, they become levers for more reflexive, open and ethically grounded 'objective' practices.

METHODOLOGY: INSTANTIATION OF SOPHIC MODEL

This chapter is predicated on small-scale exploratory research into if subjectivity impacts on meaning in the ways the above literature indicates, and if so, how any identified impacts can be mitigated with a more participatory, reflexive, and therefore ethical approach to research design, implementation and discussion. It took the form of mixed methods research addressing matters from the contexts of both respondents and researchers. The first, with a quantitative study (n=61 usable responses) that aimed to discover something 'objective' about the problem investigated. The second, with a bibliometric keyword study that sought to gain some basic insight into how authors of journal articles (n=5 because of the specificity of the exclusion and inclusion criteria) on text-based research acknowledge subjectivity

and 'the other' in their interrogations of their interpretative foundations, signification (meaning) and knowledge.

The discussion here is guided by the SOPHIC model, depicted below as circularity because each aspect of the research design informs and impacts the other as follows:

Figure 1. Subject-Object Participation for Hermeneutical Interpretation and Conceptualization (SOPHIC)
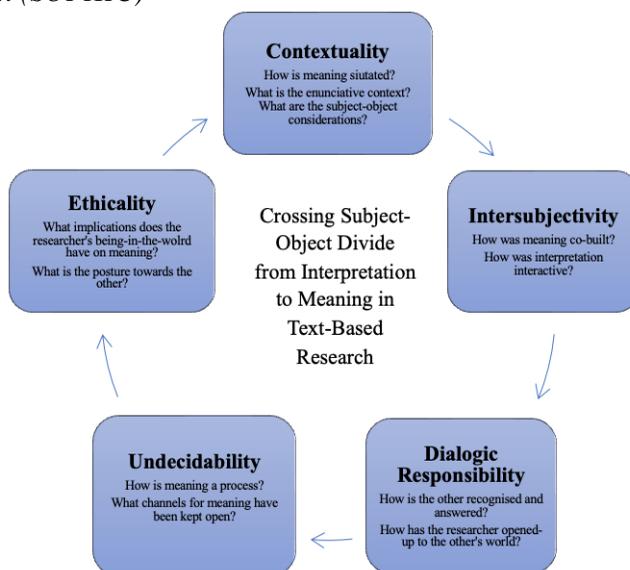
Contextuality

As Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004) and Clark (2019) have argued, mixed methods research enriches and reinforces interpretation as it allows the researcher to investigate the same phenomena from different angles. Citing Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989), they confirm that the mixed-methods approach helps researchers to extend the breadth and depth of their investigation. This type of extension was the aim of the mixed methods used for this chapter: and appropriately so, as the mixed methods provided access into the objective sphere (of respondents to the quantitative survey) and the subjective (of respondents' conceptual and semantical differences in the survey based on subjectivity filters): while, with the instantiated exemplification of SOPHIC model, prompting reflections on:

■ Signification (how meaning is situated)

- ■ Enunciative context (how the researchers' perspectival influence during the production of the research tools and collection of data is controlled)
- ■ Relevant subject-object considerations.

Signification is situated and grounded in a questionnaire survey and bibliometric keyword study. These are customary in business management and in social science research (Gougherty & Puentes, 2025). They are appropriate signification tools because their enunciative context and subject-object considerations are relevant. For example, a quantitative questionnaire survey was used to explore the 'objective' and real-world basis for the claims evaluated in the literature review about the inextricability of the subject from its object. To enable this, the questionnaire was designed to identify any link between words and the external influences on subjectivity highlighted by Fisher et al. (2016), Schiffer (2019), and Sharp (2020). Hence it is situated in the subject-object debate by design.

It was administered initially with a purposive sampling method and then with snowballing sampling. As the survey consisted of questions about specific words, concepts and phrases - 'sustainability,' 'fake news and disinformation,' 'freedom of speech,' 'globalisation,' 'poverty,' and 'children's rights,' - the researchers had to ensure that respondents were those likely to have utilised them in myriad and potentially complex contexts. Therefore, instead of placing the survey onto online platforms like Prolific or SurveyCircle where there would be more chance of reaching respondents with limited conceptual praxis, the researchers distributed the questionnaire among those actively involved with higher education institutions (students, professional staff, and academics) and in research, or professionally active across more than one country (business leaders and owners). They were asked to share the questionnaire with another person in their professional network. As Balter and Brunet (2012) note, used in the stated way, snowballing sampling offsets the selection bias associated with purposive sampling, and increases geographical breadth, giving access to those in otherwise 'hard to reach' areas. These considerations initiated an apropos subject-object participation.

Intersubjectivity

Here, the discussion pertains to how meaning was co-built, how it was produced through interpretative interaction. Aligning with Heidegger's (1986) concept of subjectivity as being-in-the-world, the first part of the survey asked about respondents' social location (gender, age, sexuality, occupation, education, neurodivergences), culture (books read, awareness of Western intellectual influences, media accessed), social contexts (family and friends), and beliefs (religion and politics), collectively

the "external influences" on subjectivity mentioned above. These were presented as multiple-choice questions to encourage faster response times.

Making room for and wishing to identify conceptual and semantical differences, the second part asked respondents to interpret well-known quotes from Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein who Carlson (2024) of *Academic Influence* ('a team of academics and data scientists working to provide an objective, non-gameable, influence-based ranking for the people, schools, and disciplinary programs that make up higher education') listed as among the most influential philosophers of all time. The quotes and philosophers used were interpretative choices but more important was for respondents to have (any) set of words to expound and so validate or not subject-object discourses on text meaning. Those used were chosen for their brevity (to limit response burden and time) and depth (to make room for variations in interpretations and so "open-up" the other). These aspects provide the conditions for the co-creation of meaning and deepen the enunciative context.

Dialogical Responsibility

The survey was administered online with a link to the questionnaire. To open-up both the researchers *and* the respondents to 'the other' (i.e., to encourage understanding of the issue being investigated) the survey's part 2 comprised semantic differential questions with a six-point rating scale (1 most closely matching respondent's understanding and 6 least closely matching respondent's understanding), i.e. with the neutral option removed so respondents make positive or negative decisions on their understanding of the options provided. As closed-ended semantic differential questions interpretative freedoms were reduced.

The options were the individual words, concepts and phrases, mentioned in 3.1. above. They appear in the United Nations' (2025) and the World Economic Forum's (2024) lists of key global issues. The definitions offered at each point in the scale were chosen from a range of popular and/or academic papers championing or critiquing the issues. While the definitions used were selected by the researchers so not without bias, the issues and definitions offered in the questionnaire all emerged from publications available in the global public domain and are appropriately mind-independent and with some 'objective' content. Indeed, drawing from published sources, both those supportive and critical, seems to align well with Ricoeur's (1990) notion of objectivity as dialogical commitment and Bourdieu's (2001) epistemological reflexivity as objectivating the researcher's analytical categories. Overall, the aim was to examine if and where agreement among respondents with similar external influences took place, or if any convergence between respondents was hopelessly arbitrary.

Processual Meaning

Within a mixed-methods approach, a (broadly) bibliometric keyword study was used to expand understanding of the topic from a researcher's perspective, as indeed the pursuit of meaning had to be opened to other researchers and with a view to value-checking the core argument of this chapter that the subject-object divide is insufficiently addressed by text-based researchers. As researchers work on complex issues with tight restrictions on word count and time, they often rely on readers to discern the nuance and implicitness of their arguments. To explicate their signification grammatology (e.g., SOPHIC-framework) may seem a low priority. But the argument in this chapter is that doing so is essential for the validity and axiology of text-based research. Thus, to verify that signification constitutes a potential axiological gap in text-based researchers' papers – and axiology in this context refers to the extent to which the researcher has achieved an objective exploration and interpretation in view of how participatory they have been in the research process, how reflexively they have prevented their own values and beliefs from affecting their interpretations; how and to what extent marginalised or disempowered voices have been considered; and how embedded the researcher has been in the discourses of their participants (to understand the role of power in participants' circumstances) - an 'objective' search of the ProQuest database (holding a variety of easily accessible high impact peer-reviewed articles on 'text-based research') took place. The process is depicted in the following PRISMA (adapted from Page et al., 2021).

Figure 2. Results of Bibliometric Search
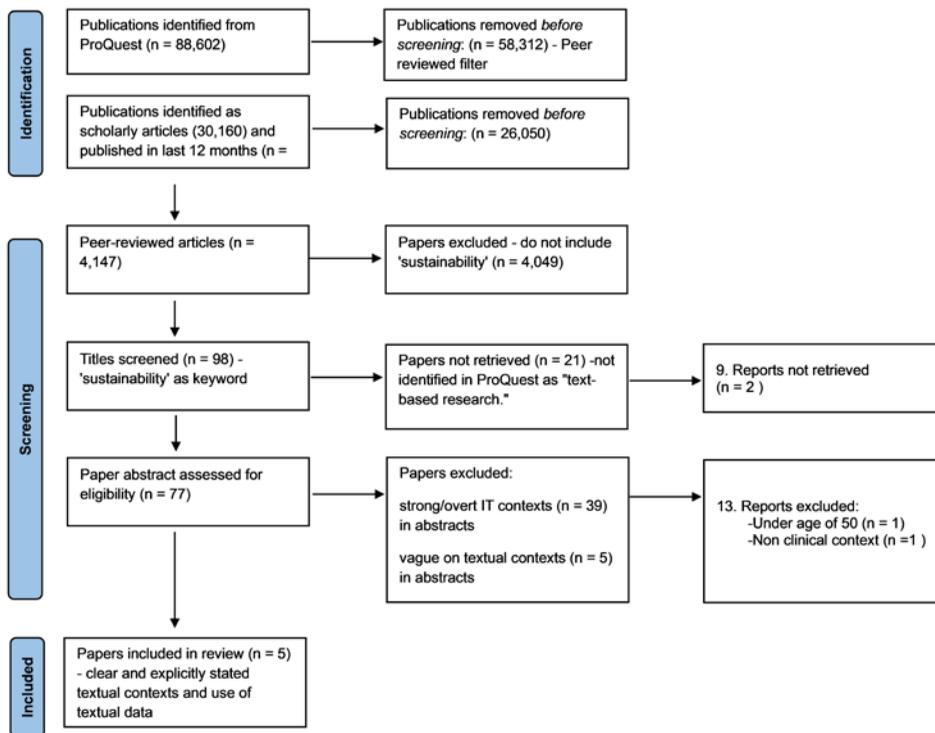
The specificity of the keyword 'sustainability' and of the 'text-based research' context, plus the requirement that this textual context be openly communicated within abstracts (so that readers are left without doubt over researchers' intention to interpret and derive meaning, understanding or insights, from printed/written words), explain the low number of included articles (see Table 2). This stated key-word limitation does not impede the value of the analysis as its aim is simply to offer a snapshot of the approaches used by the selected text-based researchers. Indeed, the long-standing argument against objectivity is that no matter how large a sample researchers may use, they will never have the complete picture; because they cannot realistically access every relevant individual or resource. Similarly, even if the fol-lowing table included 30 or 200 papers, would still need to be an acknowledgement that the picture about text-based research drawn from them will be incomplete. In view of this fundamental limitation, the papers used for this chapter are as follows:

Table 2. Papers Emerging from Text-Based Research

Name of Article	Author/s and Date
1. Evaluation of China's ESG Policy Texts Based on the "Instrument-Theme-Subject" Framework.	Liu and Ma (2025)
2. ESG Reporting in the Digital Era: Unveiling Public Sentiment and Engagement on YouTube.	Erokhin (2025)
3. Enablers and Policy Framework for Construction Waste Minimization Under Circular Economy: Stakeholder Perspectives.	Shahid and Ali (2025)
4. Remote Worker Communication Technology Use Related to Role Clarity, Coworker Support, and Work Overload.	Shin et al. (2025)
5. Environmental Education Through Eco-Literacy: Integrating Sustainability into English Language Teaching.	Kazazoglu (2025)

To reiterate, these resources are merely *indicative* of the approach to meaning in text-based research. They are not representative of all text-based research. Therefore, in terms of this chapter's claims, meaning as processual is acknowledged.

Ethicality

The questionnaire was piloted and subsequently adapted. Survey participants responded anonymously, and their responses were treated confidentially and with gratitude. Similarly, with the articles, a respectful stance towards the authors was adopted. The aim was not to criticise their approach, but to highlight the utility of the SOPHIC model which has emerged from an analysis of subject-object debates.

For space reasons, a basic descriptive analysis was applied to the surveys with this focused on the majority and on outliers, and what their differences signify. Contrastingly, a keyword analysis was applied to the articles (i.e., characteristics of the SOPHIC-framework). Subjective interpretation was moderated by careful reflexivity regarding the reception of the pertinence of the SOPHIC as a coordinated grammar of signification.

Limitations

There remains some dependence on Eurocentric notions of ethics in relation to the applied hermeneutics. While survey participants were located in different parts of the world, neither research findings nor the SOPHIC-framework should be perceived as a one-size fits all response to the subject-object problem. On the contrary, the framework is proposed as a heuristic device that, when mobilised, guides researchers' reflexivity on method and interpretative lens to validate meaning claims. In short, even with the SOPHIC-framework cultural nuances and, given the

complexities of human subjectivity, other individual differences remain potential destabilisers – as indeed, researchers are always limited by publishers' word counts and readers' patience with article lengths. But with its application, the scope for meaning and the value of the text-based research are clearer.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section, the findings from the mixed-methods research are presented and evaluated in relation to the three research questions posed in the chapter's introduction.

RQ1: How does subjectivity influence the interpretation and meaning of words and what impact could such influence have on text-based research claims?

The literature has already made a strong case for an inevitable variability of interpretation and meaning in text-based contexts but noted that meaning objectivity occurs through participation and ethical reasoning. The survey - exploratory, small-scale (usable n=61) and short-term - confirms this on two levels. First, that synergies of understanding are possible even when interpretative freedoms are encouraged and liberally given. Second, that meaning is indeed processual even for research participants.

In the first instance, where respondents were required to offer their own interpretations of brief quotes, their responses were varied but thematically consistent. For example, Kierkegaard's quote that 'life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards,' elicited many comments on how past affects future and the importance of reflecting on life experiences. But the reasons provided differed according to participants' lifeworld. Respondents demonstrating active hermeneutical participation (i.e., considering the ideas presented in the quote in terms of their life experiences, using their particular social contexts to understand and co-create meaning with the author) were those who found common ground with other respondents.

Therefore, the open questions were heuristic devices that confirmed that subjectivity influences and shapes meaning (González Rey, 2017). For example, a conservative atheist interpreted Kierkegaard as meaning that 'the choices we make and the actions we take continuously shape who we are and affect the course of our lives.' By contrast, a religious non-conformist interpreted him as, 'the driving force to life is projecting ourselves into the future — that is, to live with hope.' Both understood the connotation of 'future' in Kierkegaard's 'lived forwards' but the religious, in anticipated form, marks that future with hope.

This type of utilisation of subjectivity (what Derrida, 1967, would call a rewriting) was evident across all responses. A respondent with an international background read the Wittgensteinian quote that 'the limits of my language means the limits of my world,' as 'being able to speak more languages or having a wider vocabulary

means that we are more knowledgeable and wiser, and can both express as well as understand life much better;' presumably because of personal experience of muddling through an unfamiliar language in a new country. In this way Denzin and Lincoln's (2018) point that researchers' and participants' subjectivity are epistemic resources remains true and demands the reflexivity imbued in the SOPHIC-framework.

However, and in the second instance, where meaning prompts were provided, there was evident consistency and consonance. Indeed, the questionnaire gathered such rich data that explicating it would require another chapter and publication: hence why meaning is referred to as processual and incomplete. As the following chart shows respondents were mainly male (63%) and/or over 36 years of age (40% 36-45 with 40% being 46 years and over).

Figure 3. Respondents' Gender
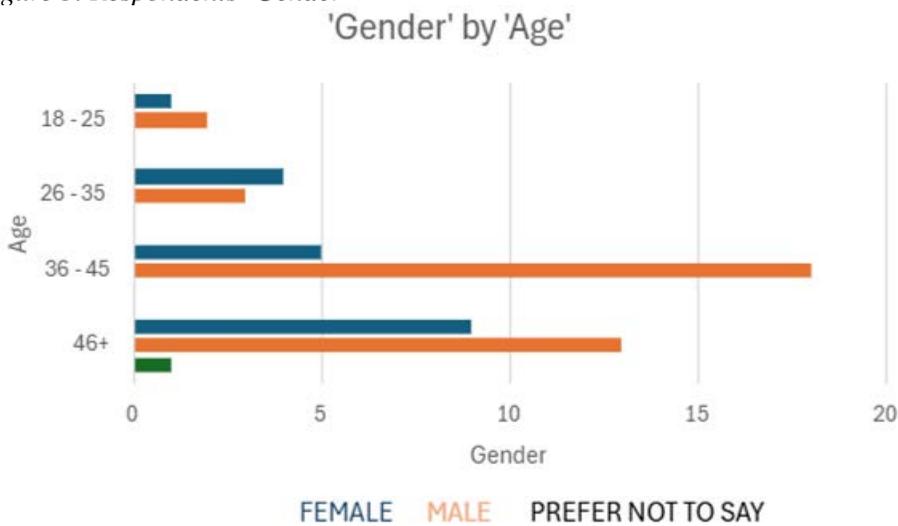
Most respondents were educated to postgraduate level, holding Masters' degrees (39%) or doctorates (42%) so it is reasonable to assume that some are active researchers. Therefore, their responses have the dual purpose of providing a snapshot of differences or consensus in meaning in general, and *among researchers leading their own investigations*. Regarding impediments to meaning, very few reported neurodivergent differences (5% equally with dyslexia or ADHD and 2% with Autism). Curiously, as the next chart shows, the majority considered themselves religious (74%) but without any or with 'other' specific political leanings (39%).

Figure 4. Respondents' Political Stances
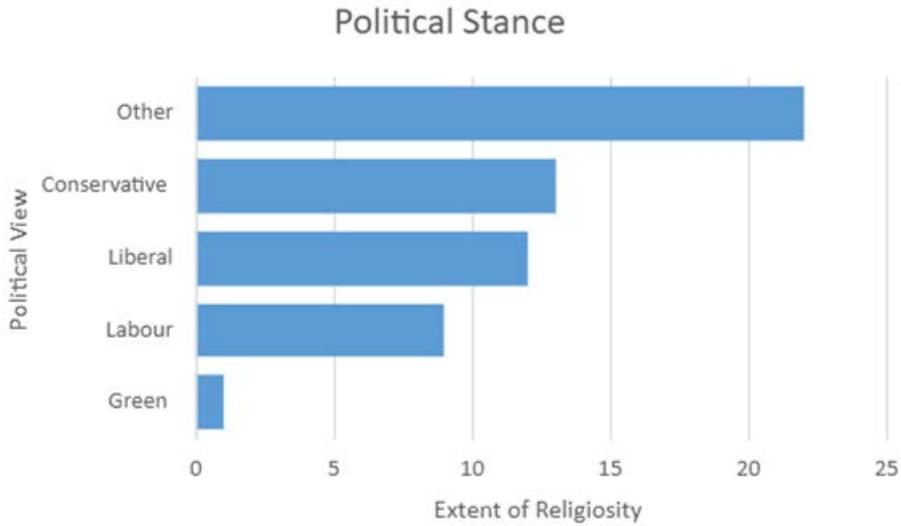
Indeed, the more religious respondents appeared, the least political they were - except for those identifying as conservative (23%) as they also self-identified as religious.

Many (24%), especially those connected to the UK, had cosmopolitan experiences, being born in one country and subsequently living and/or working in one or more other country including Vietnam, Hong Kong, Nepal, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Netherlands, Pakistan, Mauritius and Ivory Coast. However, as the diagram below shows, most participants had international backgrounds and/or were internationally located (i.e., not only based in the UK).

Figure 5. International Respondents

Nevertheless, when asked to name the "intellectual giant" of all time there was a curious congruence. Despite the explicit instruction that the named person could be from any culture or time, and contrary to Haraway's (1988) notion of situated knowledge, those offered were primarily white male philosophers (Plato, Augustine, Kant, Aristotle, Aquinas), scientists (Einstein, Newton, Hawking), writers (Dostoyevsky, Dante, Voltaire and Marcel), and De Vinci, the artist. Many of these correspond to the thinkers mentioned in the previous question where participants were asked to indicate if they had read the works of some key thinkers or were familiar with their names/works.

The correspondence highlights the reality of the phenomenon of suggestiveness, especially within this context of intellectual knowledge. This finding emphasises the importance of researchers' stance of reflexive epistemology (Stengers, 1997) especially when designing research instruments: an important, though not new, reminder. Interestingly, however, God, Jesus, and the Prophet Muhammed were mentioned by those with international backgrounds who self-identified as religious. The implication is that travelling and, contrary to populist notions, religion encourages freedom of thought. The latter instance is confirmed by the only two respondents (from UK and Ivory Coast/Burkina Faso) identifying as religious, who offered "left-field" names - Ava DuVernay (US filmmaker and the only female mentioned) and Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Burkinabé historian and politician).

Among UK respondents, where there was agreement on a question (and agreement was evident in two sets, representing 30% and 40% of UK respondents) that

268

agreement could follow through to other questions around 72% of the time (56% among the first group). Recall that for each question, respondents had six opportunities to align given words to their concept, so there were thirty-six opportunities for inconsistencies to be revealed. Therefore, the identified agreements are significant. More because they correspond with their reading and viewing material (e.g., news stories, gossip magazines, etc.), the frequency with which they were accessed, and agreement (60%) on their religiosity (agnostic), rather than with the respondents' education, gender, or familial contexts.

This finding ostensibly confirms Graham's (2018) insistence on the import of conceptual schemes on meaning and Johnson's (1987) on how experience forms those schemes and semantic systems. The finding also suggests uniformity in the thinking of (UK) agnostics. Surprisingly, there was no discernible consensus amongst those aged 18-25.

Those of international contexts in agreement, who identified as religious and had similar familial contexts, tended to have more diversity in their reading and viewing choices. Yet they generally agreed on the primary senses of the notions they were questioned on. This conformity to a concept's core or dictionary definition suggests that this group is literal or uncritical. But not always, as conceptual stabilisers differed across their cultures and/or the countries lived and/or worked in. By contrast, respondents from Burkina Faso were consistent on word senses, but their consistency did not always follow across from sense to sense, i.e. those agreeing on primary senses were not the same set agreeing on secondary or other senses.

Predictably, education is a stabiliser of meaning. For example, the question on sustainability asked respondents to indicate their agreement with the offered senses (taken from papers and general definitions on sustainability) by ordering their relevance 1 (most) to 6 (least). As the following diagram shows, doctorate holders agreed on a conception of sustainability that deviates from the literal, i.e., as 'eliminating poverty.' This agreement reduced with the lowering of education levels and thus confirms education as the meaning stabiliser, *in this particular instance*, especially insofar as those responding have access to the concepts.

Figure 6. Evidence of Stability
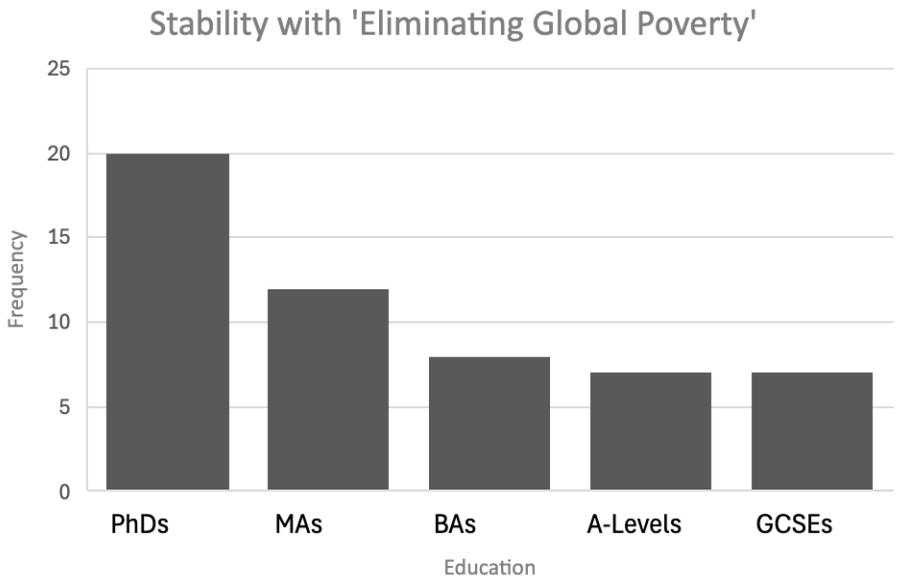
Those who agreed on the *primary and secondary* sense of 'sustainability' (53%) did not always converge on the primary senses of other concepts. They were from differing genders, religious and political views, and with ages ranging from 18 to over 46. However, the majority were educated to postgraduate level (88%) and as the chart below shows, there was commonality on their reading.

Figure 7. Reading Materials of Male Respondents

Preferred Reading Material: Males
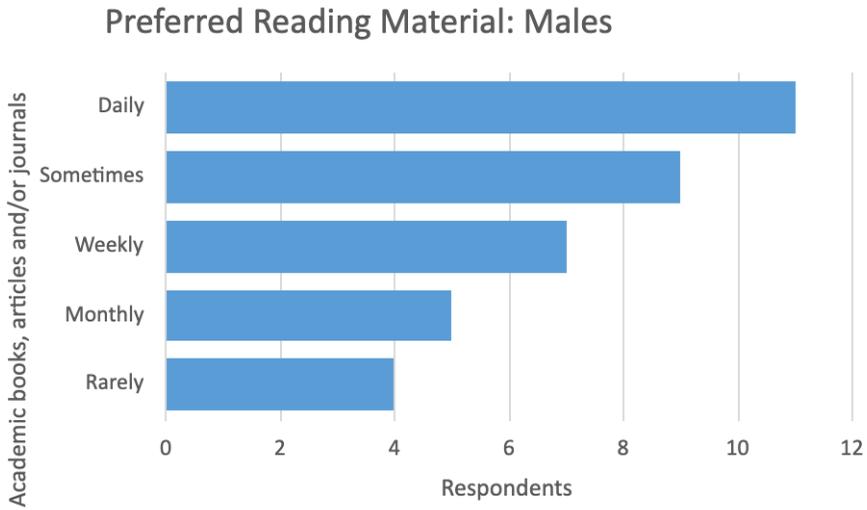
Among these avid readers, there is more agreement with the primary sense of 'globalisation' than with the more abstract 'poverty,' 'freedom of speech' or 'children's rights.' Therefore, again, reading and education explain the group's identified stability/instability, with higher levels of education implying that respondents hold complex conceptual schemes and have more awareness of academic notions. Indeed, the concepts prevalent within academia ('globalisation,' 'sustainability') stabilised meaning more than other characteristics.

By contrast, and as depicted in the chart below, females' daily reading materials are newspapers and articles (whereas the one respondent who opted out of identifying as male, female, or non-binary read 'sometimes'). This group were less likely to agree across all concepts and senses. They were also more diverse in age, friendship and familial relations, mixing with educated and uneducated, wealthy and not.

Figure 8. Reading Material of Female Respondents

Preferred Reading Material: Females
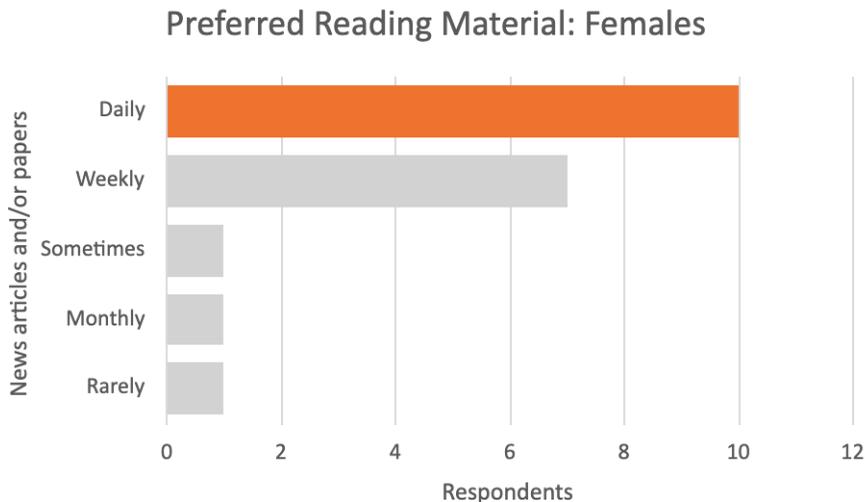
Despite the above examples of congruences, the disparities among respondents on the meaning of quite familiar terms cannot be overlooked. More so when the deeper senses (indicative of semantic systems) come into play. Crucially, this depth, and what would reveal more about a person's consciousness in relation to semantic processing (meaning-making) is what text-based researchers should be more interested in. For instance, the question 'how involved are you in sustainability efforts' could receive a 'very involved' response, however 19% defined sustainability as 'eliminating global poverty' whereas 28% defined it as 'maintained at a certain level.' Clearly, then 'very involved' is likely to be profoundly misleading. Likewise with the secondary sense of 'globalisation' with 18% defining globalisation as 'global prosperity' and 12% as 'exploitation by the West.'

Similarly, 28% put the *third* sense of 'freedom of speech' as 'truth' but another 28% had the third sense as 'hate filled rhetoric.' But they appeared *to agree* that it was necessary for democracy and for a collective search for knowledge and truth. This contradiction would be difficult to isolate in a standard questionnaire (or dialogic qualitative interview) asking if there should be freedom of speech as both groups would say yes; but by one set's conception that is yes also to hate filled rhetoric. So here there is evidence that the researcher working with words, especially those conceptually rooted, will without appropriate measures, elicit appearances of congruence and consistency, rather than objective reality as it is.

These findings, recurring across all questions, reiterates an understanding of research meaning as processual even for participants (and recalling that many of the participants in this study are likely to be researchers). Following Cruz et al (2012),

quantitative researchers operating with a concept of objectivity as neutrality, must demonstrate epistemological reflexivity more so than mixed-methods researchers who are likely to broaden their understanding of the issue they investigate, e.g., from a questionnaire through to exploratory semi-structured interviews. As reality does not easily give itself, the onus is on the researcher making claims about it, to identify where and how to engage with respondents in a less subjective sphere, e.g., through definition of terms for lexicon and lexicogrammatical stability and with a determination of a signification baseline.

RQ2: How do text-based researchers address the problem of subjectivity in meaning and interpretation in their methodologies?

This research question seeks an understanding of the attention given to the subject-object divide in text-based research. The papers (n=5) used for this analysis were identified through a relatively 'objective' and transparent approach that resulted in a small but, given space considerations, manageable sample. The table shows the key areas that the papers were analysed on. The analysis was thematic: and the themes were aligned to the categories offered earlier in section 2 as the cohered characteristics of signification. The codes (keywords), categories, and themes applied are as follows:

Table 3. Approach to Analysis of Text-Based Research Papers

Area	Key Questions	Codes	Categories (Signification Grammar)	Themes
A	Has the researcher addressed the subject-object divide regarding meaning and interpretation?	Subject-object divide Subjectivity Objectivity	**SOPHIC-1**	**Contextuality**
B	Is there context on how meaning is stabilised through the research process and how understanding and meaning is shared between the researcher and respondent?	Meaning stability Meaning discovery	**SOPHIC-2**	**Intersubjectivity**
C	Is the other's difference recognised and addressed for its effect on meaning stability and regarding axiology?	Meaning instability Meaning making	**SOPHIC-3**	**Dialogic Responsibility**
D	Is meaning stability demarcated and is meaning acknowledged as processual?	Processual meaning	**SOPHIC-4**	**Undecidability**
E	Is the researcher's being-in-the-text responsibly addressed, and in relation to any impacts on meaning stability? What is the overall value of the research given the researchers' approach and the ethical principles in play?	Researcher reflexivity Researcher co-construction	**SOPHIC-5**	**Ethicality**

The analysis focused on *only* the methodologies and methods outlined in the papers, with the rationale being that methodological sections or discussions hold, or should hold, justifications for the approach taken and indications, therefore, of the reliability, validity and overall value of the research. Admittedly, the above codes are not the only way to speak about the obfuscatory role that subjectivity has for meaning and knowledge in textual contexts. Therefore, the accompanying questions, categories and themes (all emerging from literature) facilitate a more considered and focused audit of the identified papers, especially with regards to if the subject-object issues pertinent to the meaning and interpretation of data have been explicitly acknowledged and an approach to them, legitimised. The outcome of this audit is summarised in the following table:

Table 4. Initial Findings from Papers

Area	1 Liu and Ma (2025)	2 Erokhin (2025)	3 Shahid and Ali (2025)	4 Shin et al. (2025)	5 Kazazoglu (2025)
A	States that 'qualitative-based analysis methods in policy research' do not have the same rigour as their own 'multidimensional' approach. No explicit mention of the stated codes/ themes. Context (Environment, Society, Governance (ESG) in China) is provided but not its bearing on meaning and interpretation.	Acknowledges and reflects on seven biases (see below) but commentary accompanying this reflection makes no, or limited, implicit or overt references to the above codes or themes beyond the obvious outline of the research context; a must in any research paper. Context is set out clearly.	No reflection in this area. No clear or implied references to the stated codes or themes. Brief consideration of methodology and methods. Context is sufficiently outlined but without indications of bearing on meaning and interpretation.	No reflection on meaning. Full emphasis on how the online survey was approached and how analysed with only brief mention of the inclusion of open-ended questions thus confirming this as text-based. Context is clearly outlined but not in relation to meaning and interpretation.	Context is clearly set out but not in relation to meaning or interpretation.
B	Content analysis (for specific phenomena), Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) for semantic analysis, and social network analysis (for characteristics of social networks) for multidimensional, quantitative investigation into policy texts – described as rigorous and systematic. No appearance of the above codes or themes, i.e., these are not addressed/ validated by the rigour set-out. Meaning as discovered is presented, it seems, as self-evident.	Digital tools and statistical methods in use for the transcription, extraction and analysis of the data. Also, use of OpenAI's GPT-4o-mini model which is described as natural language processing tool used to assess the text to include 'sentiment analysis' but no discourse on AI's inability to speak to human emotion, empathy, etc. distorting or affecting meaning and interpretation. Statistical analyses and correlations applied to 5060 individual comments described as 'raw text.'	Saunders' et al. (2019, cited in Shahid and Ali, 2025) research onion is relied on to communicate research coherence. Clear effort to ensure the right people are spoken to - even if identified through purposive and snowballing sampling.	Mention of safeguards put in place to ensure data validity (e.g. blocking multiple attempts from the same IP address, requiring a 90% MTurk approval rating, screening questions, and use of open questions and attention checks). Appears to take the world, reality and meaning as discoverable.	Uses a pre-test and post-test design; uses SPSS for quantitative data and puts emphasis on the systematicity of the analysis of the qualitative (textual) data.

Table 4. Continued

Area	1 Liu and Ma (2025)	2 Erokhin (2025)	3 Shahid and Ali (2025)	4 Shin et al. (2025)	5 Kazazoglu (2025)
C	'The other' is implied through the mention and analysis of social networks. No appearance of the above codes or themes.	No mention of alterity or of meaning instability. Nonetheless, there is stated awareness that the OpenAI model relied on may overlook linguistic nuances, cultural references, humour and/or emotional cues. However, no consideration of how this possibility is mitigated against.	Despite taking an interpretivist and abductive approach, and utilising non-probabilistic sampling methods, biases are brushed aside and there is no clear consideration of meaning instability or meaning making.	No clear mention or acknowledgement of the relevant codes and themes.	No overt mention of the above codes or themes although very heavily text-based and highly dependent on conceptualisations and their interpretations. No discourse on assumptions about reality, knowledge, meaning, etc. or how differences impact on perceptions.
D	NVivo, inductive logic, and grounded theory in use and these are processual by nature. But that they are so, is not stated.	Limited evidence of the stated codes and themes in this domain.	Limited evidence of the stated codes and themes in this domain.	Limited evidence of the stated codes and themes in this domain.	Limited evidence of the stated codes and themes in this domain.
E	Researcher's being-in-the-text is not explained or justified in relation to ethics or posture towards the other. Mention of 'inductive logic' but this mention is brushed aside by an emphasis on rigor, systematicity, the LDA and NVivo applications, and the formulas applied.	Acknowledgement and reflection on a range of biases but none are attributed directly to the researcher or to the ethical principles guiding the analysis or posture towards the other. Mention of keyword and query limitations imply the researcher's bias (as the owner of the keywords and query term).	Limited (as in implied) if any acknowledgement of the researchers' being-in-the-text, or to the ethical principles guiding their analysis or posture towards the other.	Limited (as in implied) if any acknowledgement of the researchers' being-in-the-text, or to the ethical principles guiding their analysis or posture towards the other.	Limited (as in implied) if any acknowledgement of the researcher's being-in-the-text, or to the ethical principles guiding the analysis or posture towards the other.

The findings in the above table are not intended as a critique. Rather, they are an acknowledgement that while text-based research is vital to the exploration of reality and discovery of new knowledge, its complexities are underappreciated: and to the extent that textual data is treated in the same way as any other type of data. As shown above, more emphasis is put on the statistical methods and software used – e.g., NVivo is utilised in Liu and Ma's (2025) paper and Erokhin (2025) uses OpenAI and reflects on biases – and on the objectification of findings that

these tools allow. However, the authors of these papers overlook the inherent cultural, gender, and racial biases in AI-powered (and this can include NVivo) tools and the fact that they tend to be very much Western and/or Anglo-American and/or Eurocentric in their interpretations (UNESCO, 2024; Hardesty, 2018) because they are 'trained' by employees in these contexts. Nonetheless, these papers (1&2) do show some movement toward the other and like the remaining papers, there is clear effort to be open to participants' worlds and experiences. However, there is limited consideration of how/why that world or those experiences may be closed to the researchers because of their text-based approaches.

The possibility of the instability of their findings (because of the subject-object divide) is only insinuated by their mention of 'bias,' 'inductive logic,' 'interpretivists' etc. Indeed, there is little evidence in all texts that conceptual blending, participants' and researchers' differences, or following Saussure (1971), how the variances between individual participants' adherence to grammatical rule (*langue*) in formal contexts and their informal language use (*parole*), could restrict epistemological success and/or the validity of any claimed stability or objectivity. By contrast, there is strong evidence that all the authors of the above papers assume that reality and meaning are given.

These papers are peer-reviewed scholarly discussions and the omissions highlighted above have emerged from, and are recurrences in, the research practices of their respective fields. Their positivistic approaches to data analysis (even while seeing themselves working in an interpretivist paradigm) and the significance they place on methods of data analysis, give the impression of objectivity and therefore relevance. However, because of the textual contexts that they are rooted in, the analysed papers should give more space to the role that language plays in limiting (or granting) access to the reality that they want to reveal. Put simply, in view of the literature, when researchers work primarily or fundamentally in textuality, their methodologies must be legitimated by their capacities to overcome the subject-object divide.

RQ3: What signification grammatology could help researchers moderate (and explain) the influence of subjectivity on meaning and interpretation in their text-based research?

The review of literature recommended the elements collated and presented as the SOPHIC model. Empirical research findings reveal that meaning stability can occur amongst those of the same gender, political stance, religion, culture, education, etc., *and* that any identified stability is fragile. Additionally, the bibliometric study has shown that researchers working in textual contexts are not (in methodologies) sufficiently attentive to the subject-object divide and/or communicative about how its capacity to destabilise the validity and reliability of the research has been moderated. Together, these three layers of analysis confirm that having a structured

model of signification could prompt researchers working with text to incorporate subject-object participation into their research design and methodologies.

Accordingly, the SOPHIC-model is proposed as a useful tool for ensuring that subject-object participation is considered when designing, explaining and justifying text-based research. Earlier, this model was depicted as circular because it had a bearing on all parts of the research and was fluid, start to finish to start again. However, following the analyses above, it is clear that the model is better depicted as processual, with each aspect having its own axiological value determined *by the extent to which a baseline of conceptual scheme and semantic network among participants* and *researchers has been determined*. The type of rating approach employed for this chapter can be recommended (see section 3) for this, and text-based researchers are encouraged to establish and communicate conceptualisations and semantic networks by utilising the following:

- Pre-interview questionnaires before semi-structured interviews to establish participants' conceptual schemes and semantic networks, mapped and appended.
- Conceptual and semantic checks in questionnaire surveys and appended mapping document.
- Researchers' conceptions and semantic networks as relevant to their analysis of other textual materials (journals, quotes, feedback cards, etc.) mapped and appended.

This type of rationalisation of meaning as it applies to interpretation in research should facilitate data analyses produced through SPSS, NVivo and the like. As indicated above, these tools do not devalue the relevance of the SOPHIC framework because the framework is not focused on the tools used for data analysis. On the contrary, it is concerned with the explication and justification of methodological and *analytical choices*, especially how the said choices control and limit bias in interpretation. Ultimately, the SOPHIC-model will permit more responsible and authentic subject-object dialogue and thus promote signification. Text-based researchers putting together the written document about their research and its findings should consider the following practical steps:

Table 5. Practical Application of the SOPHIC-Model as Signification Grammatology

Step	Theme	Stage of Research Design and/or Section of Research Paper	Questions to Answer
1	Contextuality	Context and Introduction	What are the dimensions of the subject-object issue? What are researchers' assumptions or positions about the subject-object divide and how visible will they be in the research design? What is the role and extent of subject-object participation in the research and how can any participation conform meaning?
2	Intersubjectivity	Selection and design of research instruments Methodology	How is meaning stabilised in the text-based research and was meaning instability among participants or between participants and researchers identified and managed? What process was used to establish a baseline of meaning? What is the position on meaning in the research - is meaning co-created, processual, discovered? What interpretative controls were used in research instruments and in data collection?
3	Dialogic Responsibility	Selection of hermeneutic lens and data analysis tools Data Analysis	How are data analysis methods illustrative of dialogic responsibility and the extent of researcher reflexivity? What communicative significance is given to the various voices in the data to be presented? How are communicative significances addressed though any AI-powered data analysis software used, especially in relation to discernment of human aspects such as empathy, creativity, judgment, humour, collaboration; or cultural, gender or racial biases?
4	Undecidability	Findings	How stable and pertinent are findings and why are they so? How and why coherent?
5	Ethicality	Conclusions	In relation to researcher responsibility, ethical principles and approach to meaning (as co-created, processual or discovered), where in the research is value situated? How much of that value is predicated on the data obtained through text-based methods, tools, materials. Why does the identified value apply to the overall contribution of the research?

Evaluation of Findings

The above findings show that because text-based research is predicated on participants' concepts, there is a significant possibility that unrecognised or unacknowledged interpretative differences among participants and between them and researchers devalue research claims; especially when insufficient attention has been given to the subject-object divide problematising signification and meaning stability in the methodology. Chapter findings confirm this as they show areas of both meaning agreement and disagreement and text-based researchers' inattentiveness to the subject-object divide when justifying their methodologies. By Lincoln and

Guba's (1985) naturalistic (imitative of real life) paradigm they are credible because they are internally coherent and based on the *plausibility* of interpretations. They are also reliable because of the stability of the methodological *process.* Following Derrida's notion of implication, because the discussion is pertinent, it is also valid. Moreover, its alignment with an international body of literature ensures its reliability. More because of the reflexive stance in its research design and its visible attempt to consider alterity, to listen to 'the other.'

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of this chapter has progressively justified its relevance. The "gap" between subject and object, long inherited from a positivist tradition, has proven to be less of an impassable abyss, more a dynamic space of negotiation where participation and ethical reasoning play a central role. The research findings show that the transition "from interpretation to meaning" cannot be achieved without acknowledging the subjectivity of all involved. The title of the chapter therefore finds its full legitimacy: this passage is not linear, but constitutes a crossing that demands a reflexive, critical and dialogical posture that is supported by the pragmatics of establishing a baseline meaning among and between researchers and research participants.

In this process, the proposed SOPHIC-framework is a decisive contribution. Its value resides in its capacity to articulate participation, subjectivity and an ethical dimension within a unified conceptual structure. By integrating hermeneutical, critical and practical dimensions, it offers an analytical grid that transcends the habitual divide between the social sciences and the humanities. Concretely, the model is relevant because it promotes not only the comprehension of interpretive processes, but also their transformation into actions or practical orientations. It makes visible the situated, contextual and dialogical character of knowledge production, and can thus be mobilized as follows:

- A training tool for novice text-based researchers.
- A methodological reference in the elaboration of doctoral theses.
- A theoretical framework for large-scale text-based projects.

The scope of the model nevertheless calls for a certain exigence in scientific production. Rather than limiting themselves to fragmentary contributions or short articles, it is important to invest in substantial research: e.g., doctoral theses that explore the robustness of the model in various empirical contexts, in-depth monographs, or articles published in peer-reviewed international journals that can foster sustained academic dialogue. Such contributions are necessary to consolidate the

external validity of the model and to show its fertility beyond a single disciplinary field.

However, its limitations must be recognized. The SOPHIC-framework, in its ambitions to integrate ethicality into hermeneutical dimensions, remains dependent on the cultural contexts in which it is applied. It does not offer a universal solution to the subject-object relationship but rather proposes a heuristic orientation. Moreover, the mobilisation of the model requires a high degree of reflexivity on the part of the researcher; one that is not easy to cultivate or institutionalize. Lastly, the risk of interpretive circularity remains. While assumed subjectivity may strengthen the meaning produced, it may also fragilize the pretention to generalisable validity.

Nonetheless, overall, this chapter is strongly poietic. It does not merely describe or critique but seeks to "bring forth" new ways of thinking and practicing text-based research. Whereas other chapters focus on exposing the state of the art or refining theories, this one creates an unprecedented space at the intersection of interpretation, meaning and ethics. *Poiesis* manifests here as an openness: the elaboration of the SOPHIC-framework, the call for more exigent and interdisciplinary research practices, and the recognition of limits that stimulate rather than hinder reflection. Crossing the "great divide" between subject and object thus becomes a creative, generative enterprise, which invites reformulations to the role of the researcher and the very purpose of knowledge itself.

REFERENCES

Alamri, A., & Stevenson, M. (2016). A Corpus of Potentially Contradictory Research Claims from Cardiovascular Research Abstracts. *Journal of Biomedical Semantics*, *7*(36), 36. DOI: 10.1186/s13326-016-0083-z PMID: 27267226

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Clarendon Press.

Bachelard, G. (1938). *La Formation de L'Esprit Scientifique*. Vrin.

Bakhtine, M. (1977). *Esthétique de la Création Verbale* (Todorov, T., Ed.). Gallimard.

Barthes, R. (1970). *S/Z*. Seuil.

Barthes, R. (2004). *Crítica y Verdad*. Siglo XXI.

Benson, P. (2014, May 5th). 'Derrida on Language.' *Philosophy Now*. https://philosophynow.org/issues/100/Derrida_On_Language

Benveniste, É. (1974). *Problèmes de Linguistique Générale* (Vol. II). Gallimard.

Bourdieu et al, P. (1921). *Le Métier de Sociologue: Préalables Épistémologiques.* EHESS.

Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Science de la Science et Réflexivité*. Raisons d'Agir.

Bourdieu, P. (2006). La Objetivación Participante. *Apuntes de Investigación del CECYP.*, (10), 87–101.

Carlson, B. (2024, August 9th). 'The 25 Most Influential Philosophers of All Time.' *Academic Influence*. https://academicinfluence.com/inflection/study-guides/most-influential-philosophers-study-starter

Cesca, P. (2013, 15 de 6). *Compromiso Subjetivo y ético del Investigador Durante el Trabajo de Campo*. Odiseo.

Clark, V. (2019). Meaning Integration with Mixed Methods Study: Identifying Why, What, When and How. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *57*(April), 106–111. DOI: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.01.007

Cruz, , Reyes, M. J., & Cornejo, M. (2012). Conocimiento Situado y el Problema de la Subjetividad del Investigador/a. *Cinta de Moebio*, *45*(45), 253–274. DOI: 10.4067/S0717-554X2012000300005

Culler, J. (2008). *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315782805

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2012). *El Campo de la Investigación Cualitativa*. Gedisa.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Derrida, J. (1967). *De la Grammatologie*. Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, J. (1990). *Force de Loi. Le Fondement Mystique de l'Autorité*. Galilée.

Devereux, G. (1977). *De la Ansiedad al método en las Ciencias del Comportamiento*. Siglo XXI.

Dilthey, W. (1942). *Introduction aux Sciences de L'Esprit* (Téevenot, R., Trans.). Vrin.

Eco, U. (1976). *A Theory of Semiotics*. IUP.

Erokhin, D. (2025). ESG Reporting in the Digital Era: Unveiling Public Sentiment and Engagement on YouTube. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(15), 7039. DOI: 10.3390/su17157039

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. Basic Books.

Fillmore, C. J. (1982). 'Frame Semantics.' Ed. *Linguistic Society of Korea. Linguistics in the Morning.* Hanshin. pp111–137.

Fish, S. (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. HUP.

Fisher, M., Knobe, J., Strickland, B., & Keila, F. (2016, August 8th). 'The Influence of Social Interaction on Intuitions of Objectivity and Subjectivity.' *Cognitive Science*. https://cogdevlab.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Fisher_et_al-2016-Cognitive _Science.pdf

Foucault, M. (1971). *L'ordre du Discours*. Gallimard.

Frege, G. (1993). 'On Sense and Reference.' A.W. Moore. Ed. *Meaning and Reference*. OUP. p23-42.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1996). *Vérité et Méthode* (Grondin, J., & Ladmiral, J. R., Trans.). Seuil.

González Rey, F. (2017). The topic of subjectivity in psychology: Contradictions, paths and new alternatives. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *47*(4), 502–521. DOI: 10.1111/jtsb.12144

Gougherty, M., & Puentes, J. (2025). Sociology in Everyday Life: An Equity Lens. Open Oregon Educational Resources / Lulu.com. ISBN 9781636351001.

Graham, A. C. (2018). *Conceptual Schemes and Linguistic Relativism in Relation to Chinese'. Philosophy of Language, Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy*. Brill., DOI: 10.1163/9789004368446_009

Greimas, A. J. (1966). *Sémantique Structurale: Recherche de Méthode*. Larousse.

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599. DOI: 10.2307/3178066

Hardesty, L. (2018, February 11). 'Study Finds Gender and Skin-Type Bias in Commercial Artificial-Intelligence Systems.' *MIT News*. https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-finds-gender-skin-type-bias-artificial-intelligence-systems-0212

Harland, R. (1987). *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism*. Methuen.

Heidegger, M. (1986). *Être et Temps* (Boehm, R., & Préau, A., Trans.). Gallimard.

Ioanndis, J. P. A. (2005). Why Most Published Research Findings are False. *PLoS Medicine*, *2*(8), 124. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.0020124 PMID: 16060722

Jauss, H. R. (1978). *Esthétique de la Réception*. Gallimard.

Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. UOCP. DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226177847.001.0001

Kannan, S., & Gowri, S. (2014). Contradictory/negative in Clinical Research: Why (Do We Get These)? Why Not (Get These Published)? Where (To Publish)? *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, *5*(4), 151–153. DOI: 10.4103/2229-3485.140546 PMID: 25276623

Kant, I. (2006). *Critique de la Raison Pure* (Tremesaygues, A., & Pacaud, B., Trans.). PUF.

Kazazoglu, S. (2025). Environmental Education Through Eco-Literacy: Integrating Sustainability into English Language Teaching. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(5), 2156. DOI: 10.3390/su17052156

Levinas, E. (1990). *Totalité et Infini*. Livre de Poche.

Liu, Y., & Ma, H. (2025). Evaluation of China's ESG Policy Texts Based on the "Instrument-Theme-Subject" Framework. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(17), 7796. DOI: 10.3390/su17177796

McQuillan, M. (2018). 'Derrida Queries de Man: A Note on the Materiality of the Letter Versus the Violence of the Letter.' Jean-Michel Rabaté. ed. A*fter Derrida: Literature, Theory and Criticism in the 21st Century*. CUP. pp80-94.

Merton, R. K. (1942). *The Normative Structure of Science*. https://www.panarchy .org/merton/science.html

Moore, A. W. (1993). Meaning and reference.

Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. (2004). Enhancing the Interpretation of "Significant" Findings: The Role of Mixed Methods Research. *The Qualitative Report.*

Ouattara, I. (2017). L'Objectivité dans les Sciences Historiques: Entre Mythe, Exigence et Idéal. *Revue de l'Université de Moncton*, *48*(2), 91–128. DOI: 10.7202/1061869ar

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., & Mulrow, C. D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews. *BMJ (Clinical Research Ed.)*, *372*(71). PMID: 33782057

Ricœur1, P. (1990). *Soi-Même Comme un Autre.* Seuil.

Ricœur, P. (1986). *Du Texte à L'Action: Essais d'Herméneutique II*. Seuil.

Rockwell, E. (2011). *La Experiencia Etnográfica Historia y Cultura de los Procesos Educativos*. Paidós.

Rosemblat, G., Fiszman, M., Shin, D., & Kilicoglu, H. (2019). Towards a Characterisation of Apparent Contradictions in the Biomedical Literature Using Context Analysis. *Journal of Biomedical Informatics*, *98*, 103275. DOI: 10.1016/j. jbi.2019.103275 PMID: 31473364

Sarup, M. (1993). *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Saussure, F. d. (1971). *Cours de Linguistique Générale.* C. Bally & A. Sechehaye, Éds. Payot Œuvre originale publiée en 1916).

Schiffer, F. (2019). The Physical Nature of Subjective Experience and its Interaction with the Brain. *Medical Hypotheses*, *125*, 57–69. DOI: 10.1016/j.mehy.2019.02.011 PMID: 30902153

Searle, J. (2002). *Consciousness and Language*. CUP. DOI: 10.1017/ CBO9780511606366

Shahid, M. U., & Ali, M. (2025). Enablers and Policy Framework for Construction Waste Minimization Under Circular Economy: Stakeholder Perspectives. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(9), 4129. DOI: 10.3390/su17094129

Sharp, J. (2020). 'Subjectivity.' in ed. Audrey Kobayashi. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography.* Elsevier. pp117-120.

Shin, I., Riforgiate, S. E., Godager, E. A., & Coker, M. C. (2025). Remote Worker Communication Technology Use Related to Role Clarity, Coworker Support, and Work Overload. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(7), 2830. DOI: 10.3390/su17072830

Stengers, I. (1997). *Power and invention: Situating science*. University of Minnesota Press.

Taylor, C. (2016). *The language animal: The full shape of the human linguistic capacity*. Harvard University Press. DOI: 10.4159/9780674970250

Tompkins, J. (1981). *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-structuralism*. JHUP.

UNESCO. (2024, November 28th). 'Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes

United Nations. (2025, August 9th). 'Global issues.' United Nations: Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet. https://www.un.org/en/global-issues

Weber, M. (1992). *Le Savant et le Politique* (Freund, J., Trans.). Plon.

World Economic Forum. (2024, August 9th). 'These are the Biggest Global Risks We Face in 2024 and Beyond.' *WEF Global Cooperation*. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/global-risks-report-2024/

ADDITIONAL READING

Ayton, D. and Tsindos, T. (2023, November 18th). Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Health and Social Care Researchers and Practitioners. *Open Educational Resources Collective.* https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/qualitative-research/chapter/__unknown__-2/.

Dilthey, W. (1949). *Introducción a las Ciencias del Espíritu. En la que se Trata de Fundamentar el Estudio de la Sociedad y de la Historia.* Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Pierce, C. S. (1931–1958). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (Vols. I–VIII, C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss & A. W. Burks, Eds.).* HUP.

Section 6
Interdisciplinarity

Chapter 10
From Coordinates to Consciousness:
The Interpretive Power of Spatial Data in Research

Ismatulla Khayrullayev

Termez University of Economics and Service, Uzbekistan

Anorgul Atajanova

https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5468-8187

Urgench State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan

Munir Ahmad

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4836-6151

Survey of Pakistan, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the interpretive potential of spatial data, moving beyond its traditional technical and cartographic functions to highlight its role in meaning-making and knowledge creation. By situating spatial data within philosophical debates on space and place, and examining its connections to cognition, culture, and lived experience, the chapter demonstrates how spatial methods, such as interpretive GIS, participatory mapping, and spatial ethnography, illuminate the interplay between environment, identity, and social dynamics. Positioned as an epistemological bridge, spatial data links the measurable with the meaningful, integrating quantitative precision with qualitative depth. Looking ahead, advances in geospatial technologies, narrative mapping, and participatory approaches open pathways for more inclusive, transformative, and socially engaged place-based research, with implications for scholarship, policy, and community empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

An understanding of spatial data has long been the technical resource, including coordinates, maps, and measurements, used to describe the physical configuration of features in the geographic space. It is based on cartography and quantitative analysis, and its major task has been seen as descriptive: to find, to quantify, to show. Although this representational role is still vital, recent developments in research practice have shown that spatial data is much more than a passive medium of representation. When put into perspective, it is an effective tool to help in the discovery of meaning, the creation of insights, and relating human experience to the surrounding worlds in which we live (Chaves Carniel, 2024; Dühr & Müller, 2012; SH, 2015).

It is a significant turn in epistemology to have been represented as an interpreted tool. Instead of considering spatial data as a passive product of measurement, researchers are turning to the exploration of lived realities, cultural discourses, and social relations. This way, spatial data can be thought of as a reflection of physical space, as well as a gateway to the symbolic, experiential, and cognitive aspects of place. Examples of how spatial tools, including participatory mapping, spatial ethnography, and narrative integration, can shed some light on questions of identity, belonging, exclusion, and adaptation that cannot be answered by numbers or coordinates alone (Bivand, 2022; Du et al., 2020; Pebesma & Bivand, 2023; Zormpas et al., 2023).

This is the wider interpretive horizon within which spatial data is placed in this chapter. It asks what is required to get the information of space to go beyond its technical limitations to become a medium of consciousness relating the measurable to the meaningful, the objective to the experience. In particular, the chapter addresses three central questions, namely:

(1) What can be done to incorporate spatial data into qualitative and mixed methods to capture human experience? What methodologies can be used to combine the technical correctness and the interpretation richness?
(2) How can spatial data serve as an epistemological interface, expressing place-based research that remains analytically rigorous and socially transformative?
(3) By answering these questions, the chapter repositions spatial data as not just a technical object, but as an agent of knowledge building and increasing comprehension of the world we live in.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Philosophical Conceptions of Space

The development of Western philosophy of space indicates profound and persistent discussions of what reality and perception are and how human experience can be. The issue of the existence of space as an independent entity or as one created by the relationships and human interaction has been a challenging question that philosophers have been struggling with over the centuries (Earman & van Fraassen, 1971). Space in the Newtonian tradition was an absolute and neutral one: a fixed, universal repository in which physical processes and human phenomena occur. This conception was objective and could be characterized mathematically, and it was not affected by the things it contains. It laid the foundation of modern science for the use of coordinates, geometry, and measurable models of the physical world (Martens & Lehmkuhl, 2020; Rovelli, 2006).

However, a sharp contrast was provided by Leibniz, who moved forward with a relational conception of space (McDonough, 2023). Space was not a reality in its own right but a set of relations of objects and events to him. Spatiality in this perspective was not a product of an external structure but the relations and the position of things with respect to each other.

However, many centuries later, phenomenological philosophers like Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty redefined space once again, focusing on lived experience, embodiment, and perception. They contended that space is not an abstract sort of background but is rather something that the interaction of humans, sense experiences, and culture constitutes. Space, in this regard, is existential and experiential, and it gets constructed in how people dwell in their spaces and make sense of them. Table 1 contrasts three major traditions, highlighting their distinctive views on the nature of space and their implications for spatial inquiry.

Table 1. Philosophical Conceptions of Space

Tradition / Thinker	Conception of Space	Key Characteristics	Implications for Spatial Inquiry
Newton (Absolute Space)	Space as an independent, universal container	Objective, measurable, neutral, external to objects	Basis for coordinates, geometry, and quantifiable modeling
Leibniz (Relational Space)	Space as relations among objects/events	Relational, dynamic, dependent on interactions	Emphasizes context and connections between entities
Heidegger / Merleau-Ponty (Phenomenological Space)	Space as lived, experiential, embodied	Constituted through perception, culture, and practice	Prioritizes meaning, subjectivity, and lived environments

Space and Place

The separation between space and place has become one of the main themes of modern thinking, particularly in the fields of geography, philosophy, and cultural studies. Although space usually has an abstract meaning related to geometry or the openness of the physical space, place is more about meaning, attachment, and lived reality. This theoretical distinction offers a valuable basis for conceptualising the way individuals interact with their surroundings.

Human geographers and philosophers have long maintained that although space can be imagined as a neutral space, place is created when human experience values it. The square on the map, as an example, can be defined with the help of coordinates and distances; however, it becomes a place as soon as it is accompanied by memorization, interpersonal bonds, or cultural activities. The place in this case cannot be reduced to physical space; it is stratified with stories, pasts, and feelings that make it unique.

Philosophers like Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph gave importance to this space to place shift. they proposed that familiarity, attachment, and identity influence the environments that people and communities live in (Casey, 2001; Tuan, 1979). Place anchors memory, orientation, and belonging, and functions as a point of reference in individual and societal life. Simultaneously, the concept of place highlights diversity as the same space is perceived and appreciated by various individuals and communities in several, at times contradictory, ways.

Putting place as the humanized aspect of space, the scholars emphasize the role of interpretation, narrative, and subjectivity in spatial inquiry. The lens can deepen theoretical discussions as well as be applied to practice in urban design and community-based research, in which knowledge about the ways people build meaning in their contexts may inform more responsive and inclusive work. Table 2 summarizes their contrasting attributes, emphasizing how abstract dimensions of space transform into lived and meaningful places through human experience.

Table 2. Distinctions Between Space and Place

Dimension	Space	Place
Nature	Abstract, geometric, open expanse	Meaningful, situated, lived reality
Measurement	Coordinates, distances, quantifiable	Memories, narratives, identities
Relation to Humans	Neutral backdrop	Humanized, shaped by attachment and experience
Examples	Square on a map with coordinates	The same square imbued with social gatherings, cultural practices, or memories

Cognitive and Cultural Dimensions of Space

Space is a physical or philosophical category, but also a most thoroughly cognitive and cultural act. Mental systems help human beings to interpret, plan, and navigate space, which are both biologically determined and culturally informed. Cognitive geographers have demonstrated how people are oriented to form their own mental maps or internal images of geographic spaces, which help them orient, remember, and make decisions. These mental constructs point out that space is not experienced objectively but in a human way (Downs, 1982). Cultural considerations, in their turn, have a massive effect on the way space is interpreted and appreciated (Ritella, 2025). The encoding of spatial relations in language, ritual, and practice by various societies results in different ways of living in and understanding the world. As an illustration, whereas Western cultures tend to employ cardinal directions and Cartesian coordinates, most Indigenous populations refer to spatial orientation with relationally defined markers, like rivers, mountains, or kinship. These patterns of culture indicate that space is not a common abstraction but a field of significances that arise in specific social and historical situations.

Moreover, the cognitive and cultural dimensions of space intersect with power and identity. The methods by which individuals think about, and practice, space can support hierarchies or oppose domination. The concept of urban segregation, territorial boundaries, and sacred geographies have all shown the way in which cultural conceptions of space have been integrated with politics and social conflict. Meanwhile, cultural geographies focus more on creativity in which communities rethink and transform space in a manner that maintains identity, belonging, and resilience. When they pay attention to these dimensions, the study of space through the prism of geometry or philosophy is enlarged and deals with perception, symbolism, and cultural practice. This practice highlights the fact that space is always mediated - it is constructed by minds, cultures, and histories, and therefore presents a rich environment of interdisciplinary study in the fields of geography, anthropology, psychology, and others.

Spatial Data as an Interpretive Lens in Research

Spatial data in recent years has become more than a measuring tool and technical analysis tool: it is now a matter of interpretation. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), previously linked nearly entirely to cartographic accuracy and geospatial simulation, is currently being re-conceived as a medium in which narratives, cultural implications, and social processes can be captured. Within this turn of interpretation, spatial data cease to be perceived merely as objective contributions but as a medium in which a narrative of place, power, and belonging can be narrated (Esri, 2023; Ren

et al., 2010). This change has enabled researchers to chart not only physical worlds but also allegorical and disputational worlds of identity, memory, and community life.

Critical GIS is at the center of this change. Critical approaches are helping to question the idea of the map as the neutral representation, free of values, by pointing to their uneven geographies of power, and to the voices of the marginalized. They bring to the fore how spatial data may be used to hide or exaggerate some of the views, especially where there is a contested territory, urban inequality, or environmental justice. Critical GIS has made maps and spatial analyses a tool of challenging authority, demonstrating suppressed geographies, and writing about lived realities that are usually not recorded in official documents (Pavlovskaya, 2018; Sullivan, 2006; Zeunert et al., 2025).

Participatory mapping also promotes this interpretive orientation by involving the communities in the process of co-producing knowledge (Anshori et al., 2022; Brown et al., 2022; Haworth et al., 2016). Instead of using local people as passive sources of data, participatory mapping encourages them to express their own spatial realities, bringing them to focus on experiences and priorities not always addressed by outside experts. These practices shed light on how people and their spaces relate and democratize the production of spatial knowledge. By doing so, they can accommodate deeper, more inclusive conceptions of space that recognize technical accuracy and social sense.

Spatial Ethnography and Narrative Mapping

Examples of integrative approaches, however, include spatial ethnography and narrative mapping, which explicitly involve the use of spatial systems alongside qualitative research. Spatial ethnography builds on the ethnographic tradition and makes stories of daily life contextual in space (Jensen et al., 2022; Nam et al., 2024). Researchers not only record the cultures, identities, and relations, but also find the culture in the physical space where they are enacted. In such a way, the spatial ethnography indicates the mutual dependence between lived experiences and place that demonstrates how places are constructed and constrained by human action and meaning.

Narrative mapping is an extension of this orientation into explicit connections with stories and space (Guyotte et al., 2021; Roth, 2021). An example is digital story maps, which combine oral histories, photographs, and text and cartographic visualization in order to create a multilayered account of place that can indicate both material and symbolic aspects. Cultural memory and identity are also fundamentally grounded in geography in the form of traditional mapping, in the form of indigenous land-use records, or community-based landscape drawings. These are

narrative forms that emphasize the emotional and historical experience of places as opposed to plotting them on a coordinate.

When combined, spatial ethnography and narrative mapping are effective instruments of answering the question of the why and the how of human-environment interactions by far exceeding the question of the where. They disclose the affective, cultural, and political aspects of place, expressing meanings that would otherwise stay out of the reach of purely quantitative analysis. Through this, they broaden the epistemological scope of spatial study, and it can be scientifically sound and experiential.

Toward an Interpretive Foundation

A combination of these insights helps to realize that spatial data cannot be reduced to only a technical depiction of the world. It is a medium of interpretation - able to relate the analytical precision to narrative depth and objective observation to lived experience. Such an appreciation transforms the characteristics of spatial research, being no longer descriptive but rather a field of meaning-making, one that is receptive to complexity, plurality, and context. Spatial data offers researchers special chances to work with both the sensible and the measurable as an interpretive foundation. It is an integrative method that combines the methodological gap between quantitative mapping and qualitative storytelling and provides a comprehensive view of place. By so doing, it not only adds to scholarly investigation but does has practical implications for communities and policymakers to mobilize these integrative views to make more inclusive and context-sensitive judgments.

INTEGRATING QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

What makes spatial data an interpretive possibility is not just its theoretical foundation but also its methodologies, which, given their own, allow researchers to combine the accuracy of numbers and the richness of stories. Over recent years, researchers have come up with approaches that no longer hold the dichotomy of quantitative research and qualitative research, but they spoke of spatial data as the medium in which various types of knowledge could come into a meeting point. Researchers can locate human experience in their geographical settings by mobilizing GIS, participatory mapping, spatial ethnography, and narrative mapping, as well as contend with the analytic rigor required by data-oriented inquiry.

GIS as Both an Analytical and Interpretive Tool

GIS was long linked to the technical field of cartography and spatial science, but was used in land-use planning, resource distribution, transportation models, disaster management, and environmental surveillance. These applications are abundant in objectivity, accuracy, and quantification, which reflects the reputation of GIS as a measurement and prediction tool. Under such traditional roles, GIS acts similarly to a scientific tool- generating visualizations and models and future predictions capable of informing decisions with an appearance of impartiality and accuracy. But unlike a neutral store of data, as critical geographers and social scientists have demonstrated, GIS is much more. How maps are constructed, read, and utilized inevitably presents some social, cultural, and political situations (Schulze, 2021).

There is growing rethinking of GIS as an interpretive platform that extends beyond still images of space to encompass stories, subjectivities, and contested meanings. Critical GIS scholarship emphasizes that maps never simply represent; they are also encoded with values, power relationships, and worldviews. When combined with qualitative sources: oral histories, photographs, ethnographic field notes, GIS can become more of a tool of narrative creation and meaning-making than a quantitative one. As an illustration, when urban neighbourhoods are mapped, with resident testimonies embedded into them, one can learn not only the realities of infrastructure but the textures of belonging or exclusion or resilience as it is lived. In that regard, GIS mediates between the empirical examination and the depth of interpretation, being aligned with the technical logic in the procedure of spatial science, as well as the reflexivity of the humanities and social sciences.

This dual role of GIS—as analytical and interpretive—has significant implications for research and practice. It can be used to enable more comprehensive investigation, in which levels of quantitative data, like census statistics or environmental data, can be placed alongside levels of qualitative data that demonstrate the cultural memory, symbolism, or emotional value of place. Instead of deeming one way of knowing more important than another, interpretive GIS practices foster interdisciplinarity, which allows scientists, social researchers, and communities to collaborate. The outcome is a more intrinsic and more inclusive version of the production of spatial knowledge that recognizes both realities that can be measured and those that are felt and experienced. Table 3 shows the dual character of GIS as both an analytical instrument.

Table 3. Analytical vs. Interpretive Dimensions of GIS

Dimension	Analytical Role	Interpretive Role
Purpose	Measurement, prediction, decision support	Storytelling, meaning-making, and uncovering power relations
Data Types	Quantitative layers (census, land-use, environmental data)	Qualitative inputs (oral histories, photos, field notes)
Orientation	Objectivity, neutrality, precision	Subjectivity, reflexivity, cultural and political context
Example Use	Transportation modeling, disaster management	Mapping neighborhood narratives, documenting exclusion/resilience

Participatory Mapping for Capturing Lived Experiences

Participatory mapping is a methodological move out of top-down and expert-based approaches to cartography (Fagerholm et al., 2021). Participatory approaches do not focus on communities as the subject of mapping but rather as co-creators of spatial knowledge. This often requires workshops, focus groups, sketch mapping, or web-based platforms that enable participants to define, annotate, and tell their own geographies. The resulting maps often differ from those that have been recorded formally in cartographic documentation, foregrounding the space and place that were previously not included in the conventionally available datasets or are not included deliberately. These may be informal settlements, spiritual places, covert social links, gendered mobility spaces, or spaces of daily struggle and strength (Denwood et al., 2022; Hicks et al., 2019; Laituri et al., 2023).

This kind of practice is especially effective in situations of marginalization. An example of this is the participation mapping used by indigenous communities to reclaim territories, and make voices on the cultural landscapes erased through colonial cartography. The maps may be used as advocacy instruments in legal claims to land rights, or as archives of intangible culture of myths, rituals, or seasonal knowledge. Likewise, participatory mapping within urban contexts has been used to draw attention to problems related to environmental injustice, absence of community amenities, or unsafe commuting pathways- making visible problems that are frequently not mentioned in formal planning reports.

Other than generating alternative cartographies, participatory mapping is also a highly social process. It stimulates conversation among people living in society, enhances a sense of unity, and creates a sense of identity. Participatory mapping exposes the experience, contention, and valuation of space by inquiring about people not only where but also what and why. Notably, such maps also become objects of meaning at least as much as of analysis: they represent relations between people and place, between communities and institutions. In this regard, participatory mapping has emerged as a mapping of empowerment - something which gives the margin-

alized the space to speak out, to be seen, and to dispute the hegemonic accounts of space. Figure 1 positions GIS, participatory mapping, spatial ethnography, and narrative mapping along a continuum of integration.

Figure 1. Spectrum of Methodological Pathways
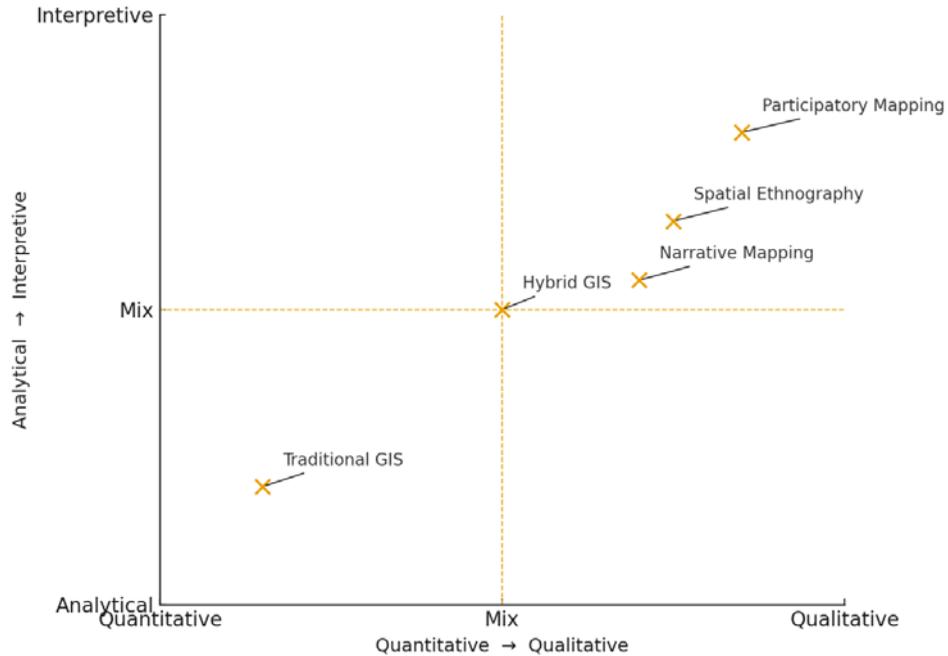
Integrating Spatial-Quantitative and Interpretive-Qualitative Methods

Although the integration of spatial-quantitative and interpretive-qualitative approaches is promising, there are still some important difficulties. One of the most fundamental lies in the epistemological differences between these traditions. Quantitative spatial science is constructed on assumptions of objectivity, replicability, and generalizability. Accuracy, precision, and predictive power of the maps and models are used to judge them. Qualitative inquiry, by contrast, appreciates context and depth, reflexivity, and meaning, and tends to focus on specific instances rather than broad generalizations. It not only tackles technical innovation but also

epistemological negotiation - the admission that other forms of validity are operative in other knowledge systems.

A difficulty experienced in embedding qualitative content on spatial platforms is the technical barriers (Burnett et al., 2023). GIS frameworks are streamlined to either numerical or categorical data, and therefore, integrating narratives, memories, or ethnographic materials proves difficult. As an illustration, a written interview can include the illusion of space, yet it is impossible to depict those allusions accurately in a GIS space deprived of subtlety or context. On the same note, fluid and dynamic aspects of stories sometimes do not comply with the spatial structures of digital mapping systems. Overcoming this necessitates innovative and methodological solutions, including mixed-media platforms development or hybrid geospatial tools able to store structured and unstructured data.

Also urgent are the ethical issues that come hand in hand with integrative approaches. For example, participatory projects can produce maps with sensitive data for sacred places, informal settlements, politically vulnerable sites, etc. But then these questions emerge: To whom are the maps owned? Who is entitled to share and access them? In what ways can it be abused by the government, business, or other parties? In short, participatory and interpretive spatial practices run the risk of recreating the very inequalities they can, if properly used or understood, resolve.

In order to eliminate or manage these tensions, researchers are required to use reflexive and transparent approaches. This involves being clear on assumptions, explanations of the intentions of mapping, and having the participants have control of their contributions. It also implies opening up to the form of knowledge that cannot be easily categorized. In such a way, researchers and practitioners can start reconciling the powers of quantitative accuracy with the knowledge of qualitative interpretation to develop hybrid spatial methods that are analytically and ethically sound. Table 4 summarizes the key categories of challenges and their implications.

Table 4. Challenges in Integrating Spatial-Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Challenge Type	Description	Implications
Epistemological	Different assumptions about validity and knowledge (objectivity vs. meaning)	Requires negotiation across disciplines
Technical	GIS optimized for structured/numeric data, difficult to host narratives	Loss of nuance or distortion of qualitative material
Ethical	Sensitive maps (sacred sites, informal settlements) risk misuse	Need for data sovereignty, transparency, safeguards

HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTIONS

The interpretive possibilities of spatial data are put into a more precise perspective when it is considered in the context of practical examples. Through linkages between physical geography and social practice, spatial approaches have uncovered intricate behaviour patterns, shed light on social processes, and pursued environmental associations that could otherwise be swept under the carpet. Practically, these applications illustrate how spatial data can characterize landscapes as well as infer the processes of human and ecological activities that give them life.

Behavioral Patterns and Social Dynamics

The use of spatial data has progressively been identified as a resourceful instrument in the exploration of behavioral patterns that capture the day-to-day rhythms, motions, and activities of communities. Instead of restricting its use to mapping physical infrastructures or administrative boundaries, the study of space offers an insight into the lives of folks as they move through cities, neighborhoods, and countryside terrains (Buckee et al., 2021; Webber et al., 2023). As an example, analysis of urban mobility based on geotagged information on a smartphone, Global Positioning System, and mass transport systems indicates not just how individuals circulate within a metropolitan area, but also how these circulating flows are organized in terms of access to resources, jobs, and social amenities. These trends tend to illuminate more widespread concerns, including economic inequity, segregation, and the disproportionate allocation of infrastructure, wherein certain groups are connected to everything with no trouble, and others are left peripheral.

Spatial analyses of disease outbreaks in health geography integrate epidemiological data and community narratives on the influence of cultural practices, trust in institutions, and risk perception in the spread and control of disease. Indicatively, in times of pandemic, one can use mobility data and spatial mapping of the location of infection clusters cross-referenced with surveys that measure the attitude of people toward vaccines and/or healthcare providers, and find that social trust and cultural norms play as significant a role in control as biological factors. In addition to mobility and health, spatial tools have also been used to map social networks in physical space, where people congregate, where people are excluded, and where people foster solidarity. These analyses show the social importance of parks, markets, religious places, and informal meeting places as centers of interaction and identity formation. Through the placing of human practices into spatial contexts, these approaches can give a potent understanding of how the structures of physical spaces and infrastructures play an active role in either strengthening or weakening social cohesion to make or break inclusion, exclusion, and belonging patterns.

Table 5 summarizes how spatial methods reveal both human behavioral dynamics and environmental interactions.

Table 5. Applications of Spatial Data in Human and Environmental Contexts

Domain	Method / Data Used	Insights Generated	Illustrative Examples
Human Mobility	Smartphone GPS, transportation data	Reveals daily rhythms, inequalities in access	Urban connectivity studies, segregation mapping
Health Geography	Epidemiological + narrative data	Shows the interplay of biology, trust, and culture	Pandemic spread linked with cultural practices
Social Networks in Space	Observations, participatory mapping	Identifies hubs of inclusion/ exclusion	Parks, markets, and religious sites as social anchors
Environmental Relationships	Participatory GIS, ethnography	Connects cultural meaning with ecology	Sacred landscapes, migration routes, and local knowledge
Climate Adaptation	Remote sensing + community maps	Links projections with lived realities	Shifting farming calendars, coastal defense practices

Environmental Relationships and Place-Based Understanding

Spatial data is also potent in clarifying the connection of people and their surroundings, providing methods to characterize and recognize the intense relations people have with the settings in which they inhabit. Although standard mapping tends to shrink the environment to parcels of land, areas of resources, or ecological types, the participatory and interpretive mapping projects demonstrate that landscapes are also endowed with meaning, memory, and spirituality. Even in rural or indigenous settings, such as in participatory mapping, sacred landscapes, migration pathways through seasons, or the use of resources based on generations of local knowledge are often emphasized. These projects bring into focus aspects of environmental involvement that are often overlooked by the traditional cartographic-based instruments in describing how communities imagine their spaces not merely as the means of economic livelihood but as cultural and spiritual landscapes that shape communal identities.

There has been growing interest among environmental scientists in how to use spatial ethnography to understand how communities respond to climate change. Examples have been documented, such as a shift in agricultural calendar, sharing water in a drought, or reconstruction of coastal structures in the face of sea-level rises. These kinds of researches stress the importance of environmental adaptation being more of a deeply social process as opposed to a purely technical one, citing traditions, common consensus, and local particular knowledge on ecological process-

es. Moreover, spatial approaches assist in mediating the scientific model and lived reality through integrating satellite data or climate forecasts with the community-constructed maps by monitoring the practical impacts of shifting weather systems. Such synthesis renders apparent the stratified engagements between environmental changes and human approaches of adjustment, which offer intricately detailed insights into researchers and policymakers beyond the metrics used in statistical expressions. Through the involvement of the local voices and stories, interpretive spatial approaches bring the lived experience of environmental transformation to the forefront so that adaptation ideas and strategies are not only efficient but also culturally sensitive and socially fair. Figure 2 illustrates how interpretive spatial data bridges physical environments, social practices, and cultural meanings, showing human–environment interaction as a layered system.

Figure 2. Human–Environment Interaction Layers
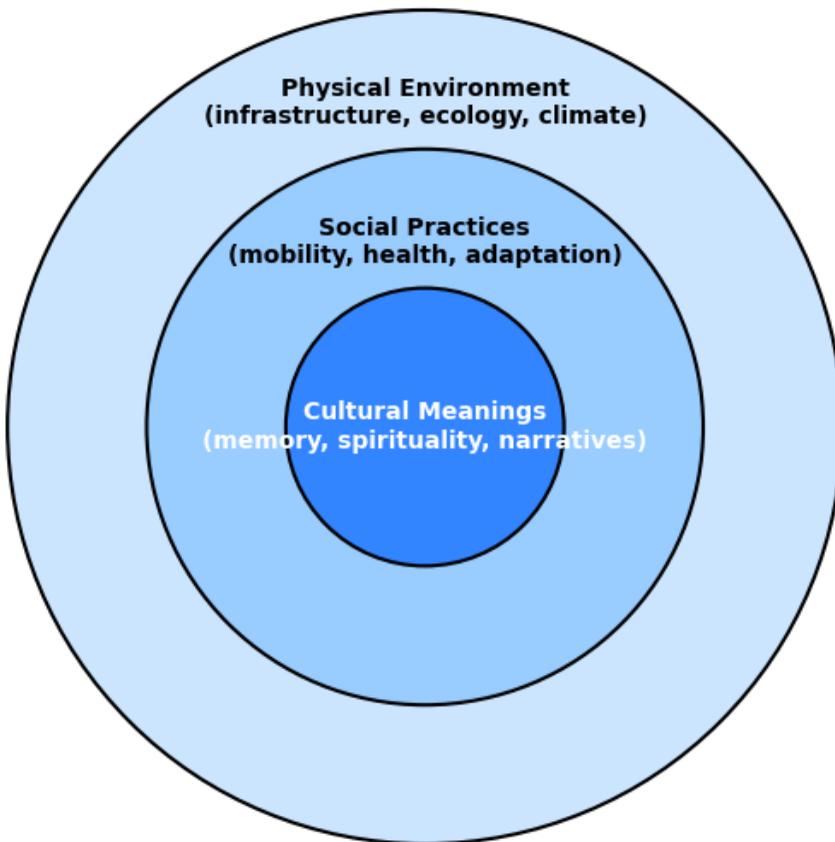
Transformative, Place-Based Research

The ability to produce transformative outcomes for communities and institutions is one of the most important contributions of interpretive spatial research. In contrast to purely technical mapping initiatives, place-based efforts to combine spatial data and community narratives tend to look beyond the creation of maps to affect actual practices, policies, and kinds of empowerment. As an example, story maps that were created by communities in urban neighborhoods have been used to promote renewal, through which the residents can demonstrate not only the issues, including underinvestment, crime, or environmental risks, but also local resources like cultural sites, social networks, and creative economies. These participatory devices offer marginalized groups the opportunity to express themselves on their own priorities, as well as on how to criticize dominant discourses of planning that ignore or distort their experiences.

Participatory GIS has been applied in post-disaster settings to inform recovery planning by bringing the voices of the locals to bear in decision-making, so that building back could address the needs and interests of those populations rather than dictate solutions at the top (Ahmad, 2023, 2024). Equally, communities working on heritage preservation have used narrative mapping to capture intangible cultural heritage, like oral history, rituals, and stories, which are place-based to enhance conservation and maintain cultural landscapes. The revolutionary nature of these movements is not just that the maps are themselves, but that the processes of participation enable dialogues, shared memory, and empowerment. In involving individuals in the creation of spatial knowledge, these projects transform the nature of relationships among researchers, policymakers, and communities and make maps a tool of advocacy, collaboration, and social change. This illustrates the fact that interpretive spatial research is not only descriptive but also participatory and interventionist: how the person not only comprehend places in a certain way but also how they imagine and construct futures in those places. Table 6 captures how participatory and narrative mapping projects influence communities and institutions.

Table 6. Transformative Outcomes of Interpretive Spatial Research

Application Context	Spatial Method	Transformative Outcome
Urban Advocacy	Community story maps	Residents challenge planning narratives, highlight assets
Post-Disaster Recovery	Participatory GIS	Local needs shape rebuilding strategies
Heritage Preservation	Narrative mapping	Documentation of intangible cultural heritage tied to landscapes
Environmental Justice	Community mapping	Visibility for marginalized concerns (pollution, access)

Implications for Interdisciplinary Inquiry

The uses of interpretive spatial research point to its deeply usefulness for interdisciplinary research, placing spatial data on the border of several bodies of knowledge. Spatial analysis in the social sciences has been extremely valuable in expanding knowledge of power, inequality, and community dynamics and has provided researchers with a means of visualizing how social structures are produced in space and also a means of establishing spatial patterns of exclusion, mobility, and resiliency. Spatial ethnography can also be used in the field of anthropology and sociology to embed lived experience into the landscape to provide rich descriptions of how people build meaning in place. Spatial data has also become a central resource in the humanities to reinterpret archives, literature, and cultural narratives in spatial terms, to comprehend in new ways the relationships between stories, memories, and identities and the landscapes. Such projects in digital humanities entail the reconstruction of historical geographies, literary journeys, and the placing of archival materials in larger cultural landscapes.

Spatial research in environmental studies offers integrative frameworks linking ecological processes - including deforestation, urbanization, or climate change - with human practices, perceptions, and adaptations. These interdisciplinary uses highlight the special epistemological status of spatial data: it can be both empirical and symbolic and thus can mediate between the quantitative rigor of the sciences and the interpretive sensibility of the humanities. The ability of spatial research to cross disciplinary lines is especially critical in meeting complex issues like climate change, inequality in cities, or cultural displacement, which cannot be fully comprehended through a single disciplinary lens. With the location of different kinds of knowledge in space, interpretive spatial research produces cross-disciplinary cooperation, methodological new directions, and ways to more comprehensive and integrative kinds of inquiry. In the end, such interdisciplinarity demonstrates how

transformative spatial data can be as a methodology and a conceptual framework regarding the relations between human and environmental systems. Figure 3 represents a hub-and-spoke model, with spatial data at the center bridging diverse fields.

Figure 3. Interdisciplinary Applications of Spatial Data
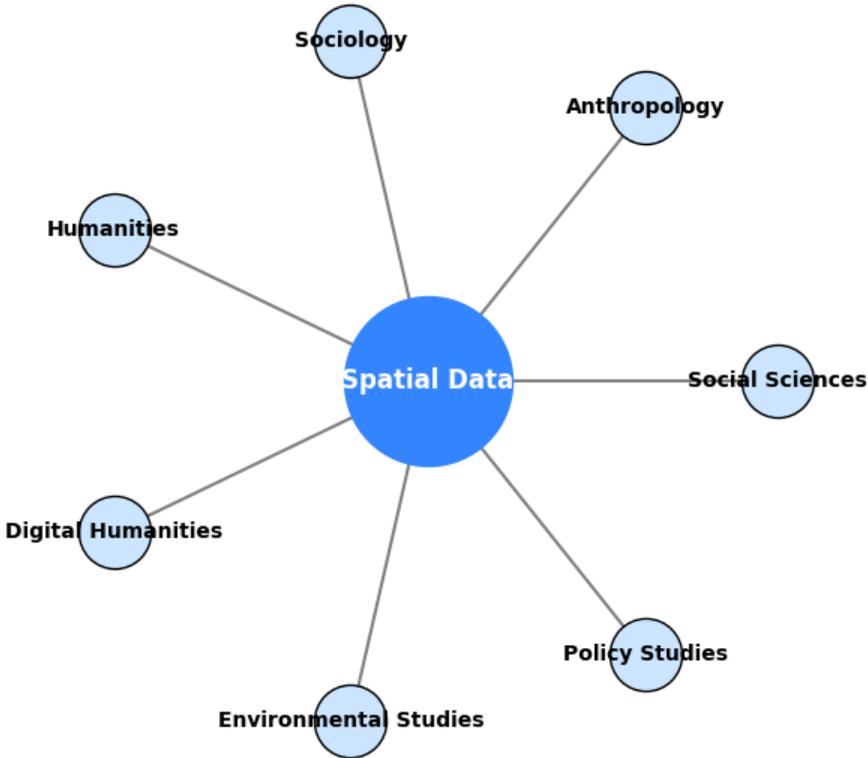
SPATIAL DATA AS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL BRIDGE

The interpretive turn, as an approach to spatial research, demonstrates that spatial data is not only an instrument of measurement but is an epistemological way to connect disparate practices of knowing. Although the classical methods have

focused on accuracy, precision, and objectivity, new orientations have highlighted that data is also highly cultural, interpretive, and narrative (Grinberger et al., 2022). The duality posits spatial data as the sole means of bridging the measurable and the meaningful and permits the researcher to interpret both empirical reality and lived reality within the same framework.

Connecting the Meaningful and the Measurable

In its simplest form, spatial data offers a framework to map the physical world into measurable representations - coordinates, distances, boundaries, layers, and topologies that are amenable to technical analysis and modeling. This capacity to abstract physical space into quantifiable units has proven to be key in the progression and development of planning, resource management, transportation, epidemiology, and a broad spectrum of scientific fields. However, these representations can lose the human context. That is, there is a danger of flattening lived realities into sterile symbols. When these quantifiable aspects are combined with cultural discourses, reminiscences, and the social structure that makes a place meaningful, the actual epistemological richness of spatial data can be understood.

A mere dot on a map night, technically, represent the site of a water well, but when overlaid with oral histories, it can represent decades of community life, struggle to secure limited resources. Or it can be a cultural artifact. In the same way, the edge of a forest captured by a satellite image can be viewed as a spiritual landscape, a contested landscape, or a livelihood anchor to indigenous peoples besides a region of ecological value. In this way, spatial data acts as an intermediary between the objective reality of measurement and the subjective, affective, and symbolic aspects of the human condition. In this twofold role, the use of spatial data helps researchers to get beyond a dichotomy of hard data against soft interpretation and introduces an integrative perspective in which the measurable and meaningful are inextricable. Table 7 highlights the dual role of spatial data in connecting measurable (technical) and meaningful (interpretive) dimensions.

Table 7. The Dual Role of Spatial Data as an Epistemological Bridge

Dimension	Measurable / Technical Role	Meaningful / Interpretive Role
Core Function	Provides quantifiable representations of the physical world (coordinates, distances, boundaries, layers).	Embeds cultural, symbolic, and narrative significance into spatial representations.
Strengths	Accuracy, precision, and replicability support planning, modeling, and scientific analysis.	Captures lived experiences, memories, and social meanings tied to place.
Risks When Isolated	Risk of reductionism—flattening complex realities into sterile symbols.	Risk of subjectivity without grounding in empirical reference.
Illustrative Example	A point on a map signifying the location of a water well.	The same point embodies community survival, resource struggles, or cultural identity.
Knowledge Contribution	Anchors spatial analysis in technical rigor and replicable evidence.	Expands spatial analysis into reflexive, political, and interpretive domains.

Maintaining Reflexivity, Context, and Interpretation

The ability to internalize reflexivity in the research process is one of the greatest contributions of spatial data to epistemology. The presumption of the objectivity of maps and spatial analyses is not accurate, as these are always interpretive artifacts fashioned by the questions that researchers pose, the scales that they choose, and the representational decisions that they make. All of the maps imply inclusion and exclusion, choices of what to describe, what categories to highlight, and how boundaries are demarcated. This is an inherently political process that requires reflexivity, an awareness that there is no neutral knowledge, but that knowledge always exists in relation to cultural, historical, and institutional contexts.

Incorporating spatial data with qualitative approaches of participatory mapping, ethnography, and narrative inquiry, researchers are required to recognize the views, voices, and power relations that influence representation. Indicatively, participatory GIS projects in marginalized communities have frequently shown that traditional mapping fails to capture important spaces of daily existence, including informal markets, culture meeting spaces, or sacred sites. Having such views has the effect of changing the interpretive frame of the map and revealing what is being silenced. The reflexivity also requires people to pay attention to the power of maps: who is involved in the creation of maps, whose interests they represent, and how they support or criticize the social hierarchies. In this regard, not only does spatial data gain a representation of reality, but it also plays a role in questioning the politics of knowledge production. This interpretive ability enhances methodological openness as well as analytical depth, placing results in the context of larger cultural, political, and ecological discourse.

Positioning Spatial Data in the Broader Knowledge-Making Process

Within the wider landscape of knowledge production, spatial data occupies a unique and liminal position between the sciences and the humanities, between the quantitative and the qualitative, and between the technical and the interpretive. It has an empirical basis, which lies in the measurement, accuracy, and reproducibility, characteristics of scientific investigation. However, its interpretive capacity has been in its ability to capture meanings, narratives, and lived experiences which are frequently the object of attention of the humanities and social sciences. Such duality renders spatial data an effective epistemological mediator - in a sense, able to ground disparate kinds of evidence into a common structure of spatial thought. This bridge position is especially important in interdisciplinary studies.

The problems of climate adaptation, urban inequality, or preserving cultural heritage cannot be solved by studying physical processes carefully, but in addition, learning how people perceive, identify with, and value them. Spatial data makes this integration possible as it provides a shared representational base, in which human experiences and natural systems overlap. In addition, it undermines the fixed distinction between so-called hard and so-called soft sciences, rather implying a spectrum of enquiry where technical clarity is mutually constitutive of interpretative richness and the reverse. By so doing, spatial data does not just provide support to a particular project or discipline, but also to a more general reconsideration of knowledge-making itself, a knowledge-making that appreciates complexity, recognizes plurality, and accepts the co-existence of measurement and meaning.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has posited that spatial data, which has been restricted to technical and cartographic realms, is ripe with interpretive promise in the fact that it is more than a list of coordinates or measurements. We have demonstrated how it goes beyond descriptive mapping to become a medium of meaning-making by placing spatial data in the philosophical discourse of space and place and by discussing the place of spatial data in cognition, culture, and lived experience. Interpretive methodological approaches, including GIS, participatory mapping, and spatial ethnography, reveal that the interaction between the environment, identities, and social dynamics can be captured by the interpretive use of spatial data in a manner unattainable by either a purely quantitative or a purely qualitative approach. As such, spatial data emerges

as an epistemological bridge, linking the measurable with the meaningful, the objective with the experiential.

The future of spatially-informed qualitative and mixed-methods research will be a greater integration of this. There are also new opportunities in integrating advanced geospatial technologies with participatory and narrative approaches, such that there can be more in-depth and more inclusive forms of place-based inquiry. Not only can digital story-maps, citizen science platforms, and immersive spatial visualizations, broaden the range of data, they can also expand the range of voices represented. Meanwhile, this will require higher levels of reflexivity to respond to issues in power, representation, and ethical application of spatial information. Technical innovation and critical sensitivity will need to be balanced to determine the future direction of this field, whereby spatial data will be applied as a method of analysis and of empowering others. Its implications go beyond the scope of research practice to policymaking and community participation. To policymakers, interpretive spatial studies would expose the social and cultural challenges of urban planning, environmental management, and issues of human health, and consequently, more responsive and fair decisions. For communities, participatory and narrative mapping provide platforms for visibility, advocacy, and collective action. Through reconciling data and lived realities, spatial research can empower democratic activities, inclusion, and base decisions on those most impacted.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, M. (2023). 'Connecting People and Places: How Citizen Diplomacy and VGI are Strengthening Disaster Response and Community Development.' S. Kavoğlu & E. Köksoy Eds. *Global Perspectives on the Emerging Trends in Public Diplomacy.* (pp. 195–226). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9161-4.ch009

Ahmad, M. (2024). 'From Crisis to Opportunity: How VGI Is Transforming Disaster Response and Recovery Efforts.' S. Siyal. Ed. *Using Crises and Disasters as Opportunities for Innovation and Improvement.* (pp. 215–232). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9522-3.ch013

Anshori, R. M., Samodra, G., Mardiatno, D., & Sartohadi, J. (2022). Volunteered Geographic Information Mobile Application for Participatory Landslide Inventory Mapping. *Computers & Geosciences*, *161*, 105073. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.cageo.2022.105073

Bivand, R. (2022). R Packages for Analyzing Spatial Data: A Comparative Case Study with Areal Data. *Geographical Analysis*, *54*(3), 488–518. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/gean.12319

Brown, G., Kyttä, M., & Reed, P. (2022). Using Community Surveys with Participatory Mapping to Monitor Comprehensive Plan Implementation. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *218*, 104306. DOI: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2021.104306

Buckee, C., Noor, A., & Sattenspiel, L. (2021). Thinking Clearly About Social Aspects of Infectious Disease Transmission. *Nature*, *595*(7866), 205–213. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1038/s41586-021-03694-x PMID: 34194045

Burnett, C. M., McCall, M., & Ollivierre, A. D. (2023). 'Participatory Mapping and Technology.' *Evaluating Participatory Mapping Software*. 1–20. .DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-19594-5_1

Casey, E. S. (2001). Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World? *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *91*(4), 683–693. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/0004-5608.00266

Chaves Carniel, A. (2024). Defining and Designing Spatial Queries: The Role of Spatial Relationships. *Geo-Spatial Information Science*, *27*(6), 1868–1892. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/10095020.2022.2163924

Denwood, T., Huck, J. J., & Lindley, S. (2022). Participatory Mapping: A Systematic Review and Open Science Framework for Future Research. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *112*(8), 2324–2343. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/24694452.2022.2065964

Downs, R. M. (1982). 'Cognitive Dimensions of Space and Boundary in Urban Areas.' *Urban Patterns: Studies*.

Du, P., Bai, X., Tan, K., Xue, Z., Samat, A., Xia, J., Li, E., Su, H., & Liu, W. (2020). Advances of Four Machine Learning Methods for Spatial Data Handling: A Review. *Journal of Geovisualization and Spatial Analysis.*, *4*(1), 13. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s41651-020-00048-5

Dühr, S., & Müller, A. (2012). The Role of Spatial Data and Spatial Information in Strategic Spatial Planning. *Regional Studies*, *46*(4), 423–428. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2012.669535

Earman, J., & van Fraassen, B. C. (1971). An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time and Space. *The Philosophical Review*, *80*(4), 516. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.2307/2183758

Esri. (2023). *What is GIS?* Esri.Com. https://www.esri.com/en-us/what-is-gis/overview

Fagerholm, N., Raymond, C. M., Olafsson, A. S., Brown, G., Rinne, T., Hasanzadeh, K., Broberg, A., & Kyttä, M. (2021). A Methodological Framework for Analysis of Participatory Mapping Data in Research, Planning, and Management. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, *35*(9), 1848–1875. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/13658816.2020.1869747

Grinberger, A. Y., Minghini, M., Yeboah, G., Juhász, L., & Mooney, P. (2022). Bridges and Barriers: An Exploration of Engagements of the Research Community with the OpenStreetMap Community. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, *11*(1), 54. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3390/ijgi11010054

Guyotte, K. W., Flint, M. A., & Latopolski, K. S. (2021). Cartographies of Belonging: Mapping Nomadic Narratives of First-Year Students. *Critical Studies in Education*, *62*(5), 543–558. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2019.1657160

Haworth, B., Whittaker, J., & Bruce, E. (2016). Assessing the Application and Value of Participatory Mapping for Community Bushfire Preparation. *Applied Geography (Sevenoaks, England)*, *76*, 115–127. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2016.09.019

Hicks, A., Barclay, J., Chilvers, J., Armijos, M. T., Oven, K., Simmons, P., & Haklay, M. (2019). Global Mapping of Citizen Science Projects for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Frontiers in Earth Science (Lausanne)*, *7*, 226. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3389/feart.2019.00226

Jensen, L. X., Bearman, M., Boud, D., & Konradsen, F. (2022). Digital Ethnography in Higher Education Teaching and Learning—A Methodological Review. *Higher Education*, *84*(5), 1143–1162. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-022-00838-4

Laituri, M., Luizza, M. W., Hoover, J. D., & Allegretti, A. M. (2023). Questioning the Practice of Participation: Critical Reflections on Participatory Mapping as a Research Tool. *Applied Geography (Sevenoaks, England)*, *152*, 102900. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2023.102900

Martens, N. C. M., & Lehmkuhl, D. (2020). Cartography of the Space of Theories: An Interpretational Chart for Fields That Are Both (Dark) Matter and Spacetime. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part B Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*, *72*, 217–236. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.shpsb.2020.08.004

McDonough, J. K. (2023). Leibniz on Time, Space, and Relativity. *The Philosophical Review*, *132*(3), 495–499. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1215/00318108-10469538

Nam, B. H., English, A. S., & Dai, K. (2024). Intercultural Capital and Ambiguous Loss in In-Between Space: A Digital Ethnography of Anglo-Sino Academic Families Amid China's Transformation into the Post-Pandemic Era. *Identities (Yverdon)*, *31*(5), 645–664. DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2024.2309825

Pavlovskaya, M. (2018). Critical GIS as a Tool for Social Transformation. *The Canadian Geographer. Geographe Canadien*, *62*(1), 40–54. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/cag.12438

Pebesma, E., & Bivand, R. (2023). 'Spatial Data Science: With Applications in R.' *Spatial Data Science: With Applications in R.* .DOI: 10.1201/9780429459016

Ren, C., Wang, W., & Luo, H. (2010). 'Research on the GIS-Based Business Decision System. *2010 18th International Conference on Geoinformatics. Geoinformatics 2010*. DOI: 10.1109/GEOINFORMATICS.2010.5567767

Ritella, G. (2025). *'The Cultural Dimension of Space-Time in Technology-Mediated Learning.' Technology as Cultural Mediator: Theories and Experiences from Different Contexts*. Springer.

Roth, R. E. (2021). Cartographic Design as Visual Storytelling: Synthesis and Review of Map-Based Narratives, Genres, and Tropes. *The Cartographic Journal*, *58*(1), 83–114. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/00087041.2019.1633103

Rovelli, C. (2006). 'Chapter 2: The Disappearance of Space and Time.' *Philosophy and Foundations of Physics.* (Vol. 1, Issue C). DOI: 10.1016/S1871-1774(06)01002-3

Schulze, U. (2021). "GIS works!"—But Why, How, and for Whom? Findings From a Systematic Review. *Transactions in GIS*, *25*(2), 768–804. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/tgis.12704

Sh, S.SH. (2015). Application of Geographic Information System (GIS) in Forest Management. *Journal of Geography & Natural Disasters.*, *05*(03). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.4172/2167-0587.1000145

Sullivan, D. O. (2006). Geographical Information Science: Critical GIS. *Progress in Human Geography*, *30*(6). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1191/0309132505ph581pr

Tuan, Y. F. (1979). Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective. *Philosophy and Geography*, 387–427. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-009-9394-5_19

Webber, Q. M. R., Albery, G. F., Farine, D. R., Pinter-Wollman, N., Sharma, N., Spiegel, O., Vander Wal, E., & Manlove, K. (2023). Behavioural Ecology at the Spatial–Social Interface. *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, *98*(3), 868–886. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/brv.12934 PMID: 36691262

Zeunert, J., Hawken, S., & Gowers, J. (2025). Visualising and Valuing Urban Agriculture for Land Use Planning: A Critical GIS Analysis of Sydney and Neighbouring Regions. *Land (Basel)*, *14*(4), 854. DOI: 10.3390/land14040854

Zormpas, E., Queen, R., Comber, A., & Cockell, S. J. (2023). Mapping the Transcriptome: Realizing the Full Potential of Spatial Data Analysis. *Cell*, *186*(26), 5677–5689. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.cell.2023.11.003 PMID: 38065099

Chapter 11
Poiesis and the Emergence of New Knowledge:
Pushing Paradigmatical Boundaries for Interdisciplinary Research

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub
https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5735-305X
Ravensbourne University, London, UK

Augustin Bado
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2760-4042
Univesitat Ramon Llull, Spain & Université Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Burkina Faso

ABSTRACT

This chapter offers the five philosophical branches as the quintessential paradigms for interdisciplinary research. Specifically, interdisciplinary research seeking a poiesis of sorts. That is, through investigation and study, by bringing new knowledge into existence. In a researcher's chapter, philosophy serves to justify the value and relevance of the study described. In interdisciplinary research, where multiple disciplines tackle often highly complex problems, the identification and subsequent operation within a chosen paradigm can be problematic. Yet, getting it right facilities both the elevation of research quality and the poiesis of research. Mobilising a Gadamerian hermeneutic methodology, this chapter offers a how-to guide to the

philosophies that interdisciplinary researchers may want to consider especially with a view to pushing disciplinary boundaries and bringing forth an ecstasis of meaning and interpretation that is transformative.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the importance of philosophical theory in interdisciplinary research, and how it may be utilised to animate and advance such research especially within the textual contexts that data gathering and analysis occur. Its contribution to knowledge is in its presentation of the applicability, depth, and teleology of the five key philosophical branches - ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics, and aesthetics - as a guide for interdisciplinary poietic research. While researchers of every discipline are accustomed to contextualising their methodologies to epistemological and ontological criteria, they are less likely to paradigmatically consider their research in light of the beliefs and assumptions of logic, ethics and aesthetics, even if they implicitly apply them. However, all five philosophical fields - and philosophy is the pursuit and love, i.e. *philo*) of wisdom (*sophia*) - represent significant opportunities for enhancing the relevance and reflexive depth of research and for reducing the overproduction of defunct or siloed knowledge. With particular attention to the analytical questions and themes that align with each field, this chapter articulates the poietic potential of philosophical paradigms in text-based interdisciplinary research.

As a guide, the chapter pinpoints the key questions that such researchers may want to consider when presenting, evaluating, and/or justifying their research claims. It does so within the context of the theory of *poiesis* and the fundamental impulse (force, act, process) that it shares with research: that of bringing something new into existence viz. consciousness, the public domain, or to intellectual discourse and debate. More often associated with artistic or poetical creation, *poiesis* may also be extended to the type of ideational or conceptual creation found in, for example, business (i.e., new brands, services, products, operational processes, etc.) and in research (i.e. when researchers try to advance their fields through rigorous theoretical development).

In its etymology the Greek *poiēsis* (ποίησις) is rooted in *poiéō* (ποιέω), 'to make.' The Oxford Dictionary of Etymology (1966) describes *poeisis* as 'cause to be, cause (something to happen),' connects it to 'maker' and further synonymises it with '*manufacturer* [authors' emphasis] creator, poet.' So, *poiesis* has the causative meanings that many of the chapters in this text on meaning and interpretation are associating with the research act and process, and particularly with the value of knowledge claims.

Creswell (2003) defines a knowledge claim as *what* was learnt or accomplished through the research and considering *how* it was learnt and accomplished. Both the 'what' and 'how' of a knowledge/research claim can be validly expressed as the value or importance of what was discovered through the research and how the discovery was made. The *meaning of* a thing, in this case the research and its outcome, is by definition, its value and importance. Thus, the contention in this chapter is that *poiesis* as 'bringing,' 'causing,' or 'making' meaning, would be useful as a framework of interdisciplinary research and as an evaluative benchmark for:

- Why the research is needed bearing in mind recent discourses on the crisis of overpublishing in academic and scientific research (see e.g., Boulton & Koley, 2024; Frodeman, 2014a).
- How best to approach the research design so that bias is minimised and 'study power' (Ioannidis, 2005) increased.
- What the value of the knowledge or research claim is.

It may seem counterintuitive to propose a concept that seems unashamedly dependent on bias. Indeed, the successful poet, entrepreneur, or creator making meaning is likely to have invested much of themselves into that making. However, it is researchers' selfhood that drives them to identify a knowledge gap and motivates them to fill it. Likewise with the entrepreneur whose experience of the world spurs them to identify a gap in the market. In such instances, selfhood is intersubjectively shared with others and becomes a part of the 'objective' world when the meaning-making process is brought to a research community that accesses and builds on it; to a market whose consumers purchase and use the new product or service; to aesthetes who build libraries of literary works or art collections.

Accordingly, and in line with Heidegger's rejection of methodology in favour of 'the individuality of an event' (Frodeman, 2014b), this chapter encourages interdisciplinary researchers to consider the conditions in which their research and knowledge claims would be validly *poietic* in view of the analytical contexts of the philosophical branches. For Heidegger (1954) *poiesis* is a 'bringing forth' he analogises to a butterfly emerging from its cocoon. In this chapter, interdisciplinary research that eschews methodism in favour of the expansive questioning of the philosophical branches is well-placed to 'bring forth' emerging knowledge more capable of responding to the complex problems of interdisciplinary studies than research operating within restrictive methodologies. Such researches transcend disciplinary boundaries for insights, information, techniques, processes etc. that cohere into an advancement in 'fundamental understanding or ... solutions [that] are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice,' (National Academies, 2004, cited in Hu et al., 2024).

Thus, this chapter is a guide to research *poiesis*. Poietical research involves the production of *needed* knowledge and meaning making that occurs through questioning. It is ethical and logical, relevant to the perceived realities of the investigated problem and transcends researcher subjectivity for the shared goodness (e.g., the solution, understanding, or meaning) and living well being sought through the research. It is both a philosophy of interdisciplinarity and an invitation to scholars to think of research as a creative and transformative activity rather than a mere description of a perceived reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is an examination of *poiesis* and its related concept, *ecstasis*. It pertains to interdisciplinary research and its inherent intent to disrupt paradigmatical boundaries and disciplinary logic. Therefore, the section is an outline of the characteristics of interdisciplinary research and in relation to the core philosophical branches: ontology, an offshoot of metaphysics (reality), epistemology (knowledge), logic (reason), ethics (right or good), and aesthetics (beauty). These fields indicate the expansive potential of interdisciplinary research.

Towards Transformative Knowledge: *Poiesis*, *Ecstasis* and a Creative Evaluation of Interdisciplinary Research

What is knowledge and how can researchers' knowledge claims be conceptualised as *poiesis* or *ecstasis?* This questioning allows reflection on the foundations of knowledge, and consideration of *poiesis* as the act of bringing forth new knowledge or of transforming knowledge into meaning or meaningfulness. It thus serves as an evaluative tool in interdisciplinary research. Indeed, the question 'what is knowledge?' is present in all history of philosophy, and the responses vary according to the era and systems of thought. In classical epistemological theories, for example, knowledge is understood as faithful representation of reality regardless of the subject. It is therefore assimilated, through mental structures, language or logic, to the perceived or reproduced world (Descartes, 2009; Kant, 2001).

However, this approach has been criticized by constructivist, hermeneutic and poststructuralist epistemologies which insist on creative, subjective and processual dimensions of knowledge (Varela et al., 1993; Morin, 1986; Gadamer, 1996). Thus, to know is not merely to describe reality but to bring it about differently: to transform a situation, generate meaning, shift frameworks. In this context, poiesis and ecstasis - philosophical concepts rooted in Greek tradition - permit the rethinking of knowledge as a 'creative event.'

In the field of epistemocriticism, the poetology of knowledge understood as *poiesis,* contrasts with theorical knowledge (*episteme*), and highlights its contingent and productive dimension. According to Marx (1977), knowledge of being *as* being is defined as *episteme*, as science, but more precisely as knowledge that is addressed to its object contemplatively, theoretically. This theorical knowledge connects with the other two fundamental forms of human activity that Aristotle also calls knowledge: (i) poetic knowledge (knowing how to produce something) and (ii) practical knowledge (knowing how to act). While *poiesis* and praxis each refer to a particular purpose beyond knowledge itself, theorical knowledge has its purpose *in* itself. In *Aristotle* (Randall & Woodbridge, 1960) the idea of *poiesis* as 'creative act' differs from 'theorical praxis.' But for Heidegger (2001), *poiesis* is the process by which something comes from no-being into being: it is a revealing and opening of the world. In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, he writes: '*Poiesis* is what allows that which was not, to appear,' (p. 52): much like the research process allows what is not yet known to become known and when known to alter a perception, an understanding, a field.

So, research *poiesis* is the process by which the researcher makes new meaning appear, reveals an original configuration of reality, or reorders the theoretical chaos within a disciplinary domain. Similarly, *ecstasis,* meaning 'to step outside oneself,' refers to a subject's capacity to move beyond their cognitive references to welcome the alterity of reality. In Bataille (1970), *ecstasis* is the condition of any experience of transcendence including intellectual ones. It involves a 'crossing over,' a loss of the overly rational subject to receive a more vivid form of truth. In the field of research, *ecstasis* refers to the moment when the researcher is affected, displaced, or transformed by their object. This moment is essential in interdisciplinary research which requires the researcher to cross disciplinary boundaries and accept the discomfort of deconstructing their own categories. In this sense, *ecstasis* completes *poiesis* to mean an existential, affective and subjective condition.

In response to disciplinary fragmentation, Lingner (2011) suggests that interdisciplinary research may generate knowledge as *poiesis*. For him, interdisciplinary research possesses a specific potential strength to solve ambivalent, uncertain, difficult, ambitious and socially relevant questions. Because, when we speak of theory,' 'praxis' and '*poiesis,'* we clearly distinguish theorical, practical and poetic knowledge as a basis for conceptualizing knowledge claims as acts of creation. One can then relate the actions of thinking, doing and creating, to disciplines of theoretical, practical and creative knowledge (Potur & Kayihan, 2011).

Thus, the interdisciplinary researcher should aim to create a third space where heterogenous modes of thought generate transformative knowledge, and where evaluation is based on the researcher's capacity to bring forth a living transformative knowledge that is situated in a space of tension between different disciplines.

Hence, Morin's (1986) call for a 'complex thought' capable of inventing new forms of intelligibility from tensions and interweaving.

Interdisciplinary Research: Issues, Definitions and Disruptions with Disciplinary Logic

The notion of interdisciplinarity is a dynamic space of encounter between various disciplines aimed at generating knowledge through exchanges and reflexion (Camacho-Hübner, 2007). This is a reciprocal form where the sharing of critical resources results in equal contributions from the different disciplines involved (Belle & Echeverri, 2017). Interdisciplinarity is also understood as a methodological and intellectual approach that combines knowledge, methods and perspectives from various disciplines in order to understand or solve complex problems. Unlike the simple juxtaposition of viewpoints (as in multi-disciplinarity), interdisciplinarity involves an active integration of conceptual frameworks, a critical confrontation of epistemologies and a transformation of the objects themselves (Klein, 1990). The definition from the *Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économiques* (OCDE, 1972) is also significant: 'Interdisciplinarity refers to an interaction between two or various disciplines that may range from the simple communication of ideas to the mutual integration of concepts, methodologies, processes, epistemologies, terminologies and data.'

Interdisciplinary research addresses difficult questions such as articulations of complex realities (e.g., sustainability or globalisation), power relations between the disciplines exploring, investigating or furthering understanding of such realities, the consideration of relevance and import of subjectivities in these contexts, or the production of knowledge that meets academic publication standards (Arpin & Lefèvre, 2018). Thus, interdisciplinary research continues to grow because it is more cognitively agile and can respond to global issues. As examples of specific and complex challenges, Morin (2005) and Nicolescu (2008) evoke climate change, global health, artificial intelligence, migrations, or social inequalities: these cannot be adequately understood within the boundaries of a single discipline. Indeed, there are clear cognitive and epistemological benefits from active integration of various research disciplines. But what is the fundamental difference between disciplinary and interdisciplinary research?

Kuhn (1962) points out that disciplinary research relies on the specialization of knowledge. Each discipline constructs its objects, methods, validity norms and paradigms. This model, inherited from scientific modernity, facilitated considerable advances through the rigor and depth it offers. However, it also produced limitations. Although disciplines can functionate alone, those that do cannot promote understanding of real-world problems because such problems tend to cut across domains.

Hence the need for interdisciplinarity which allows for the activation of forms of knowledge such as *poiesis* in contemporary society and the pursuit of solutions to technical and scientific issues to enhance human knowledge and its associated practical capabilities (Lingner, 2011).

Interdisciplinarity further generates significative knowledge by contextualizing information and values. It supports rational knowledge for specific goals, situating it within a value structure that contributes to a broad and deep understanding of data. This data united with values, facts and sensations, acquire a character of virtue, grounded in the contributions from empirical research that offer a well-founded and general perspective (Cortijo & Martinez-Roig, 2022). In interdisciplinary research, because the object cannot be fully exhausted by a single perspective, there is mixed inquiry protocols, analysis models or interpretative frameworks that enable researchers to interrogate the presuppositions of their own disciplines, to negotiate with other logics of evidence and to shift their perspective.

Unsurprisingly, then, interdisciplinarity is part of a larger movement that Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009) calls the 'ecology of knowledges:' an approach that values the diversity of rationalities, epistemic cultures, and methods of producing and validating knowledge. From this perspective, interdisciplinarity is not merely an academic method. It is an ethical and political act aimed at reconfiguring power relations between expert-knowledge and profane-knowledge, between north and south. It is in this sense that interdisciplinary research can become transformative, viz. poietic, not only in its results, but in its very modes of questioning, acting, and thinking. Thus, for illustrative purposes, it is useful to analyse three examples from different fields - public health, artificial intelligence and the Anthropocene - for the types of paradigms mobilized, the tools used, the implicit presuppositions, and the forms of knowledge and signification produced, so as to provide a snapshot of how Interdisciplinary research done well is approached.

Example 1: Public Health and Social Sciences: Study on Vaccinal Inequalities

An interdisciplinary study conducted by Dubé et al. (2013) on vaccinal reticence articulates epistemology, sociology and communication. The authors mobilize a mixed quantitative-comprehensive paradigm, combining statistical data and qualitative interviews.

■   *Paradigm and tools:* The paradigm is post-positivist, assuming a plurality of determinants (biological, cultural, political) of vaccination behaviour. Tools include statistical analysis, semi-directive interviews, and cross-disciplinary literature reviews.

- *Presuppositions:* The research is based on the idea that medical science alone is insufficient to understand social resistances. Knowledge is situated, and its validity depends on the articulation of facts and narratives, between health norms and lived experiences (Latour, 2001).
- *Results:* This approach produces meaning in context and reveals the symbolic dimensions of vaccinal rejections, often invisible in purely biomedical studies. The knowledge produced is not merely descriptive, but also explicative and interpretive.

Example 2: Artificial Intelligence and Ethics: Enhanced Humanity or Technological Power

The human brain project program (HBP), funded by the European Union, brings together neuroscience, informatics, ethics, law and philosophy to model the human brain and its applications in artificial intelligence (Aicardi et al., 2020).

- *Paradigm and tools:* The project is based on a computational and systemic paradigm but also integrates critical approaches from the human sciences. It combines neuronal simulations, ethical reflexivity (via ELSA studies – Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects), and risk analysis.
- *Presuppositions:* The research postulates that cognitive technologies transform the human condition, and that such a transformation cannot be understood without dialogue between reflexive and technical disciplines (Floridi, 2014).
- *Results:* The principal contribution is the co-construction of ethical norms integrated into technological design. The research therefore becomes poetic (Heidegger, 2001), insofar as it brings forth new signification of the human, the living and the "thinking being".

Example 3: Anthropocene Studies: Climate, Narratives and Interdisciplinarity

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) collective represents global interdisciplinary research on climate. In this approach dominated by natural sciences, critical research projects integrate history, anthropology, geography and philosophy, such as in the "*Narrating the Anthropocene*" project (Bonneuil & Fressoz, 2013).

- *Paradigm and tools:* These works adopt a critical and constructivist paradigm, rejecting a purely naturalist reading of the Anthropocene. They use

discourse analyse, genealogy, archival study, and narrative devices (stories, fiction, visualizations).

- *Presuppositions***:** Researchers assume that representations of ecological crisis are themselves political constructions, and that their study can reveal mechanisms of power, denial or inaction (Haraway, 2016).

- *Results:* The knowledge produced is epistemic and political: it aims to denaturalize climatic evidences, highlight marginalized voices, and propose other narratives of the future. It produces meaning not only to understand the world, but to symbolically reconfigure it.

In sum, the analysis of these three cases shows the diversity of interdisciplinary modalities and their capacity to produce transformative knowledge, rooted in contemporary problematical contexts. Interdisciplinarity cannot be reduced to a methodology, but constitutes a critical and intellectual praxis, utilizing plural paradigms, crossing disciplinary fields, and oriented toward the production of meaning. It invites a redefinition of empirical knowledge as an ethical and poietic event.

Philosophical Branches & Interdisciplinary Research

Interdisciplinary dialogue oriented to a theory of knowledge provides an essential framework for realizing empirical research. In this process, it is possible to associate sensibility, emotions and feelings (Chamois, 2023) with the five principal branches of philosophy which can be convocated within their derivatives (philosophy of mind, axiology, philosophy of language, political philosophy, philosophy of science, phenomenology, etc.). These key branches are distinct disciplines but in the context of research *poiesis*, their questions and assumptions can be holistically combined to push disciplinary boundaries and therefore knowledge into new directions.

Indeed, this latter type of agreement is the aim of literature on interdisciplinary research. As Morin (1986) noted, to solve complex problems, it is important to *bring together* various disciplines. In this convergence and collectiveness, interdisciplinary research is better placed to resolve problems. However, as Bammer (2013) argued, its concrete implementation presents axiological, methodological and epistemological challenges. As she explains, 'there is no substantial, well-established, internationally accepted methodology. There are no standard procedures for deciding, for example, which disciplines to include, what each discipline will contribute or how the different findings will be melded together,' (Bammer, 2013).

To explicate this, the following table aligns the characteristics of *poiesis* to each of the five branches of philosophy in relation to interdisciplinary text-based research:

Table 1. Poiesis and Philosophical Branches in Relation to Interdisciplinary Text-Based Research

Philosophical branches	Poietical Character (central dimension)	Link with interdisciplinary research based on texts	Coordinated characteristic
Ontology (Metaphysics)	Openness to the world and ontological un-attainment	Text as event, opened process and in-becoming	Ontological un-attainment
Epistemology	Situated production of knowledge	Recognition of plural contextual validity and horizon waiting	Intersubjectivity
Logic	Discursive structuration and argumentative coherency	Argumentative alignment, articulation between readings and disciplinary approaches	Contextuality
Ethics	Responsibility and dialogical participation	Reflexive practice, respect of marginalized voice and co-construction of meaning	Dialogical responsibility
Aesthetics	Sensible experience and imaginative meaning	Critical hermeneutics, interpretive fecundity, openness to alterity	Hermeneutical creativity

Table 1 is an articulation of a philosophy of interdisciplinary research which integrates methodological pluralism, dialogical thinking and *poiesis* as the horizon. The validity of the knowledge drawn from this type of articulation depends, following Hacking's (1999) notion of interventionist realism, on its capacity to effect action in or experience of the world. This knowledge, in line with Morin's (1999, p.64) conception of an epistemology of complexity, is interdependent, emerges from a circularity of causes and effects, and is incomplete but dialogical to allow for contradictory positions (rather than a forced synthesis) because 'complexity calls for a knowledge that connects.'

'HOW-TO' GUIDES FOR RESEARCHERS: PRINCIPLES AND RECONFIGURATIONS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Empirical research is always oriented, implicitly or explicitly, by philosophical frameworks that guide researchers on how to problematize, interpret and validate knowledge. Classical poetic theory is part of this process. It is a historical and theoretical foundation for conceiving interdisciplinary research as creation of meaning or production of knowledge (Randall & Woodbridge, 1960). Philosophical frameworks have long been used as guides for researchers in general, and are usually realised in well-defined disciplinary traditions, such as empiricism, rationalism, pragmatism or hermeneutics. However, in the context of increasing knowledge complexity for

global problems, interdisciplinary research calls these classical guides into question. It demands that they be adapted, diversified and reinvented.

For example, in Bergson (1909), the concepts of 'ontological creativity' - duration, intuition, vital momentum, becoming, which touch metaphysics, ethics, aesthetic and science - offer interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks for guiding empirical researchers. Indeed, in contrast to Darwinian evolution by natural selection, Bergson's creative evolution involves a process of creation and innovation. Organisms are not merely passive to their environment but participate in their own evolution. Additionally, 'interdisciplinary ethics' – bioethics and interdisciplinarity – promotes dialogue between medicine, law, social sciences and ecology within research practices (Galati, 2023). Likewise, within philosophy and literary theory (and illustrative of how ethics, aesthetics and epistemology can converge in global debates), the notions of 'justice,' 'ecology,' 'technology' can be reconfigured in an ethical-interpretative *poiesis* (Sanders, 2022).

Indeed, the link between semantics, *poiesis* and hermeneutics in Ricoeur (1978) is useful in integrating philosophical branches through an interdisciplinary approach. Ricoeur shows how language can be extended beyond its limits by continually discovering new resonances within itself. By recognizing the fundamental power of language in constructing the world that we perceive, Ricoeur reveals the processes by which linguistic imagination creates and recreates meaning through metaphor. Peirce (1955) moves along the same lines by proposing a logical and semiotic model that combines epistemology, logic and aesthetics as forms of *poiesis.* Thus, philosophical disciplines and science have mutual synergy within an interdisciplinary framework as a *poiesis* of knowledge (De Haro, 2013).

Designing a 'How-to Guide' for such research would entail creating an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that orients research activity, structures the questions posed, the criteria for validity and the goals of knowledge. This guide would include:

- **An ontology** - what do we want to know?
- **An epistemology** - how can we know it?
- **A logic** - how did we apply reason to enhance the value, axiology, of the research?
- **An ethic** - what are the consequences of the knowledge produced?
- **An aesthetic** - how can the research contribute to an experience of the sublime?

Such plurality presents a risk of relativism or reductionism. Researchers might be tempted either to relativize them all (everything is equally valid), or to impose one as dominant: these are two dead ends for true interdisciplinarity (Jullien, 2006). Thus, the guide must be flexible. It is no longer a matter of adopting a single 'How-to

Guide,' but of configuring relevant areas that allow for translations between different forms of knowledge or, more importantly, to prompt researchers on questions they may want to consider to push the boundaries of their research.

Text-Based Research *Poiesis*: The Hermeneutic Impulse of the 'How-to' Guide

Bammer (2013) suggested that the question of what is properly interdisciplinary research remains unanswered because there is no clear "methodology" that is specifically interdisciplinary. It is the contention in this chapter that *poiesis* is an appropriate conceptual framework that, when articulated in the light of the five key philosophical branches, would function effectively as a "methodology" for interdisciplinary research. Importantly however, this framework of poietical knowledge and meaning through the questioning of the philosophical branches, is appropriate only because it takes on board Frodeman's (2014b) critique of Bammer's assumption that a homogenous, unified or agreed upon methodology would advance interdisciplinarity. Much like Frodeman (2014a), emphasis in this chapter is on a Heideggerian notion of knowledge and meaning as an event of becoming (the caterpillar becoming butterfly, melting snow becoming a cascade, knowledge becoming meaning) to enhance the utility, longevity or continuation and value of the knowledge claims emerging from interdisciplinary research, i.e., to limit the overproduction of knowledge that Frodeman lamented.

When knowledge claims must be justified in the poietical terms outlined in this chapter, they will be made only when they *can be* justified in those terms. Justification in these terms is the demonstration that the knowledge claim arising from the interdisciplinary research has strong capacity to transform some real-world issue. Or to paraphrase Frodeman (2014a), that the knowledge claim correlates with a good life, i.e., that it is not made just for the sake of making but for bringing forth some good. Defined in this way, *poiesis* is not a rigid theoretical framework or methodology: it is a requirement for interdisciplinary researchers to demonstrate that they have opened-up the investigated problem to the multiplicity of perspectives (on knowledge, reality, being, identity, reason, ethics, etc.) held within the philosophical fields. Frodeman (2014b) made this point well when he stated the following:

  '… *someone who seeks to promote an interdisciplinary perspective on a problem needs to be able to do more than list propositions. The project of creating a discipline of interdisciplinarity, with its accompanying dependence on a rigorous methodology, brings too much theoretical firepower to our problems. Interdisciplinary success is more a matter of practicing a set of virtues — openness to new perspectives, a willingness to admit the inadequacies of one's own point of*

view, to be wrong and to play the fool, and generosity in interpreting the position and motives of others.'

But why doesn't *poiesis* in the deeply philosophical context described amount to the 'theoretical firepower' Frodeman warns against? The simple answer is that the recommendation here is not to work within specific theories relevant to the philosophical branches (as researchers working within a research paradigm do, e.g., positivists with quantitative methods, pragmatists with mixed-methods, interpretivists with qualitative methods). On the contrary, it is to interrogate the research process *and its outcomes* in light of the questions and worldviews of the philosophical branches, and in text-based research, to evaluate hermeneutical aspects and resultant meaning in those areas.

As interrogated by numerous thinkers (e.g., Derrida 1967; Gadamer, 1975, 1996), text meaning unfolds more or less through the interplay between subjective interpretations of an objective shared language system. Likewise, qualitative research has meaning unfold through the coding, categorising, and thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, etc. With text-based research (qualitative data from transcripts, written materials including journals, open-ended responses to survey questions, diary reflections on experiences, online content, advertisements, canonical texts, etc.) it is used, with criticality and rigour, to develop in-depth understanding of 'human experiences, beliefs, perspectives, and phenomena,' (Haroen, 2023).

One such critical and rigorous approach comes from Gadamer (1975), a student of Heidegger (the primo theorist of *poiesis*), who offered a phenomenology of text interpretation that promotes human understanding and its existential relevance and meaning. Gadamer's hermeneutic phenomenology is, like qualitative data analysis, processual and emerging. According to Alsaigh and Coyne (2021), it is not a *rigidly* structured methodology. It may be adapted by the researcher so long as it remains faithful to Gadamer's (1975, cited in Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021) persistence with textual understanding. Consequently, it is complimentary to the *poietic* ambitions of this chapter, to Frodeman's (2014a, 2014b) and Heidegger's (1954) affirmation of openness to the event of meaning, and to a presentation of research *poiesis*, i.e., claims that emerge from creative and processual dimensions of knowledge (Varela et al., 1993; Morin, 1986; Gadamer, 1996), claims that bring forth, transform and generate meaning through processes that have pushed against paradigmatical boundaries.

Ajjawi and Higgs (2007, cited in and explicated by Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021) offer the textual researcher working in Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology a multi-stage analytical process. Below, these have been aligned with the questions of the philosophical branches and with those from the field of Integration and Implementation Sciences (I2S) that Bammer (2013) sees as a useful consideration

for 'disciplining interdisciplinarity.' Citing them from Frodeman (2014b), these questions are recontextualised and mapped with other considerations. Together, they form the overall impulse of the analytical context of poietical research as follows:

Table 2. Key Areas and Questions for Poietic Text-Based Interdisciplinary Research

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Analytical Stage (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007)	Key Analytical Questions (Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021)	I2S Questions in Bammer (2013, from Frodeman, 2014b) Interdisciplinary Research	Complimentary Branch of Philosophy	Key Poietic Questions
Immersion	Who is the researcher dialoguing with (e.g. texts) and in what form is this "dialogue"? What are the actual contexts and aspects of the research	What reality is the interdisciplinary research aiming to address?	1.Ontology (sub-discipline of Metaphysics).	What is the openness to the world and to text as event, to meaning as becoming (what texts and why, which aspects or types of texts and why)? How may the researcher's emotions and subjectivity be relevant to accessing the reality being explored so that the exploration brings forth an event of actual (living well) impact?
Understanding	How is the text read, interpreted and coded?	What is the interdisciplinary research dealing with and which knowledge is synthesized, which epistemological domains and questions considered, and which aspects of cognition, knowledge, the world, etc. looked at?	2.Epistemology	What interpretative lens or hermeneutic is applied? What would 'knowledge' look like in this context and what definition of knowledge is accepted? What is the situatedness of knowledge, i.e., limits to knowledge – researcher perceptions, memory, introspection, epistemic content, etc. What is cognitive success in the context being worked in? What plural contexts are recognised?

Table 2. Continued

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Analytical Stage (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007)	Key Analytical Questions (Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021)	I2S Questions in Bammer (2013, from Frodeman, 2014b) Interdisciplinary Research	Complimentary Branch of Philosophy	Key Poietic Questions
Abstraction	How is the coded reading and interpretation categorised?	How is the interdisciplinary research undertaken by whom, when and, importantly *why* in the ways stated? Which key debates and arguments have informed what has been done, from which disciplines, and why?	3.Logic	How is reason applied and how could inferences be therefore valid and true in light of broader arguments, readings and across disciplines? In what ways is there coherence of the applied reasoning and ideas, and how valid are the inferences?

Table 2. Continued

Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Analytical Stage (Ajjawi and Higgs, 2007)	Key Analytical Questions (Alsaigh and Coyne, 2021)	I2S Questions in Bammer (2013, from Frodeman, 2014b) Interdisciplinary Research	Complimentary Branch of Philosophy	Key Poietic Questions
Synthesis and Theme Development; and Illumination and Illustration of Phenomena	What themes are developing and how can the researcher reasonably and responsibly challenge them? How can the literature on interdisciplinary research and *poiesis* be reasonably and responsibly linked to the identified themes?	Reflexively, who benefits from the interdisciplinary research? Which marginalised voices? What circumstances influence the value, good, and objectivity of the research and whose responsibility are these?	4. Ethics	How reflexive and what evidence of reflexivity is there in relation to the ethical approach, framework, consideration, the researcher ascribes to and to what extent can it validate the dialogical and co-development of themes as right and, in the contexts of the investigation, participants, outcomes and claims, good? What correlation is there between the claims and their real-world implications and good?
Integration and Critique	What are the critiques and final interpretations of the emergent themes and how may they be fused together into a claim that is whole and trustworthy?	What are the interdisciplinary research claims and outcomes of embodied and/or intellectual understanding? What has been the interaction between sensible experience and imaginative meaning and how has that interaction been defined, impacted by, or influenced by otherness?	5. Aesthetics	After integrating theory and primary findings, to what extent can the overall integration be considered *poietic* and how may it contribute to a universal intellectual sublimity and/or embodied understanding of being, becoming, or otherness?

These key areas reappear in the following 'How-to Guide' as considerations and evaluative concerns for the interdisciplinary researcher wanting to demonstrate the real-world significance of their research claims.

THE 'HOW-TO' GUIDE: EVALUATING RESEARCH CLAIMS AND OUTCOMES

In the philosophy of dialogue, there is emphasis on the relationality and inter-action of human existence. That relational dialogue may be textual, and it is validly "dialogue" if those works are publicly available and can be responded to, or is itself responding to what is publicly available. In this textual and dialogic context, there are benefits to the analytical questions of the philosophical fields as researchers presenting claims and making them available for others, must be clear on what those claims are and why they should be taken seriously. Typically, this has been to comment on the reliability (i.e., repeatability and consistency) and validity (accuracy) of those claims. Maintaining these standards is a necessary and vital part of research as it asks for attentiveness in the design of research instruments, in the data collection process, and in the analysis of data. However, research *poiesis* requires a more demanding evaluation in relation to how it:

- Brings forth transformative knowledge or knowledge that was not yet known.
- Makes new meaning appear or reveals a new configuration of reality by reordering theoretical chaos.
- Finds a synergy within complex and diverse perspectives that transcend their specificity.

For illustrative purposes, the following 'How to Guide' utilises hypothetical interdisciplinary text-based research into the correlation between sustainability and globalisation. This *hypothetical* project is funded by a US Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and comprises teams of British and US researchers. Its research question is, 'how has globalisation contributed to (or inhibited) sustainability efforts within Africa?' which it is investigating in view of Pogge's (2005) call for a more legitimate and just global order. Pogge's request came alongside strong criticism of the developed world for failing to acknowledge or correct its role in global regimes, oppressive global institutions, and the violence, poverty and hunger these regimes and institutions cause across borders. The project's textual contexts are written testimonies and reflections on the everyday experiences of those living in areas without needed development or infrastructure, i.e., with regular power outages, limited water, limited access to healthcare, etc. Also included are: social media content on everyday life in Africa; government policy documents; Africa's ESG approaches and documents; global corporations' sustainability statements; news stories; data and reports on the weather anomalies; and the like.

Ontology: Immersion and Dialogue on the Reality to Be Known

As being-to-the-world (Heidegger, 2001) *poiesis* requires researchers to participate within an existential and intersubjective dialogic frame in which meaning is always becoming, never closed (Derrida & Johnson, 1977). In interdisciplinary research text is an event, a process of continuous transformation rather than a stable object: so 'globalisation', 'sustainability' and 'Africa' are not to be treated as static conceptions during textual analysis. Indeed, ontology encourages questions on their nature of being, reality and the entities that compose or shape these conceptions and compare and evaluate them in relation to their ontic manifestations. This ontology would require researchers to immerse themselves in wide-ranging texts and responses from a multiplicity of voices, in and out of Africa, in order to extensively map out the reality as is for the stated region. This approach should be standard for any research. For research *poeisis*, there is more requirement to explicitly acknowledge the diversity and range accessed *before* explaining which of that variety has been accommodated in the research, and how/why so.

In essence, when researchers ask businesses or communities to indicate in surveys or in transcribed interviews, their global contexts and approaches to sustainability and/or how globalisation has impacted them, they are ontologically asking 'how are these concepts real to you?' 'What does "living well" mean for you?' This questioning perceives *poiesis* as a form of creation that brings forth new being into the world. It obliges researchers to submerge themselves in an ontological interrogation of the perceived reality being investigated – e.g., which groups say there is climate change, which groups deny climate change, which argue that environmental degradation is an expected consequence of development therefore improving environmental quality is a responsibility of the developed world - to show how they were fully immersed in its existential quagmires including ontologies of relevant governments, climate change activists, conspiracy theorists, anti-globalisation rhetoric, etc. in relation to appropriate fields.

This type of immersion at the start of the research process should enable researchers to demonstrate, at its end when presenting findings, *what* they can claim to know about reality and being in relation to any of the definitions of research *poiesis*, e.g.:

- The robustness of the consideration of different perspectives of reality within the demarcated area.
- The scope and extent of the identification and implications of the diversity of realities within the area.
- The acknowledgement of the import of the researchers' assumptions, worldviews and conceptions of reality (and living well) and how it differs from those dialogued with in texts, documents, transcribed interviews, etc.

Epistemology: Understanding and Interpretation to Support Claims to Know

Poiesis emphasizes that all textual knowledge is produced (and not merely discovered). It underlines the constitutive role of subjectivity, the horizon of expectation (Jauss, 1978) and interpretive frameworks (Fish, 1980). In interdisciplinary research, *poiesis* is translated into the recognition of contextual validity (credibility, transferability, confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) rather than universal positivist criteria, and bearing in mind that text-based research would always require the articulation of the codes utilised for interpretating texts.

The primary analytical questions in epistemology are fundamentally how we know what we know, and what are the conditions, sources, and limits of knowledge. In the context of *poiesis*, epistemology asks how new knowledge emerges and what makes us recognize it as valid. For example, in the project's interdisciplinary research team (e.g., science, economics, politics, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and ethics), each discipline has its own manner of 'reality' as well as its own notion of 'knowledge' and if and how it is discovered or constructed. The scientist is concerned with empirical data on changes in climates, extreme weather events, and their causes or catalysts; economists on corruption, debt, institutional quality; politicians on legislations and policies restricting/promoting African development, or globalised countries' exportations of pollution, recycling, landmines and their implications for their own countries or finances; the anthropologists on how sustainability and globalisation are 'enacted' culturally and socially in the West versus in Africa and comparably with another region; sociologists on how the wellbeing of all members of African societies are being impacted, and what social equalities are being destabilised through globalisation or sustainability; linguists on African notions of meaning and of speaking about knowledge and cultural heritage; and ethicists on if it is 'right' and 'good' for Eurocentric or Western organisations to set or demand sustainability targets from communities labouring to produce food, housing, and infrastructure in communities whose natural resources have, historically, been depleted by the countries setting them.

Each team of researchers would have their own hermeneutic lens and way of describing their codes and understanding of the knowledge within their areas. However, they would need to share (therefore make comprehensible) their interpretative approach with the other research teams. This process of sharing and confronting differing epistemologies creates cognitive *poiesis* where a new collective form of knowledge emerges and is constructed from the multitude discovered. Given this variety, researchers would need to evaluate their research claims in relation to the criteria of cognitive success which validates their claims to know, such as:

- The appropriateness, relevance, and interdisciplinarity of the hermeneutical lenses applied.
- The reflexiveness on researchers' worldviews and assumptions and the situatedness and limits of the codes applied from interpretation to understanding.
- Why/how the constructed knowledge aligns with the epistemological stances of interdisciplinarity (e.g., knowledge as transformative, new, collective, processual, creative).

Logic: Abstraction, Categorisation and the Application of Reason

Abstraction underpins logic and how it works. *Poiesis* is not only artistic creation but also the *rational organisation of discourse*. It involves the construction of logical forms that give meaning to a text, while knowing incompleteness and interpretive openness (Derrida,1967; Gadamer, 1996). For interdisciplinary textual research, poietic logic is translated in argumentative coherence, clarity of conceptual articulations, and the capacity to engage in dialogue across disciplines. Indeed, where logic is understood as the coherence of reasoning, the issue is how the interdisciplinary team have demonstrated the validity of inferences and the internal coherency of their varied ideas and themes. Logic structures the creative and research process to avoid contradictions and ensure rigor. In the hypothetical interdisciplinary project being considered here, the Western scientists may speak of 'planetary boundaries,' economists may want to speak about 'doughnut economics' or 'ecological limits,' politicians about 'environmental thresholds,' anthropologists about 'planetary integrity' or 'the Anthropocene,' sociologists about 'societal boundaries,' linguists about 'conceptual metaphors,' and ethicists about 'global justice' or 'ethical ecological limits.' Moreover, their African counterparts will offer alternative phrases or metaphors – e.g., 'historical responsibilities', 'unfair costly burdens,' 'imposed solutions,' 'ecological imperialism,' 'protective barriers favouring the West' - or use the same but perceive and value them differently.

With the application of reason and logic, researchers can verify if these notions coexist without contradiction in the texts and dialogues that they become immersed in, that they read, interpret and code, especially in terms of their contribution to an understanding of how globalisation has driven (or inhibited) sustainability efforts within Africa. Researchers can categorise the levels of coexistence and the significances applied to them by the different users, and then abstract from them a range of inferences while establishing the validity of those inferences on their coherence according to a logic of interdependence; an organized, rational and living *poiesis*. Consequently, researchers can justify the poietical character of their claims by way of:

- The validation of applied categories in relation to the priorities of the different groups and their contradictions and agreements.
- The justification of claims in interdisciplinary and axiological terms, e.g., in light of their research aims, objectives, questions or hypothesis, and their overall real-world value.
- The argumentative coherence of the categories, inferences, and subsequent claims, and their alignment with the research process, aim, questions and/or hypothesis. Moreover, how the enhancement and alignment may be attributable to the applied logic.

Ethics: Synthesis, Illumination and Consequences of the Knowledge Claim

The production of meaning is always a situated act, necessarily involving the other (Bakhtine, 1977; Levinas, 1990). It entails an ethical responsibility on the part of the researcher in the way texts are made to speak or interlocutors are given a voice. For the hypothetical interdisciplinary research, this requires a reflexive practice that is overtly attentive to marginalized voices, and oriented toward a respectful and responsible co-construction of knowledge, viz. the synthesis and development of themes emerging from the research and what they illuminate about the issue under investigation. With ethics, the question is always the morality of actions and/or outcomes as well as the responsibilities linked to their creation and/or discovery. For instance, when researchers argue that globalisation entails profit maximisation for local businesses because exports are simplified, they must be sure to highlight the dissenting positions especially in relation to who would be responsible for the negative consequences that these latter voices identify. Indeed, this type of ethical reflection wherein the local, indigenous, and most vulnerable or weakest voice is considered, should accompany each of their arguments especially (in the hypothetical project) in relation to historical contexts and the constraints on African development that Western climate goals inevitably represent.

Hence, instead of research ethics being restricted to the collection or handling of data, it fosters the poietical character of the research when claims are evaluated by:

- The morality of relevant actions and their real-world consequences; the range of areas or fields benefiting from the actions considered or recommended by the researchers.
- The extent to which those affected by the claims would find them ethical and respectful of their way of being, if those claims are themselves responsible additions to that being, and how they may be protected from or mitigate the

problems of the region, such as corruption, nepotism, lack of infrastructure etc. (Pinto, 2024).

■ The extent of dialogic responsibility and participation with the marginalised or infrequently heard voices implicated or affected by any recommended action.

Aesthetics: Integration, Critique and the Contribution to an Experience of the Sublime

Poiesis is also the creative act that transforms interpretation into an aesthetic experience: opening new perspectives, revealing aporias and internal tensions (Derrida, 1967; Caputo, 1997). It is not limited to description but extends to the transformation of perception. In interdisciplinary textual research, it grounds the hermeneutic-critical dimension, where validity is measured by the richness and fruitfulness of interpretations. In this creative context, aesthetics concerns perception, beauty, the senses and the way creation awakens an experience, emotion, or embodied understanding.

With regards to the hypothetical project, the interdisciplinary team integrates and critiques the findings from their respective approaches – and it may be that each discipline aligns better with one philosophical field e.g., the scientist to the ontology of sustainability, the politician on the epistemology of globalisation, the linguist on logic, etc. – to create a visual form of the correlation that is intuitive, poetic, and fused into one reliable whole. In this way, aesthetics contributes to the *poiesis* of knowledge: beauty becomes a vector of understanding.

However, aesthetics also refers to the experience of the sublime, whether intellectual, physical, or moral. Following Munro and Scruton (2025) in aesthetics, observing and knowing can only be valid and reliable when there is a transcendence from self and emotions along the principles underlying judgements of criticism and towards a universally agreed intellectually and poietic sublime. Therefore, the interdisciplinary team may want to align their analysis and reflections of the correlation in terms of correcting a deeply existential wrong. With regards to the hypothetical project, researchers may want to, for example, offer claims that directly respond to Pogge's (2005, p.29) passionate rebuke of economists, multinationals, governments, and citizens in the West:

'Despite a high and growing global average income, human beings are still being condemned to lifelong severe poverty with all its attendant evils of low life expectancy, social exclusion, ill health, illiteracy, dependency, and effective enslavement. We citizens of the rich countries are conditioned to think of this problem as an occasion for assistance … most of us do not know how deeply

339

we are implicated through the new global order our states have imposed in this ongoing catastrophe…'

In this case, the research claims will be poietical when researchers demonstrate their capacity for responding to, resolving or revealing something new about the 'catastrophe' Pogge mentions, and in relation to the descriptions of poiesis already defined above, i.e.:

■ What transformative knowledge or profound understanding has emerged through the research and how does it speak to the dilemma Pogge highlights, i.e. to what was not before known?

■ What meaning or a new configuration of reality has appeared through the reordering of the theoretical (or empirical) chaos represented by the interdisciplinary fields involved in the research?

■ What synergy has been achieved within complex and diverse perspectives that transcend the specificity of the individual fields involved, to *become* a solution to the problem investigated?

Poesis as Evaluative Tool

The above 5-staged evaluation is proposed for text-based interdisciplinary research tackling complex real-world problems. It may be used to highlight the importance and therefore sustainability of the research. Consequently, it equilibrises the overproduction of knowledge by demonstrating, via the analytical questions of the philosophical branches, how researchers can evaluate the significance of their research and connect their claims to the bringing forth into the world of some good not hitherto known (Frodeman, 2014a).

In this way, *poiesis* may be understood as an integrative principle of interdisciplinary textual research. It articulates ontological openness, epistemic production, logical rigor, ethical responsibility and aesthetical creativity, allowing researchers to incorporate their questions and so transcend disciplinary paradigmatical boundaries for methodological thinking that is critical, participative and reflexive. It is an emerging philosophy of interdisciplinary research

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that interdisciplinary research, when considered through the prism of *poiesis*, can be understood as a process of conceptual and intellectual creation that transcends the mere combination of themes from different disciplines. Too often, as the analysis has revealed, "interdisciplinary research" is limited to

juxtaposed perspectives from several domains without truly integrating their methodologies, paradigms and fundamental questionings. However, the central argument defended here is that interdisciplinarity, if it is to be truly fecund, must be grounded in a deep philosophical reflection that engages not only the specific methods of the disciplines, but also the major branches of philosophy – ontology, epistemology, logic, ethics and aesthetics – as normative and analytical frameworks.

Poiesis, understood in its etymological sense as the act of "bringing forth", illuminates this process. It does not refer only to poetic or artistical creation but can also characterize the movement by which research transforms data, ideas and institutions into new knowledge with social and scientific value. From this perspective, poetic interdisciplinarity is not only accumulation, but a true dialogue and coherence among forms of knowledge. It enables researchers to explore the complexity of contemporary phenomena – such as global health, artificial intelligence or climate change – by simultaneously mobilizing the analytical depth of disciplines and the transversality of philosophical paradigms.

The essential contribution of this chapter is therefore threefold. First, it provides a framework for demonstrating the robustness of interdisciplinary text-based research inspired by Gadamerian hermeneutic methodology, and highlights the evaluative considerations pertinent to such research alongside the analytical questions of the philosophical fields. Second, it minimises bias through its insistence on an overt consideration of alterity and dialogue with the other. Third, it proposes a rereading of *poiesis* as a conceptual tool for understanding the value, legitimacy and scope of knowledge claims. Thus, the criteria of ontology (rooting in reality), epistemology (truth and validity), ethics (rightness and responsibility), logic (coherence and rationality) and aesthetics (harmony and pertinency) become such references for judging the interdisciplinary character of research.

In addition, this approach utilises the subjectivities of the researcher and the researched. Contrary to the illusion of absolute objectivity, poetic interdisciplinary research recognizes that it is lived experience, intuition and commitment of the researcher and those they dialogue with that make possible the identification of a problem, a gap or a need for knowledge and its solution. This subjectivity, far from being a bias to eliminate, becomes a poietic resource when articulated with methodological rigor and philosophical reflection. It is in this tension between creative subjectivity and evaluative objectivity that research imbued with meaning is constructed.

Finally, this chapter maintains that interdisciplinary research, understood as *poiesis*, calls for pushing paradigmatic boundaries and contributing decisively to the complex problems of our time. It does not merely produce new knowledge: it gives such knowledge value, signification and orientation that allow its integration into social and human reality. Thus, *poiesis* becomes not only a conceptual framework,

but also a criterion of evaluation and philosophy, ensuring that interdisciplinary research is at once innovative, philosophically grounded and socially pertinent. Therefore, it offers researchers a theoretical and methodological horizon for tackling global challenges that need, more than ever, collective intelligence and transversal (ecstatic) thought.

REFERENCES

Aicardi., ... C. (2020, September 20th). 'Accompanying Technology Development in thev Human Brain Project.' *Journal of Responsible Innovation.* 7(1).26–52. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328717301064

Ajjawi, R., & Higgs, J. (2007, September 15th). Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Learn to Communicate Clinical Reasoning. *The Qualitative Report.*, *12*(4), 612–638. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol12/iss4/6

Alsaigh, R., & Coyne, I. (2021). Doing a Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research Underpinned by Gadamer's Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20*, 16094069211047820. DOI: 10.1177/16094069211047820

Arpin, M.-L., & Lefèvre, S. A. (2018). 'Retour Réfléxif Sur un Projet de Recherche Partenariale: Entrevue Avec Jean-Pierre Revéret.' *Erudit.* 59(1-2).25–51. https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1051424ar

Bakhtine, M. (1977). *Esthétique de la Création Verbale* (Todorov, T., Ed.). Gallimard.

Bammer, G. (2013). *Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems*. Australian National University E-Press.

Bataille, G. (1970). *L'Expérience Intérieure. 2e éd.* Gallimard. (Original Publié en 1943).

Belle, M.-A., & Echeverri, A. (2017). *Pour une Interdisciplinarité Réciproque*. Artois Presses Université. DOI: 10.4000/books.apu.4541

Bergson, H. (1909). *L'évolution Créatrice*. Félix Alcan.

Bonneuil, C., & Fressoz, J.-B. (2013). *L'événement Anthropocène: La Terre, l'Histoire et Nous*. Seuil.

Boulton, G., & Koley, M. (2024, August 25th). 'More is Not Better: The Developing Crisis of Scientific Publishing.' *International Sciences Council.* https://council.science/blog/more-is-not-better-the-developing-crisis-of-scientific-publishing/.

Camacho-Hübner, E. (2007). 'De l'Interdisciplinaire Comme Paradigme de Recherche.' *Obtenido de Espaces Temps.* https://www.espacestemps.net/articles/interdisciplinaire-comme-paradigme-de-recherche/. Caputo, J. D. (1997). *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida.* FUP.

Chamois, C. E. (2023). Sensibilités: Entre Histoire et Anthropologie. *L'Homme*, *247*(248), 5–40. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2730639

Cortijo, A., & Martinez-Roig, R. (2022). *Approaches in Educational Research as a Basis for Interdisciplinary Knowledge/Aspectos de Investigación Educativa como base del conocimiento interdisciplinar*. OCTAEDRO. DOI: 10.36006/90011

Creswell, J. W. (2003). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

De Haro, S. (2013). 'Science and Philosophy: A Love Hate Relationship.' *Physics. Hist.* Ph. 1307(1244). https://arxiv.org/abs/1307.124

Derrida, J. (1967). *De la Grammatologie*. Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, J., & Johnson, B. (1977). Fors. *The Georgia Review*, *31*(1), 64–116.

Descartes, R. (2009). *Méditations métaphysiques (trad. J. Brunschwig)*. Paris: GF Flammarion. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1641).

Dubé., ... E. (2013). 'Vaccine Hesitancy: An Overview.' *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics.* 9(8). 1763–1773. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23584253/

Fish, S. (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. HUP.

Floridi, L. (2014). *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford University Press.

Frodeman, R. (2014a). *Sustainable Knowledge: A Theory of Interdisciplinarity*. Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9781137303028

Frodeman, R. (2014b, October 25th). 'Robert Frodeman on Gabriele Bammer: Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems.' *Impact: Journal of the Centre for Interdisicplinary Teaching and Learning.* https://sites.bu.edu/impact/previous-issues/impact-vol-4-no-1-winter-2014/robert-frodeman-on-gabriele-bammer-disciplining-interdisciplinarity-integration-and-implementation-sciences-for-researching-complex-real-world-problems/

Gadamer, H.-G. (1996). *Vérité et Méthode (trad. P. Fruchon & J. Grondin)*. Seuil. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1960).

Gadamer, H. G. (1975). Hermeneutics and social science. Cultural hermeneutics, 2 (4), 307-316.

Galati, E. (2023). Filosofía de la génesis de la interdisciplinariedad en su relación con la transdisciplinariedad. *Ciencia, Docencia y Tecnología*, *34*(68), 1–18. https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=14575856001. DOI: 10.33255/3468/1502

Hacking, I. (1999). *The Social Construction of What?* Harvard University Press.

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Haroen, H., Mirwanti, R., Agustina, H., Pahria, T., Harun, H., Akuoko, C., & Nadirawati, N. (2023). A Qualitative Study of Perception and Experience Toward End-of-Life Care Among Nursing Students Who Witnessed Dying People in Their Family. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, *16*, 2261–2270. DOI: 10.2147/JMDH.S423198 PMID: 37588170

Heidegger, M. (1954). *Poésie, Langage, Pensée* (Beaufret, A., Trans.). Gallimard.

Heidegger, M. (2001). *L'Origine de l'Ouvre D'art (trad. W. Brokmeier).* Gallimard. (Texte de 1935-36).

Hu, L., Huang, W., & Bu, Y. (2024). Interdisciplinary Research Attracts Greater Attention from Policy Documents: Evidence from COVID-19. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 383. DOI: 10.1057/s41599-024-02915-8

Jauss, H. R. (1978). *Esthétique de la Réception*. Gallimard.

Jullien, F. (2006). *Penser Entre les Langues*. Gallimard.

Kant, I. (2001). *Critique de la Raison Pure (trad. A. Tremesaygues & B. Pacaud).* PUF. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1781).

Klein, J. T. (1990). *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*. Wayne State University Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Latour, B. (2001). *Nous N'Avons Jamais été Modernes*. La Découverte.

Levinas, E. (1990). *Totalité et Infini*. Livre de Poche.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Lingner, S. (2011). Science, Interdisciplinarity, and Society. *Poiesis & Praxis : International Journal of Ethics of Science and Technology Assessment*, *7*(4), 221–223. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10202-011-0092-z. DOI: 10.1007/s10202-011-0092-z PMID: 21874127

Marx, W. (1977). *Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being*.

Morin, E. (1986). *La Méthode 3: La Connaissance de la Connaissance*. Seuil.

Morin, E. (1999). *La Tête Bien Faite. Repenser la Réforme, Réformer la Pensée*. Seuil.

Morin, E. (2005). *Introduction à la Pensée Complexe*. Seuil.

Munro, T., & Scruton, R. (2025, August 16th). 'Aesthetics: Philosophy.' *Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/aesthetics

Nicolescu, B. (2008). *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Hampton Press.

OCDE. (1972). *Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities.* Paris: OCDE. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000057878

Pinto, T. (2024). 'Africa Shows ESG is Near an Adapt-or-Die Moment.' *GIS*. https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/africa-esg/

Pogge, T. (2005). Real World Justice. *The Journal of Ethics*, *9*(9), 29–53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115814. DOI: 10.1007/s10892-004-3313-z

Potur, A. A., & Kayihan, K. S. (2011). Theoria, Praxis, Poiesis: A Continuum Scheme. *Archnet-IJAR*, *5*(2). https://www.archnet.org/publications/5517

Randall, J. H., & Woodbridge, F. J. (1960). *Aristotle*. Columbia University Press. DOI: 10.7312/rand90400

Ricoeur, P. (1978). *The Rule of Metaphor. Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Routledge et Kegan Paul.

Sanders, M. (2022). Ética e Interdisciplinariedad en la Filosofía y la Teoría Literaria. *Perífrasis*, *13*(26), 142–163. DOI: 10.25025/perifrasis202213.26.08

Santos, B. D. (2009). *Une Science Postmoderne: Épistémologies du Sud*. Desclée de Brouwer.

Varela, F. J., Thomson, E., & Rosch, E. (1993). *L'inscription corporelle de l'esprit: sciences cognitives et expérience humaine*. No Title.

Additional Reading

Aristote. (1960). *Rhétorique I.* Les Belles Lettres.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2022). *Business Research Methods*. OUP.

Creswell, J. W., & Báez, J. C. (2020). *30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*. Sage.

Dahlmann, F. (2025). Conceptualising Sustainability as the Pursuit of Life: JBE. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *196*(3), 499–521.

Denzin, N. K., Lincoln, Y. S., Giardina, M. D., & Cannella, G. S. (Eds.). (2023). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.

Giorgio, A. (Ed.). (2012). *Phenomenology and Psychological Research* (16th ed.). DUP.

Ioanndis, J. P. A. (2005). Why Most Published Research Findings are False. *PLoS Medicine*, *2*(8), 124.https://doi.org./10.1371/journal.pmed.0020124

Kelly, D. (2003). 'Edmund Husserl and Phenomenology.' R. Solomon and D. Sherman. Eds. *The Blackwell Guide to Continental Philosophy*. Blackwell. pp. 112-142.

Knowles, A. (2021). 'Poiêsis.' in (ed.) Wrathall M.A. *The Cambridge Heidegger Lexicon*. CUP.pp589-591.

Levers, M. J. (2013, May 3rd). Philosophical Paradigms, Grounded Theory, and Perspectives on Emergence. *SAGE Open*, (October-December), 1–6. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244013517243

Lury, C., Fensham, R., Heller-Nicholas, A., Lammes, S., Last, A., Michael, M., & Uprichard, E. (2020). *Routledge Handbook of Interdisciplinary Research Methods*. Routledge.

Pierce, C. S. (1955). *Philosophical Writings of Pierce*. Dover Publications.

Repko, A. F., & Szostak, R. (2021). Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Varela et al., F. J. (1993). *L'inscription corporelle de l'esprit : Sciences Cognitives et Expérience Humaine (trad. M. de La Soudière*Seuil. (Titre Original: The Embodied Mind, 1991).

Van Inwagen, P., Sullivan, M., & Bernstein, S. (2023, July 20th). 'Metaphysics.' *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphysics/#WordMetaConcMeta

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. SUNY.

Woodruff Smith, D. (2013, July 21st). 'Phenomenology.' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/

Conclusion

This book of chapters has defined meaning as the space where reality, lived experience and ethical reflexivity intersect with the word's mediation. It has argued that researchers wanting to contribute life-enhancing, impactful knowledge to complex interdisciplinary problems (with solutions that promote the good life) are those who navigate, nimbly, through the textual contexts of research, from nuance and objectivity to intelligibility.

Bringing together diverse perspectives from several disciplines, the book has presented qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods researchers with a range of strategies and new thinking on how meaning and interpretation should be negotiated during the research process; especially where the research is intersubjective and mediated by words, i.e., textual. Aiming to offset the problem of meaning stability/ discovery that has been extensively discussed by contemporary philosophers, contributors have brought a mix of reflections, frameworks, tool-kits, how-to guides, and reconceptualisations to the public domain and to the research communities inhabiting it.

Oftentimes these offerings have been inherently interdisciplinary, being initiated by and/or manifesting from philosophies and philosophers working in, amongst others, pragmatism, phenomenology, logic, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. What they bring to this edited book is a rigorous interrogation of the extent to which research, if consistently dialogic and open to alterity, can grant or obtain access to reality (ontology), and so reduce the overproduction of contradictory and valueless knowledge (epistemology).

Contributors have made clear that the question of if reality and knowledge (these seemingly symbiotic) are constructed or discovered has a decidedly ethical character, and is answerable to researchers' responsible application of reason; their transparency in communicating how they have contained or utilised their biases, worldviews and lifeworld through the collection and analysis of data – whether through interpretative lens, analytical tools, etc.

The chapters reveal agreement amongst contributors that research value is enhanced when ethical reason reconciles nuance and objectivity. Moreover, that while meaning stability is not an infinitely sure thing, aspects of meaning can be, with the right interpretative approach, stabilised for the time being. This substantive claim, sometimes rooted in empirical data, is reiterated chapter to chapter even where knowledge is described as made, constructed or processual.

Calling on other researchers to refine what is being proposed across its pages, the resounding success of this collection is its demonstration that the issues and questions addressed under its title *Meaning and Interpretation in Research: Nuance, Objectivity and Ethical Reason*, are necessarily pertinent to research broadly speaking rather than limited to specific disciplines. Therefore, that contributors' arguments and findings are not final: they should be exposed to additional interdisciplinary explorations if they are to be truly metamorphic, poietic, ecstatic. For instance, and deliberately left unanswered, how could explorations of time and selfhood bring the thinking in this book closer to intellectual sublimity, and in what ways could our collective understanding be enhanced when chapter conclusions are considered from the perspective of the nature and structure of words and language?

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub

Compilation of References

Abishek, N., & Judi, E. K. (2025). 'A Study on Exploring Consumer Engagement with Ai-Driven Experiences on Netflix Streaming Platform.' *International Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Commerce and Management*. 93–100. DOI: 10.34293/ICAICM-25.ch013

Adhikari, R., & Timsina, T. P. (2024). An educational study exploring the application of the mixed methods approach as a research methodology. OCEM Journal of Management, Technology &. *Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 94–109.

Agbon, G. (2024). Who speaks through the machine? Generative AI as discourse and implications for management. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, *100*, 102761–102761. DOI: 10.1016/j.cpa.2024.102761

Agrawal, A., Gupta, G., Agrawal, A., & Gupta, H. (2025). Evaluating Diversity and Stereotypes Amongst AI Generated Representations of Healthcare Providers. *Frontiers in Digital Health*, *7*, 1537907. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3389/fdgth.2025.1537907 PMID: 40352327

Aguzzoli, R., Clark, T., Kappen, P., & Tempel, A. (2024). Paradigms in qualitative international business research: Trends, analysis, and recommendations. *Management International Review*, *64*(3), 379–406.

Ahmad, M. (2023). 'Connecting People and Places: How Citizen Diplomacy and VGI are Strengthening Disaster Response and Community Development.' S. Kavoğlu & E. Köksoy Eds. *Global Perspectives on the Emerging Trends in Public Diplomacy.* (pp. 195–226). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9161-4.ch009

Ahmad, M. (2024). 'From Crisis to Opportunity: How VGI Is Transforming Disaster Response and Recovery Efforts.' S. Siyal. Ed. *Using Crises and Disasters as Opportunities for Innovation and Improvement.* (pp. 215–232). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-9522-3.ch013

Ahmadi, F., Khodayarifard, M., Rabbani, M., Zandi, S., & Sabzevari, M. (2022). Existential meaning-making coping in Iran: A qualitative study among patients with cancer. *Social Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, *11*(2), 80. DOI: 10.3390/socsci11020080

Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The Pillars of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, *2*, 100051. DOI: 10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051

AI News International. ' (2025, March 16). 'The Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Industries. *AI News International.* https://www.ainewsinternational.com/the-ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-industries/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Aicardi., ... C. (2020, September 20th). 'Accompanying Technology Development in thev Human Brain Project.' *Journal of Responsible Innovation.* 7(1).26–52. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0016328717301064

Aigwi, I. E., Phipps, R., Ingham, J., & Filippova, O. (2021). Characterisation of Adaptive Reuse Stakeholders and the Effectiveness of Collaborative Rationality towards Building Resilient Urban Areas. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *34*(2), 141–151. DOI: 10.1007/s11213-020-09521-0

Aivas, S. A., Fatah, N. A., Bayz, H. A., Karem, L. E., Salih, H. H., & Hussein, K. Q. Y. (2025). Critically Discuss Epistemological Issues by Examining the Claim to 'Truth'. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies*, *5*(1), 78–83. DOI: 10.55677/ijssers/V05I01Y2025-12

Ajjawi, R., & Higgs, J. (2007, September 15th). Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate How Experienced Practitioners Learn to Communicate Clinical Reasoning. *The Qualitative Report.*, *12*(4), 612–638. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol12/iss4/6

Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. DOI: 10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T

Åkerblad, L., Seppänen-Järvelä, R., & Haapakoski, K. (2021). Integrative strategies in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *15*(2), 152–170. DOI: 10.1177/1558689820957125

Alamri, A., & Stevenson, M. (2016). A Corpus of Potentially Contradictory Research Claims from Cardiovascular Research Abstracts. *Journal of Biomedical Semantics*, *7*(36), 36. DOI: 10.1186/s13326-016-0083-z PMID: 27267226

Alharthi, S. A. (2025). Generative AI in Game Design: Enhancing Creativity or Constraining Innovation? *Journal of Intelligence*, *13*(6), 60. DOI: 10.3390/jintelligence13060060 PMID: 40558810

Ali, I.M. (2024). 'A Guide for Positivist Research Paradigm: From Philosophy to Methodology.' *Idealogy Journal. 9*(2).

Alsaigh, R., & Coyne, I. (2021). Doing a Hermeneutic Phenomenology Research Underpinned by Gadamer's Philosophy: A Framework to Facilitate Data Analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20*, 16094069211047820. DOI: 10.1177/16094069211047820

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Anam, R.K. (2024). 'Hermeneutics Situation as the Philosophizing Method of Martin Heidegger and its Relevance to Social Research.' *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism. 10*(2). pp.161-182.

Angle, S. (2021). *Growing moral: A Confucian guide to life*. Oxford University Press.

Annajigowda, H. H., Mendon, G. B., Cherian, A. V., Wahid, S. S., Kohrt, B. A., Rüsch, N., & Loganathan, S. (2025). Cultural Adaptation Process of Six Stigma Assessment Scales Among Kannada Speaking Population in South India. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health.*, *12*, e8. PMID: 39935734

Anshori, R. M., Samodra, G., Mardiatno, D., & Sartohadi, J. (2022). Volunteered Geographic Information Mobile Application for Participatory Landslide Inventory Mapping. *Computers & Geosciences*, *161*, 105073. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.cageo.2022.105073

Antonakis, J., Bendahan, S., Jacquart, P., & Lalive, R. (2010). On Making Causal Claims: A Review and Recommendations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *21*(6), 1086–1120. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.10.010

Armaah, D. (2025, February 3). 'How Artificial Intelligence Will Reshape Content Creation by 2030.' *The FutureList*. https://www.thefuturelist.com/how-artificial -intelligence-will-reshape-content-creation-by-2030/

Arpin, M.-L., & Lefèvre, S. A. (2018). 'Retour Réfléxif Sur un Projet de Recherche Partenariale: Entrevue Avec Jean-Pierre Revéret.' *Erudit.* 59(1-2).25–51. https://id .erudit.org/iderudit/1051424ar

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Clarendon Press.

Austin, S., & Stanley, S. (2022). *'Educational Criticism and Connoisseurship: A Case Study Example.' Conceptual Analyses of Curriculum Inquiry Methodologies*. IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8848-2.ch011

Avlonitou, C., & Papadaki, E. (2025). AI: An Active and Innovative Tool for Artistic Creation. *Arts*, *14*(3), 52–52. DOI: 10.3390/arts14030052

Bachelard, G. (1938). *La Formation de L'Esprit Scientifique*. Vrin.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2024). *'The Construct Validation of Some Components of Communicative Proficiency 1.' The Writings of Lyle F. Bachman*. Routledge.

Baker, B. (1999). What is voice? Issues of Identity and Representation in the Framing of Reviews. *Review of Educational Research*, *69*(4), 365–383. DOI: 10.3102/00346543069004365

Bakhtadze, I. (2015). The Importance of Ethics and Its Relevance to Challenges of Global Education. *Journal in Humanities.*, *4*(1), 5–9. DOI: 10.31578/hum.v4i1.284

Bakhtine, M. (1977). *Esthétique de la Création Verbale* (Todorov, T., Ed.). Gallimard.

Balasubramaniam, N., Kauppinen, M., Rannisto, A., Hiekkanen, K., & Kujala, S. (2023). Transparency and Explainability of AI Systems: From Ethical Guidelines to Requirements. *Information and Software Technology*, *159*(159), 107197. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950584923000514. DOI: 10.1016/j.infsof.2023.107197

Balmaceda, F. G. (2022). 'The Thick Description of Clifford Geertz: An Anti-Scientific Approach to Anthropology.' *Acta Scientiarum. Human and Social Sciences.*, *44*(2), e65730.

Bammer, G. (2013). *Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems*. Australian National University E-Press.

Bang, T. C. (2024). *'Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Inquiries.' Applied Linguistics and Language Education Research Methods: Fundamentals and Innovations*. IGI Global.

Bansal, P., & Song, H. C. (2017). Similar but not the same: Differentiating corporate sustainability from corporate responsibility. *The Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(1), 105–149. DOI: 10.5465/annals.2015.0095

Barthes, R. (1970). *S/Z*. Seuil.

Barthes, R. (2004). *Crítica y Verdad*. Siglo XXI.

Basilico, J., Feng, Y., Bhattacharya, M., Lamkhede, S., Hsiao, K.-J., & Oh, S. (2025, July 15). 'FM-Intent: Predicting User Session Intent with Hierarchical Multi-Task Learning.' *Netflix*. https://research.netflix.com/publication/fm-intent-predicting-user -session-intent-with-hierarchical-multi-task

Bataille, G. (1970). *L'Expérience Intérieure. 2e éd.* Gallimard. (Original Publié en 1943).

Bazeley, P. (2024). Conceptualizing integration in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *18*(3), 225–234. DOI: 10.1177/15586898241253636

Belle, M.-A., & Echeverri, A. (2017). *Pour une Interdisciplinarité Réciproque*. Artois Presses Université. DOI: 10.4000/books.apu.4541

Benson, P. (2014, May 5th). 'Derrida on Language.' *Philosophy Now*. https:// philosophynow.org/issues/100/Derrida_On_Language

Bentalha, B., & Alla, L. (2024). *'Revealing the Subtleties: The Art of Qualitative Studies in Science and Management.' Applying Qualitative Research Methods to Management Science*. IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-5543-5.ch001

Benveniste, É. (1974). *Problèmes de Linguistique Générale* (Vol. II). Gallimard.

Berger, R. (2015). Now I See It, Now I Don't: Researcher's Position and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research*, *15*(2), 219–234. DOI: 10.1177/1468794112468475

Bergson, H. (1909). *L'évolution Créatrice*. Félix Alcan.

Bhattacharya, K., & Kim, J. H. (2020). Reworking Prejudice in Qualitative Inquiry with Gadamer and De/Colonizing Onto-Epistemologies. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *26*(10), 1174–1183. DOI: 10.1177/1077800418767201

Bhuda, M. T., Setshego, M. V., & Koitsiwe, M. (2025). The role of Indigenous participants in participatory action research: Applying a decolonial approach. In *Enabling Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Action Research and Action Learning* (pp. 291–308). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-3542-0.ch015

Biedermann, B., Calder, S., Leitão, S., & Lette, H. (2025). Combining Participatory-Action-Research With Single-Case-Experimental-Designs: A New Promise for a Mixed-Methods Approach. *Journal of Participatory Research Methods*, *6*(4). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.35844/001c.146371

Biesta, G. (2010). Pragmatism and the philosophical foundations of mixed methods research. In Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.), *SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed., pp. 95–118). SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9781506335193.n4

Biesta, G. J., & Burbules, N. C. (2004). *Pragmatism and educational research*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA. DOI: 10.5040/9798216401544

Bivand, R. (2022). R Packages for Analyzing Spatial Data: A Comparative Case Study with Areal Data. *Geographical Analysis*, *54*(3), 488–518. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/gean.12319

Bogues, A. (2022). *Black critique and the savage: Essays on Caribbean philosophy*. University of the West Indies Press.

Bolukbasi, T., Chang, K. W., Zou, J., Saligrama, V., & Kalai, A. T. (2016). Man is to Computer Programmer as Woman is to Homemaker? Debiasing Word Embeddings. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, *29*, 4349–4357.

Bonneuil, C., & Fressoz, J.-B. (2013). *L'événement Anthropocène: La Terre, l'Histoire et Nous*. Seuil.

Borgstede, M., & Scholz, M. (2021). Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Generalization and Replication – A Representationalist View. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*, 605191. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.605191 PMID: 33613387

Boulton, G., & Koley, M. (2024, August 25th). 'More is Not Better: The Developing Crisis of Scientific Publishing.' *International Sciences Council.* https://council.science/blog/more-is-not-better-the-developing-crisis-of-scientific-publishing/.

Bourdieu et al, P. (1921). *Le Métier de Sociologue: Préalables Épistémologiques.* EHESS.

Bourdieu, P. (1999). *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Science de la Science et Réflexivité*. Raisons d'Agir.

Bourdieu, P. (2006). La Objetivación Participante. *Apuntes de Investigación del CECYP.*, (10), 87–101.

Braden, Z. (2024, October 16). 'AI Will Replace Entry Level Creative Positions.' *Medium*. https://medium.com/@zacharybraden./ai-will-replace-entry-level-creative-positions-10ebb3be1877

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing Interviews* (2nd ed.). SAGE. DOI: 10.4135/9781529716665

British Educational Research Association (BERA). (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th ed.). BERA.

Broder, M. (2025, June 16). 'Keeping Up with Modern Media: The Role of AI in Video Production.' *Iconik*. https://www.iconik.io/blog/keeping-up-with-modern-media-the-role-of-ai-in-video-production

Brown, A. L. (1992). Design experiments: Theoretical and methodological challenges in creating complex interventions in classroom settings. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, *2*(2), 141–178. DOI: 10.1207/s15327809jls0202_2

Brown, G., Kyttä, M., & Reed, P. (2022). Using Community Surveys with Participatory Mapping to Monitor Comprehensive Plan Implementation. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *218*, 104306. DOI: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2021.104306

Brown, L., & Kim, S. U. (2025). Methodology. In *Politeness Metapragmatics: Inductive Research, Multimodality and Critical Theory* (pp. 75–91). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-81643-7_4

Bruine de Bruin, W., & van der Klaauw, W. (2012). Measuring Expectations of Inflation: Effects of Survey Mode, Wording, and Opportunities to Revise. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *33*(4), 749–757. DOI: 10.1016/j.joep.2012.02.001

Buckee, C., Noor, A., & Sattenspiel, L. (2021). Thinking Clearly About Social Aspects of Infectious Disease Transmission. *Nature*, *595*(7866), 205–213. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1038/s41586-021-03694-x PMID: 34194045

Burke Reifman, J., White, M. and Kalish, L. (2022). 'Students as Researchers and Participants: A Model of Iterative Member-Checking for Inclusive, Equity-Centered Assessment Research.' *Intersection: A Journal at the Intersection of Assessment and Learning. 3*(1). p.n1.

Burnett, C. M., McCall, M., & Ollivierre, A. D. (2023). 'Participatory Mapping and Technology.' *Evaluating Participatory Mapping Software*. 1–20. .DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-19594-5_1

Busher, H., & James, N. (2012). The ethical framework of research practice. *Research methods in educational leadership & management*, 90-104.

Cajahuanca, M., Jara, G. X., Cruz, G. J., Suarez, C. J., Yaipen, E. N. M., Rojas, V. Y., & Rodas, J. R. (2025). *Research Methodology Applied to The Social Sciences: From Hermeneutics to Holistic and Cross-Cultural*. Editorial Mar Caribe.

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native science*.

Caliskan, A., Bryson, J. J., & Narayanan, A. (2017). Semantics Derived Automatically from Language Corpora Contain Human Biases. *Science*, *356*(6334), 183–186. DOI: 10.1126/science.aal4230 PMID: 28408601

Camacho-Hübner, E. (2007). 'De l'Interdisciplinaire Comme Paradigme de Recherche.' *Obtenido de Espaces Temps.* https://www.espacestemps.net/articles/interdisciplinaire-comme-paradigme-de-recherche/. Caputo, J. D. (1997). *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida.* FUP.

Carlson, B. (2024, August 9th). 'The 25 Most Influential Philosophers of All Time.' *Academic Influence.* https://academicinfluence.com/inflection/study-guides/most-influential-philosophers-study-starter

Casey, E. S. (2001). Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World? *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *91*(4), 683–693. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/0004-5608.00266

Cesca, P. (2013, 15 de 6). *Compromiso Subjetivo y ético del Investigador Durante el Trabajo de Campo*. Odiseo.

Chamois, C. E. (2023). Sensibilités: Entre Histoire et Anthropologie. *L'Homme*, *247*(248), 5–40. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2730639

Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory (introducing qualitative methods series). *Constr. grounded theory*.

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, *65*(2), 81–93. DOI: 10.1509/jmkg.65.2.81.18255

Chaves Carniel, A. (2024). Defining and Designing Spatial Queries: The Role of Spatial Relationships. *Geo-Spatial Information Science*, *27*(6), 1868–1892. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/10095020.2022.2163924

Chekuri, K. (2025, September 8). *The myth of Neutral AI — Beneath the layers of complexity*. Medium. https://medium.com/@keeruchekuri/the-myth-of-neutral-ai-beneath-the-layers-of-complexity-acde70a49573

Chen, S., Lou, V. W., Leung, R., & Yu, D. S. (2024). Meaning-making of dementia caregiving: A systematic review of qualitative studies. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, *158*, 104848. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2024.104848 PMID: 39043114

Chetty, Z. (2025, May 24). 'The Mirror We Built: What AI is Really Showing Us'. *Medium.* https://medium.com/@zahara_chetty/the-mirror-we-built-what-ai-is-really -showing-us-5484dd149de6

Chmielewski, D. (2025, August 21). 'Hollywood's Biggest AI Debut? Las Vegas Sphere's "Wizard of Oz."' *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/technology/hollywoods -biggest-ai-debut-las-vegas-spheres-wizard-oz-2025-08-21/

Christou, P. (2025). Looking Beyond Numbers in Qualitative Research: From Data Saturation to Data Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, *30*(1), 3088–3100. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2025.7560

Clark, M. C. (2011). 'Power, Privilege, and the Public: The Dynamics of Gatekeeping in Qualitative Research.' Denzin, N. K. & Giardina, M. D. Eds. *Qualitative Inquiry and Human Rights* (pp. 57–70). Left Coast Press.

Clarke, R., Chadwick, K., & Williams, P. (2017). 'Critical Social Research as a 'Site of Resistance': Reflections on Relationships, Power and Positionality.' *Justice, Power and Resistance*. 261-282

Clark, M. C., & Sharf, B. F. (2007). The Dark Side of Truth(S): Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE*, *20*(4), 317–331.

Clark, T., Foster, L., Bryman, A., & Sloan, L. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Clark, V. (2019). Meaning Integration with Mixed Methods Study: Identifying Why, What, When and How. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *57*(April), 106–111. DOI: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.01.007

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *The poetics and politics of ethnography*. University of California, Berkeley Press.

Clift, B. C., Batlle, I. C., Bekker, S., & Chudzikowski, K. (Eds.). (2023). *Qualitative Researcher Vulnerability: Negotiating, Experiencing and Embracing*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003349266

Coe, R., Waring, M., Hedges, L. V., & Ashley, L. D. (Eds.). (2025). *Research methods and methodologies in education*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Colapietro, V. (2023). Le-didakh: A Defining Directive of the Talmudic Tradition. *Dewey Studies.*, *7*(1), 105–136.

Comte, A. (1853). *The positive philosophy of Auguste Comte* (Martineau, H., Trans.). John Chapman.

COPE. (2025, February 12). 'Artificial Intelligence and Authorship.' *COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics.* https://publicationethics.org/news-opinion/artificial -intelligence-and-authorship?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Cornish, K. (2025, August 22). 'Adobe Firefly can Erase Photo-Bombers, Make you Fluent in French, and More.' *New York Post*. https://nypost.com/shopping/adobe -firefly-review-the-best-creative-ai-tool-for-creators/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Cornish, F., Breton, N., Moreno-Tabarez, U., Delgado, J., Rua, M., de-Graft Aikins, A., & Hodgetts, D. (2023). Participatory action research. *Nature Reviews. Methods Primers*, *3*(1), 34. DOI: 10.1038/s43586-023-00214-1

Coronado-Maldonado, I., & Benítez-Márquez, M. D. (2023). Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, and Work Teams: A Hybrid Literature Review. *Heliyon*, *9*(10), E2023. DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20356 PMID: 37790975

Cortijo, A., & Martinez-Roig, R. (2022). *Approaches in Educational Research as a Basis for Interdisciplinary Knowledge/Aspectos de Investigación Educativa como base del conocimiento interdisciplinar*. OCTAEDRO. DOI: 10.36006/90011

Creative Commons. (2023, October 7th). 'Making AI Work for Creators and the Commons.' *Creative Commons*.https://creativecommons.org/2023/10/07/making -ai-work-for-creators-and-the-commons/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Creswell, J. W. (2003). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2021). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Cruz, , Reyes, M. J., & Cornejo, M. (2012). Conocimiento Situado y el Problema de la Subjetividad del Investigador/a. *Cinta de Moebio*, *45*(45), 253–274. DOI: 10.4067/S0717-554X2012000300005

Culler, J. (2008). *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315782805

Dans, E. (2025, November 11th). 'When AI Gets it Wrong: Why Responsibility Still Lies with Us.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/enrique-dans/when-ai-gets-it-wrong -why-responsibility-still-lies-with-us-d6d1890f395d

Daston, L., & Galison, P. L. (2021). *Objectivity*. Princeton University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1c9hq4d

Davis, J. P. (2024, December 9th). 'How Businesses Can Survive the AI "Black Hole."' *INSEAD Knowledge.* https://knowledge.insead.edu/strategy/how-businesses -can-survive-ai-black-hole

Dawadi, S., Shrestha, S., & Giri, R. A. (2021). Mixed-methods research: Types, challenges, and criticisms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, *2*(2), 25–36. DOI: 10.46809/jpse.v2i2.20

De Haro, S. (2013). 'Science and Philosophy: A Love Hate Relationship.' *Physics. Hist.* Ph. 1307(1244). https://arxiv.org/abs/1307.124

De Oliveira, B. (2023). Participatory action research as a research approach: Advantages, limitations, and criticisms. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *23*(3), 287–297. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-08-2022-0101

De Oliveira, B. (2024). Philosophical foundations of participatory action research: Pragmatism, critical theory, constructivism, feminist epistemology, and participatory democracy. *Qualitative Research Journal*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-07-2024-0151

Deckker, D., & Sumanasekara, S. (2025). A Review of AI-Powered Creativity: The Intersection of AI and the Arts. *International Journal of Global Economic Light*, *11*(4), 10–24. DOI: 10.36713/epra20968

Denwood, T., Huck, J. J., & Lindley, S. (2022). Participatory Mapping: A Systematic Review and Open Science Framework for Future Research. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *112*(8), 2324–2343. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/24694452.2022.2065964

Denzin, N. K. (2012). *Interpretive Autoethnography* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *6*(2), 80–88. DOI: 10.1177/1558689812437186

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1–32). Sage Publications Ltd.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2012). *El Campo de la Investigación Cualitativa*. Gedisa.

Derrida, J. (2016). *Of Grammatology* (G. C. Spivak, Trans.; 40th anniversary ed.). Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1967)

Derrida, J. (1967). *De la Grammatologie*. Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, J. (1990). *Force de Loi. Le Fondement Mystique de l'Autorité*. Galilée.

Derrida, J., & Johnson, B. (1977). Fors. *The Georgia Review*, *31*(1), 64–116.

Descartes, R. (2009). *Méditations métaphysiques (trad. J. Brunschwig).* Paris: GF Flammarion. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1641).

Design-Based Research Collective. (2003). Design-based research: An emerging paradigm for educational inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(1), 5–8. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X032001005

Devereux, G. (1977). *De la Ansiedad al método en las Ciencias del Comportamiento*. Siglo XXI.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Dilthey, W. (1942). *Introduction aux Sciences de L'Esprit* (Téevenot, R., Trans.). Vrin.

Dos Santos, J. F. P., & Williamson, P. J. (2024). Beyond Connectivity: Artificial Intelligence and the Internationalisation of Digital Firms. *Information and Organization*, *34*(4), 100538. DOI: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2024.100538

Doshi, A. R., & Hauser, O. P. (2024). Generative AI Enhances Individual Creativity but Reduces the Collective Diversity of Novel Content. *Science Advances*, *10*(28), eadn5290. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.adn5290 PMID: 38996021

Downs, R. M. (1982). 'Cognitive Dimensions of Space and Boundary in Urban Areas.' *Urban Patterns: Studies*.

Dubé., ... E. (2013). 'Vaccine Hesitancy: An Overview.' *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics.* 9(8). 1763–1773. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23584253/

Dubinina, V. O.V. O. Dubinina. (2019). The Methodology of Philosophical Hermeneutics in the Social Sciences. *Scientific Review (Singapore)*, *2*(19), 25–31. DOI: 10.31435/rsglobal_sr/28022019/6366

Dühr, S., & Müller, A. (2012). The Role of Spatial Data and Spatial Information in Strategic Spatial Planning. *Regional Studies*, *46*(4), 423–428. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2012.669535

Dulal, T. D. (2025). Application of positivism and post-positivism approaches in contemporary research. *International Journal of Applied Research and Sustainable Sciences*, *3*(4), 305–314.

Du, P., Bai, X., Tan, K., Xue, Z., Samat, A., Xia, J., Li, E., Su, H., & Liu, W. (2020). Advances of Four Machine Learning Methods for Spatial Data Handling: A Review. *Journal of Geovisualization and Spatial Analysis.*, *4*(1), 13. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s41651-020-00048-5

Dwivedi, Y. K., Hughes, L., Cheung, C. M., Conboy, K., Duan, Y., Dubey, R., Janssen, M., Jones, P., Sigala, M., & Viglia, G. (2022). How to develop a quality research article and avoid a journal desk rejection. *International Journal of Information Management*, *62*, 102426. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102426

Earman, J., & van Fraassen, B. C. (1971). An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time and Space. *The Philosophical Review*, *80*(4), 516. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.2307/2183758

Eco, U. (1976). *A Theory of Semiotics*. IUP.

Egger, R., Neuburger, L., & Mattuzzi, M. (2022). *'Data science and ethical issues: between knowledge gain and ethical responsibility.' Applied Data Science in Tourism: Interdisciplinary Approaches, Methodologies, and Applications*. Springer International Publishing.

Eliezer, K., & Peled, E. (2023). Intertextual Psychoanalytic-Intersubjective Analysis in Qualitative Research: "Can Two Walk Together, Except They Be Agreed?". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *26*(4), 425–437. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2021.2011118

Enworo, O. C. (2023). Application of Guba and Lincoln's Parallel Criteria to Assess Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research on Indigenous Social Protection Systems. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *23*(4), 372–384. DOI: 10.1108/QRJ-08-2022-0116

Erickson, K. (2024). AI and Work in the Creative Industries: Digital Continuity or Discontinuity? *Creative Industries Journal*, •••, 1–21. DOI: 10.1080/17510694.2024.2421135

Erokhin, D. (2025). ESG Reporting in the Digital Era: Unveiling Public Sentiment and Engagement on YouTube. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(15), 7039. DOI: 10.3390/su17157039

Esri. (2023). *What is GIS?* Esri.Com. https://www.esri.com/en-us/what-is-gis/overview

Ewuoso, C., & Hall, S. (2021). A normative analysis of Ubuntu-informed African bioethics. *Developing World Bioethics*, *21*(1), 28–35.

Fadli, H. (2022). *The Impact of Transformational Education Aided by Creativity on Students' Intended Sustainable Behaviour at Anglia Ruskin University, UK: A Mixed-Methods Study.* [Doctoral dissertation Anglia Ruskin University]. ARU Institutional Repository.

Fagerholm, N., Raymond, C. M., Olafsson, A. S., Brown, G., Rinne, T., Hasanzadeh, K., Broberg, A., & Kyttä, M. (2021). A Methodological Framework for Analysis of Participatory Mapping Data in Research, Planning, and Management. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, *35*(9), 1848–1875. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/13658816.2020.1869747

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. Basic Books.

Fazlollahi Ghomshe, S., & Mohammadi, R. (2025). Deconstruction Methodology in Qualitative Research: From Theory to Practice. *Methodology of Social Sciences and Humanities.*, *31*(122), 107–129.

Fillmore, C. J. (1982). 'Frame Semantics.' Ed. *Linguistic Society of Korea. Linguistics in the Morning.* Hanshin. pp111–137.

Finlay, L. (2024). Qualitative Research: the "Good," the "Bad," the "Ugly". *European Journal for Qualitative Research in Psychotherapy. 14*1-19.

Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(2), 209–230. DOI: 10.1177/146879410200200205

Fisher, M., Knobe, J., Strickland, B., & Keila, F. (2016, August 8th). 'The Influence of Social Interaction on Intuitions of Objectivity and Subjectivity.' *Cognitive Science*. https://cogdevlab.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Fisher_et_al-2016-Cognitive_Science.pdf

Fish, S. (1980). *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*. HUP.

Flake, J. K., & Fried, E. I. (2020). Measurement Schmeasurement: Questionable Measurement Practices and How to Avoid Them. *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science*, *3*(4), 456–464. DOI: 10.1177/2515245920952393

Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Floridi, L. (2014). *The Fourth Revolution: How the Infosphere is Reshaping Human Reality*. Oxford University Press.

Floridi, L., & Cowls, J. (2019). A Unified Framework of Five Principles for AI in Society. *Harvard Data Science Review*, *1*(1). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1162/99608f92.8cd550d1

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511810503

Flyvbjerg, B., & Gardner, D. (2022). *How big things get done*. Penguin.

Fodouop Kouam, A. W. (2025). Post-positivism and critical realism as epistemological frameworks in educational research: A systematic review. *International Journal of Changes in Education*, *2*(2), 115–122. DOI: 10.47852/bonviewIJCE52024338

Foucault, M. (1971). *L'ordre du Discours*. Gallimard.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Pantheon Books.

Frank, C., Magnone, P., & Netzer, O. (2022, August 28th). *Decisions Over Decimals*. 1st ed. Wiley. https://www.perlego.com/book/3739432

Frege, G. (1993). 'On Sense and Reference.' A.W. Moore. Ed. *Meaning and Reference*. OUP. p23-42.

Frei-Landau, R., Abo-Mokh, I., & Ben-Yehoshua, N. S. (2023). Religious meaning-making among Muslim parents bereaved by homicide: Struggling to accept 'God's will' and yearning for 'Qayama' day. *Heliyon*, *9*(9), e20246. DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20246 PMID: 37809798

Freire, P. (1970). The adult literacy process as cultural action for freedom. *Harvard Educational Review*, *40*(2), 205–225. DOI: 10.17763/haer.40.2.q7n227021n148p26

Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001

Frodeman, R. (2014b, October 25th). 'Robert Frodeman on Gabriele Bammer: Disciplining Interdisciplinarity: Integration and Implementation Sciences for Researching Complex Real-World Problems.' *Impact: Journal of the Centre for Interdisicplinary Teaching and Learning*. https://sites.bu.edu/impact/previous-issues/impact-vol-4-no-1-winter-2014/robert-frodeman-on-gabriele-bammer-disciplining-interdisciplinarity-integration-and-implementation-sciences-for-researching-complex-real-world-problems/

Frodeman, R. (2014a). *Sustainable Knowledge: A Theory of Interdisciplinarity*. Macmillan. DOI: 10.1057/9781137303028

Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(9), 1408–1416. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281

Gadamer, H. G. (1975). Hermeneutics and social science. Cultural hermeneutics, 2 (4), 307-316.

Gadamer, H.-G. (1996). *Vérité et Méthode (trad. P. Fruchon & J. Grondin)*. Seuil. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1960).

Gadamer, H.-G. (1996). *Vérité et Méthode* (Grondin, J., & Ladmiral, J. R., Trans.). Seuil.

Gage, N. L. (1989). The paradigm wars and their aftermath: A "historical" sketch of research on teaching since 1989. *Educational Researcher*, *18*(7), 4–10.

Gajjar, D., & Jeary, L. (2024, October 7). *'Artificial Intelligence and New Technology in creative Industries.' UK Parliament*. https://post.parliament.uk/artificial-intelligence-and-new-technology-in-creative-industries/

Galati, E. (2023). Filosofía de la génesis de la interdisciplinariedad en su relación con la transdisciplinariedad. *Ciencia, Docencia y Tecnología*, *34*(68), 1–18. https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=14575856001. DOI: 10.33255/3468/1502

Ganeri, J. (2011). *The lost age of reason: Philosophy in early modern India 1450–1700*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199218745.001.0001

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

Gillespie, A., Glăveanu, V., & de Saint Laurent, C. (2024). *Pragmatism and Methodology: Doing Research that Matters with Mixed Methods*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/9781009031066

Gillo, M. D. (2021). The Basic Ideas of Hermeneutics as a Theoretical Framework for Qualitative Research. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy*, *2*(3), 42–45. DOI: 10.24018/ejedu.2021.2.3.43

Gilmore, A., Carson, D., & Grant, K. (2001). SME marketing in practice. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *19*(1), 6–11. DOI: 10.1108/02634500110363583

Glissant, É. (1997). *Traité du tout-monde*.

Gondola, J. (2024, April 5). 'AI and the Future of Art: Ethical Considerations for Creativity.' *Medium.* https://medium.com/%40jamesgondola/ai-and-the-future-of-art-ethical-considerations-for-creativity-84ea06fc4eff?utm_source=chatgpt.com

González Rey, F. (2017). The topic of subjectivity in psychology: Contradictions, paths and new alternatives. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *47*(4), 502–521. DOI: 10.1111/jtsb.12144

Gonzalez, E., & Faubert, M. (2020). Integrating Meaning Making with Collaborative-Dialogic Practice. *International Journal of Collaborative-Dialogic Practices.*, *12*(1), 68–77.

Goodman, N. D., & Frank, M. C. (2016). Pragmatic Language Interpretation as Probabilistic Inference. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *20*(11), 818–829. DOI: 10.1016/j.tics.2016.08.005 PMID: 27692852

Goodman, R. B. (Ed.). (1995). *Pragmatism: A contemporary reader*. Psychology Press.

Goshu, B. S., & Ridwan, M. (2024). Ancient Ethiopian astronomy: Cultural foundations, indigenous timekeeping, and scientific contributions. *Lakhomi Journal Scientific Journal of Culture*, *5*(4), 242–264.

Gougherty, M., & Puentes, J. (2025). Sociology in Everyday Life: An Equity Lens. Open Oregon Educational Resources / Lulu.com. ISBN 9781636351001.

Goyes, D. R., & Sandberg, S. (2025). Trust, Nuance, and Care: Advantages and Challenges of Repeat Qualitative Interviews. *Qualitative Research*, *25*(2), 330–349. DOI: 10.1177/14687941241246159

Graham, A. C. (2018). *Conceptual Schemes and Linguistic Relativism in Relation to Chinese'. Philosophy of Language, Chinese Language, Chinese Philosophy*. Brill., DOI: 10.1163/9789004368446_009

Grant, M. R., & Lincoln, Y. (2021). A conversation about rethinking criteria for qualitative and interpretive research: Quality as trustworthiness. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education*, *14*(2), 1–15. DOI: 10.21423/jume-v14i2a403

Grass, J. (2024). Why your ontology matters: Ontological awareness and research. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *8*(1), 28–48.

Greenhalgh, T., Hinton, L., & Finlay, T.. (2017). Frameworks for supporting patient and public involvement in research: Systematic review and co-design pilot. *Health Expectations*, *20*(3), 376–391. PMID: 31012259

Greenwood, D. J., & Levin, M. (2007). *Introduction to action research: Social research for social change* (2nd ed.). Sage. DOI: 10.4135/9781412984614

Greimas, A. J. (1966). *Sémantique Structurale: Recherche de Méthode*. Larousse.

Grinberger, A. Y., Minghini, M., Yeboah, G., Juhász, L., & Mooney, P. (2022). Bridges and Barriers: An Exploration of Engagements of the Research Community with the OpenStreetMap Community. *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information*, *11*(1), 54. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3390/ijgi11010054

Groer, R., Morrissey, P. J., & Glatte, T. (2025). Research design: Historical industrial buildings and their real estate utilization in Germany and the United Kingdom. In *Historical Industrial Buildings and their Real Estate Utilisation* (pp. 37–42). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-89417-6_3

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research.' Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. Eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* (pp. 105–117). SAGE.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 261–280. DOI: 10.1177/1077800403262360

Guinness, H. (2023, September 12). 'The Best AI Image Generators in 2023.' *Zapier*. https://zapier.com/blog/best-ai-image-generator/

Gupta, C. P., & Mishra, M. (2024). *The Relation Between Intellectual Honesty and Research Integrity as the Fundamental Principles oof Research*. Research and Publication Ethics.

Gupta, P., Ding, B., Guan, C., & Ding, D. (2024). Generative AI: A Systematic Review Using Topic Modelling Techniques. *Data and Information Management*, *8*(2), 100066. DOI: 10.1016/j.dim.2024.100066

Guyotte, K. W., Flint, M. A., & Latopolski, K. S. (2021). Cartographies of Belonging: Mapping Nomadic Narratives of First-Year Students. *Critical Studies in Education*, *62*(5), 543–558. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2019.1657160

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society* (Vol. 1). Beacon Press.

Habermas, T. (2019). *Emotion and Narrative: Perspectives in Autobiographical Storytelling*. Cambridge University Press.

Hacking, I. (1999). *The Social Construction of What?* Harvard University Press.

Hair, J. F., Page, M. J., & Brunsveld, N. (2019). *Essentials of Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780429203374

Halme, M., Piekkari, R., Matos, S., Wierenga, M., & Hall, J. (2024). Rigour vs. Reality: Contextualizing Qualitative Research in the Low-Income Settings in Emerging Markets. *British Journal of Management*, *35*(1), 36–51. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8551.12690

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (4th ed.). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781315146027

Hammersley, M., & Traianou, A. (2012). Ethics in Qualitative Research: Controversies and Contexts. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.4135/9781473957619

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599. DOI: 10.2307/3178066

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Hardesty, L. (2018, February 11). 'Study Finds Gender and Skin-Type Bias in Commercial Artificial-Intelligence Systems.' *MIT News*. https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-finds-gender-skin-type-bias-artificial-intelligence-systems-0212

Harding, N. (2023). *'Locating our Research within Feminist Philosophies and Epistemologies'. Handbook of Feminist Research Methodologies in Management and Organization Studies*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Harding, S. (1995). Strong Objectivity: A Response to the New Objectivity Question. *Synthese*, *104*(3), 331–349. DOI: 10.1007/BF01064504

Harding, S. (2023). *Science and Social Inequality: Feminist and Postcolonial Issues*. University Of Illinois Press.

Harland, R. (1987). *Superstructuralism: The Philosophy of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism*. Methuen.

Haroen, H., Mirwanti, R., Agustina, H., Pahria, T., Harun, H., Akuoko, C., & Nadirawati, N. (2023). A Qualitative Study of Perception and Experience Toward End-of-Life Care Among Nursing Students Who Witnessed Dying People in Their Family. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, *16*, 2261–2270. DOI: 10.2147/JMDH.S423198 PMID: 37588170

Haworth, B., Whittaker, J., & Bruce, E. (2016). Assessing the Application and Value of Participatory Mapping for Community Bushfire Preparation. *Applied Geography (Sevenoaks, England)*, *76*, 115–127. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2016.09.019

Heidegger, M. (2001). *L'Origine de l'Ouvre D'art (trad. W. Brokmeier)*. Gallimard. (Texte de 1935-36).

Heidegger, M. (1954). *Poésie, Langage, Pensée* (Beaufret, A., Trans.). Gallimard.

Heidegger, M. (1986). *Être et Temps* (Boehm, R., & Préau, A., Trans.). Gallimard.

Heikkilä, M. (2025, June 19). 'Margaret Mitchell: Artificial General Intelligence is "Just Vibes and Snake Oil."' *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/7089bff2-25fc-4a25-98bf-8828ab24f48e?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hemraj, S. (2025). AI and the Future of Creative Development: Redefining Digital Media Production. *AI and Ethics*, *5*(5), 5105–5119. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s43681-025-00765-x

Hendrickson, D. S. (2022). *Jesuit Higher Education in a Secular Age: A Response to Charles Taylor and the Crisis of Fullness*. Georgetown University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv29z1hmx

Hicks, A., Barclay, J., Chilvers, J., Armijos, M. T., Oven, K., Simmons, P., & Haklay, M. (2019). Global Mapping of Citizen Science Projects for Disaster Risk Reduction. *Frontiers in Earth Science (Lausanne)*, *7*, 226. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.3389/feart.2019.00226

Hikuroa, D. (2017). Mātauranga Māori—The Ūkaipō of knowledge in New Zealand. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, *47*(1), 5–10. DOI: 10.1080/03036758.2016.1252407

Hoda, R. (2024). Research philosophy. In *Qualitative Research with Socio-Technical Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide to Qualitative Data Analysis and Theory Development in the Digital World* (pp. 93–112). Springer International Publishing. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-031-60533-8_5

Holitschke, S. (2023, September). 'The Ethics of Using AI For Creativity: Opportunities and Challenges.' *LinkedIn.* https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ethics-using-ai -creativity-opportunities-challenges-stefan-holitschke?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hosanagar, K., & Ahn, D. (2024). 'Designing Human and Generative AI Collaboration.' *Cornell University.* https://arxiv.org/abs/2412.14199?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Hosseini, M., Resnik, D. B., & Holmes, K. (2023). The Ethics of Disclosing the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Writing Scholarly Manuscripts. *Research Ethics*, *19*(4), 449–465. DOI: 10.1177/17470161231180449 PMID: 39749232

Hothersall, S. J. (2025). Social work: Ontology, epistemology, and methodology. In *Handbook of Research Methods in Social Work* (pp. 27–38). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781035310173.00010

Hu, L., Huang, W., & Bu, Y. (2024). Interdisciplinary Research Attracts Greater Attention from Policy Documents: Evidence from COVID-19. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communications*, *11*(1), 383. DOI: 10.1057/s41599-024-02915-8

Hung, P., Miciak, M., Godziuk, K., Gross, D. P., & Forhan, M. (2024). Reducing Weight Bias and Stigma in Qualitative Research Interviews: Considerations for Researchers. *Obesity Reviews*, *25*(7), e13750. DOI: 10.1111/obr.13750 PMID: 38685680

Ignacio, A. G., & Paras, P. S. (2024). A critical analysis of epistemological and ontological assumptions in constructivism. In *Building Resiliency in Higher Education: Globalization, Digital Skills, and Student Wellness* (pp. 1-20). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-5483-4.ch001

Inglis, N. C., Vukomanovic, J., Costanza, J., & Singh, K. K. (2022). From viewsheds to viewscapes: Trends in landscape visibility and visual quality research. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, *224*, 104424. DOI: 10.1016/j.landurbplan.2022.104424

Inie, N., Falk, J., & Tanimoto, S. (2023). 'Designing Participatory AI: Creative Professionals' Worries and Expectations about Generative AI.' *Cornell University.* https://arxiv.org/abs/2303.08931?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Intellectual Property Office. (2024, December 17). 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence.' *GOV.UK.* https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/copyright-and -artificial-intelligence/copyright-and-artificial-intelligence

Ioanndis, J. P. A. (2005). Why Most Published Research Findings are False. *PLoS Medicine*, *2*(8), 124. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.0020124 PMID: 16060722

Israel, D., & Hay, D. (2006). *Fundamentals of Quantitative Research*. Language Institute. *Chulalongkorn University.*, *1*(3), 1–20.

Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). Research ethics for social scientists. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Ivankova, N. V., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2016). Mixed methods research: A guide to the field. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Jacobsen, B. N. (2024). The Logic of the Synthetic Supplement in Algorithmic Societies. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *41*(4), 41–56. DOI: 10.1177/02632764231225768

James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism: A new name for some old ways of thinking*. Longmans, Green, and Co. DOI: 10.1037/10851-000

James, W. (1912). *Essays in radical empiricism*. Longmans, Green, and Co.

Jauss, H. R. (1978). *Esthétique de la Réception*. Gallimard.

Jebeile, J. (2022). *'Values and Objectivity in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.' Questioning Experts and Expertise*. Routledge.

Jensen, L. X., Bearman, M., Boud, D., & Konradsen, F. (2022). Digital Ethnography in Higher Education Teaching and Learning—A Methodological Review. *Higher Education*, *84*(5), 1143–1162. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-022-00838-4

Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. UOCP. DOI: 10.7208/chicago/9780226177847.001.0001

Jones, C. (2024). *Black Magic Marketing, Myth or Material?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sunderland).

Joseph, E. (2023). Underlying Philosophies and Human Resource Management Role for Sustainable Development. In *Governance as a Catalyst for Public Sector Sustainability* (pp. 286–304). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6966-8.ch014

Joseph, E. (2025). Leveraging AI to Inspire Innovation in Traditional and Digital Business Ecosystems. [JBE]. *Journal of Business Ecosystems*, *6*(1), 1–18. DOI: 10.4018/JBE.383049

Joseph, E. (2025). Public-Private Partnerships for Revolutionizing Personalized Education Through AI-Powered Adaptive Learning Systems. In *Public Private Partnerships for Social Development and Impact* (pp. 265–290). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-3471-4.ch011

Joseph, J. (2024). Gramsci, post-Marxism and critical realism. In *The Elgar Companion to Antonio Gramsci* (pp. 240–260). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781802208603.00023

Joullié, J. E., Gould, A. M., Spillane, R., & Luc, S. (2021). The Language of Power and Authority in Leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *32*(4), 101491. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101491

Judhananto, M.N. and Sitorus, F.K. (2025). 'Fusion of Horizons: Pemikiran Gadamer Mengenai Dialog dan Pemahaman dalam Kehidupan Manusia.' *Jurnal ISO: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Politik dan Humaniora. 5*(1). pp.12-12.

Jullien, F. (2006). *Penser Entre les Langues*. Gallimard.

Kadyschuk, L. (2023). *'Interpretive Analysis.' Varieties of Qualitative Research Methods: Selected Contextual Perspectives*. Springer International Publishing.

Kannan, S., & Gowri, S. (2014). Contradictory/negative in Clinical Research: Why (Do We Get These)? Why Not (Get These Published)? Where (To Publish)? *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, *5*(4), 151–153. DOI: 10.4103/2229-3485.140546 PMID: 25276623

Kant, I. (2001). *Critique de la Raison Pure (trad. A. Tremesaygues & B. Pacaud).* PUF. (Œuvre Originale Publiée en 1781).

Kant, I. (2006). *Critique de la Raison Pure* (Tremesaygues, A., & Pacaud, B., Trans.). PUF.

Kaplan, D. T. (2011). *Statistical Modelling: A Fresh Approach* (2nd ed.). Project Mosaic Books.

Kasula, C. P. (2020, June 28th). 'Netflix Recommender System — A Big Data Case Study.' *Medium*. https://medium.com/data-science/netflix-recommender-system-a-big-data-case-study-19cfa6d56ff5

Kazazoglu, S. (2025). Environmental Education Through Eco-Literacy: Integrating Sustainability into English Language Teaching. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(5), 2156. DOI: 10.3390/su17052156

Klakegg, O. J., & Tvedt, I. M. (2024). Ontology, epistemology, and axiology: Understand your philosophy and approach. In *Design methods and practices for research of project management* (pp. 3–18). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003469513-2

Klein, J. T. (1990). *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*. Wayne State University Press.

Kohno, K., Caliskan, A., & Cheong, C. (2025). Safeguarding Human Values: Rethinking US Law for Generative AI's Societal Impacts. *AI and Ethics*, *5*(2), 1433–1459. DOI: 10.1007/s43681-024-00451-4 PMID: 40352581

Koskinen, C. (2025). Researcher Vulnerability in Qualitative Research—A Conceptual Framework. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, *39*(1), e70012. DOI: 10.1111/scs.70012 PMID: 40087860

Kublikowski, I. (2023). Reflections on Analysis in Qualitative Research: The Hermeneutic Circle in Ricoeur. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, *33*, e3319. DOI: 10.1590/1982-4327e3319

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Kumar, A. (2022). Nyāya epistemology as global philosophy: Evidence, inference and action. *Philosophy East & West*, *72*(4), 983–1003.

Kunwar, A. (2025, October 9th). 'The AI-Driven Evolution of Netflix: Personalization at Scale.' *Times of AI.* https://www.timesofai.com/industry-insights/ai-in-netflix-personalization/

Kvale, S. (2007). Doing Interviews. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Laituri, M., Luizza, M. W., Hoover, J. D., & Allegretti, A. M. (2023). Questioning the Practice of Participation: Critical Reflections on Participatory Mapping as a Research Tool. *Applied Geography (Sevenoaks, England)*, *152*, 102900. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.apgeog.2023.102900

Latour, B. (2001). *Nous N'Avons Jamais été Modernes*. La Découverte.

Lenzner, T., Hadler, P., & Neuert, C. E. (2024). *Cognitive Pretesting*. GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. DOI: 10.15465/gesis-sg_en_049

Leppens, M., Chatteur, F., & Perkins, P. (2023). Mixed methods studies in design practice and suggestions for business and management research. In *Handbook of Mixed Methods Research in Business and Management* (pp. 394–410). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781800887954.00035

Levinas, E. (1990). *Totalité et Infini*. Livre de Poche.

Levitt, H., Surace, F., Wu, M., Chapin, B., Hargrove, J., Herbitter, C., Lu, E., Maroney, M., & Hochman, A. (2020). The Meaning of Scientific Objectivity and Subjectivity: From the Perspective of Methodologists. *Psychological Methods*, *27*(4), 589–605. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1037/met0000363 PMID: 33048563

Lim, W. M. (2025). What is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, *33*(2), 199–229. DOI: 10.1177/14413582241264619

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.)*.

Lingner, S. (2011). Science, Interdisciplinarity, and Society. *Poiesis & Praxis : International Journal of Ethics of Science and Technology Assessment*, *7*(4), 221–223. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10202-011-0092-z. DOI: 10.1007/s10202-011-0092-z PMID: 21874127

Liu, H. C., Liu, R., Gu, X., & Yang, M. (2023). From total quality management to Quality 4.0: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Frontiers of Engineering Management*, *10*(2), 191–205. DOI: 10.1007/s42524-022-0243-z

Liu, Y., & Ma, H. (2025). Evaluation of China's ESG Policy Texts Based on the "Instrument-Theme-Subject" Framework. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(17), 7796. DOI: 10.3390/su17177796

Long, D. (2024, December 8th). 'TBWA Creative Boss Says AI Will Boost Aussie Brands Globally.' *The Australian*. https://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/growth-agenda/ai-will-boost-aussie-brands-globally-as-agencies-harness-tech-tools/news-story/b276b5222ca67b90034f719357c2edc1?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Lovitts, B. E. (2008). *The Transition to Independent Research: Who Makes It, Who Doesn't, and Why*. Stylus Publishing.

Luoma, J., & Hietanen, J. (2024). Reflexive Quantitative Research. *Academy of Management Review*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.5465/amr.2021.0234

MacLeod, M. L., McCaffrey, G., Wilson, E., Zimmer, L. V., Snadden, D., Zimmer, P., Jónatansdóttir, S., Fyfe, T. M., Koopmans, E., Ulrich, C., & Graham, I. D. (2023). Exploring the Intersection of Hermeneutics and Implementation: A Scoping Review. *Systematic Reviews*, *12*(1), 30. DOI: 10.1186/s13643-023-02176-7 PMID: 36864488

Madanchian, M., & Taherdoost, H. (2025). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Research Efficiency. *Results in Engineering*, *26*, 104743. DOI: 10.1016/j.rineng.2025.104743

Madell, R. (2025, April 14th). 'How AI Helps This Company Have a 4-day Work-week.' *Business Insider.* https://www.businessinsider.com/4-day-workweek-ai-tools-efficiency-2025-4?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Maher, C. (2026). Planning, writing, and defending a doctoral thesis: Strategies and recommendations. In The Dissertation Research Guide for the Doctoral Scholar (pp. 239–266). IGI Global.

Maher, C., & Bedwei-Majdoub, C. (2025). Semi-structured qualitative interview guide: Process and considerations for doctoral students. In Qualitative Research Methods for Dissertation Research (pp. 195–220). IGI Global.

Maher, A. J. (2025). Rigour in Interpretive Qualitative Research in Education: Ideas to Think With. *British Educational Research Journal*, *51*(5), 2099–2155. DOI: 10.1002/berj.4156

Maher, C. (2018). *Understanding managerial career anchors and career path preferences: A case study of third sector social enterprise managers*. Scholar's Press.

Maher, C., & Sidei, S. (2025). Application of multiple case study design to identify digital marketing managers' career path preferences. In *Methodological Application of Multiple Case Study Design* (pp. 180–204). IGI Global. DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-7698-0.ch015

Majlesi, A. R. (2021). *'The Intersubjective Objectivity of Learnables.' Classroom-based Conversation Analytic Research: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives on Pedagogy*. Springer International Publishing.

Maksimovic, J., & Evtimov, J. (2023). Positivism and post-positivism as the basis of quantitative research in pedagogy. *Research in Pedagogy*, *13*(1), 208–218. DOI: 10.5937/IstrPed2301208M

Mallory, D. B. (2024). Participatory action research. In *Elgar Encyclopedia of Organizational Psychology* (pp. 468–474). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781803921761.00093

Margaryan, A. (2025, May 6th). 'AI is Not an Agent – AI is a Tool.' *Oxford University*. https://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/news-events/ai-is-not-an-agent-ai-is-a-tool/

Marlina, E., Purwaningsih, M., Al Hakim, S., & Maryati, I. (2025). Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research: The role of triangulation techniques. In *Qualitative research methods for dissertation research* (pp. 347-376). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Martens, N. C. M., & Lehmkuhl, D. (2020). Cartography of the Space of Theories: An Interpretational Chart for Fields That Are Both (Dark) Matter and Spacetime. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part B Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*, *72*, 217–236. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.shpsb.2020.08.004

Marx, W. (1977). *Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being*.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research. *Sage (Atlanta, Ga.).*

McAllister, J. W. (2023). Common Sense and the Difference Between Natural and Human Sciences. *Inquiry (Oslo, Norway)*, ●●●, 1–26. DOI: 10.1080/0020174X.2023.2240430

McCosker, A., & Wilken, R. (2020). *Automating Vision*. Routledge., DOI: 10.4324/9780429341175

McDonough, J. K. (2023). Leibniz on Time, Space, and Relativity. *The Philosophical Review*, *132*(3), 495–499. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1215/00318108-10469538

McQuillan, M. (2018). 'Derrida Queries de Man: A Note on the Materiality of the Letter Versus the Violence of the Letter.' Jean-Michel Rabaté. ed. A*fter Derrida: Literature, Theory and Criticism in the 21st Century*. CUP. pp80-94.

Meindl, J. R., Ehrlich, S. B., & Dukerich, J. M. (1985). The Romance of Leadership. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *30*(1), 78–102. DOI: 10.2307/2392813

Mendie, J.G. and Udofia, S.N. (2020). 'A Philosophical Analysis of Jacques Derrida's Contributions to Language and Meaning.' *International Journal of Humanities, Management and Social Science (IJ-HuMaSS). 3*(1). pp.20-34.

Mercer, J. (2007). The Challenges of Insider Research in Educational Institutions. *Oxford Review of Education*, *33*(1), 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/03054980601094651

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Merton, R. K. (1942). *The Normative Structure of Science*. https://www.panarchy.org/merton/science.html

Metz, T. (2014). Just the beginning for ubuntu: Reply to Matolino and Kwindingwi. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, *33*(1), 65–72. DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2014.892680

Microsoft. (2016, April 13th). 'The Next Rembrandt: Recreating the Work of a Master with AI.' *Microsoft News Centre Europe.* https://news.microsoft.com/europe/features/next-rembrandt/

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Misak, C. J. (2004). *Truth and the end of inquiry: A Peircean account of truth*. Clarendon Press. DOI: 10.1093/0199270597.001.0001

Moffatt, B., & Hall, A. (2024). Is AI My Co-author? The Ethics of Using Artificial Intelligence in Scientific Publishing. *Accountability in Research*, ●●●, 1–17. DOI: 10.1080/08989621.2024.2386285 PMID: 39109816

Montgomery, R. M. (2025). *Ontological and Epistemological Challenges in Contemporary Multidisciplinary Research: Towards an AI-Enhanced Framework for Academic Knowledge Production and Evaluation. Preprints*.

Moon, K., & Blackman, D. (2014). A guide to understanding social science research for natural scientists. *Conservation Biology*, *28*(5), 1167–1177. DOI: 10.1111/cobi.12326 PMID: 24962114

Moore, A. W. (1993). Meaning and reference.

Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *1*(1), 48–76. DOI: 10.1177/2345678906292462

Morin, E. (1986). *La Méthode 3: La Connaissance de la Connaissance*. Seuil.

Morin, E. (1999). *La Tête Bien Faite. Repenser la Réforme, Réformer la Pensée*. Seuil.

Morin, E. (2005). *Introduction à la Pensée Complexe*. Seuil.

Morley, J., Elhalal, A., Garcia, F., Kinsey, L., Mökander, J., & Floridi, L. (2021). Ethics as a Service: A Pragmatic Operationalisation of AI Ethics. *Minds and Machines*, *31*(2), 239–256. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s11023-021-09563-w PMID: 34720418

Mosinyan, D. (2024). Reimagining Epistemology: A Historical Analysis of Shifting Paradigms. *Multidisciplinary Reviews.*, *7*(5), 2024082–2024082. DOI: 10.31893/multirev.2024082

Motlhabane, A. (2024). Navigating The Ethical Landscape of Research: An Exploration of Reflective Practice Balancing Ethical Dilemmas. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review.*, *11*(1), 255–262.

Munro, T., & Scruton, R. (2025, August 16th). 'Aesthetics: Philosophy.' *Britannica.* https://www.britannica.com/topic/aesthetics

Murphy, D. (2024, July 18th). 'How to Humanize ChatGPT written content for better fiction (and to pass AI detection).' *Creativindie.* https://www.creativindie.com/how-to-humanize-chatgpt-written-content-for-better-fiction-and-to-pass-ai-detection/

Nam, B. H., English, A. S., & Dai, K. (2024). Intercultural Capital and Ambiguous Loss in In-Between Space: A Digital Ethnography of Anglo-Sino Academic Families Amid China's Transformation into the Post-Pandemic Era. *Identities (Yverdon)*, *31*(5), 645–664. DOI: 10.1080/1070289X.2024.2309825

Narayanan, M., & Ordynans, J. G. (2022). Meaning making and self-efficacy: Teacher reflections through COVID-19. *Teacher Educator*, *57*(1), 26–44. DOI: 10.1080/08878730.2021.1990455

Nasution, U. (2022). Wilhelm Dilthey's Hermeneutical Methodology in Understanding Text. *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies.*, *3*(1), 1–4. DOI: 10.30984/kijms.v3i1.59

Naughton, J. (2025, February 22nd). 'Creative Industries are Among the UK's Crown Jewels – And AI is Out to Steal Them.' *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/feb/22/creative-industries-are-among-the-uks-crown-jewels-and-ai-is-out-to-steal-them?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Nelson, E. S. (2023). *'Individuation and Self-Awareness in Wilhelm Dilthey.' Varieties of Self-Awareness: New Perspectives from Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Comparative Philosophy*. Springer International Publishing.

Nessle, C. N., Ghazal, L. V., Choi, S. W., & Fetters, M. D. (2023). Joint display of integrated data collection for mixed methods research: An illustration from a pediatric oncology quality improvement study. *Annals of Family Medicine*, *21*(4), 347–357. DOI: 10.1370/afm.2985 PMID: 37487720

Netflix. (n.d.). 'How Netflix's Recommendations System Works.' *Netflix Help Center*. https://help.netflix.com/en/node/100639

Neubert, M. (2024). Foundations of Academic Philosophy for Doctoral Researchers. *SSRN* 5255888.

Nicolescu, B. (2008). *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Hampton Press.

Nielsen, C. R., & Utsler, D. (2022). *'Gadamer, Fricker, and Honneth: Testimonial Injustice, Prejudice, and Social Esteem.' Epistemic Injustice and the Philosophy of Recognition*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9780429435133-5

Nosek, B. A., Ebersole, C. R., DeHaven, A. C., & Mellor, D. T. (2018). The Pre-registration Revolution. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *115*(11), 2600–2606. DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1708274114 PMID: 29531091

Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press. DOI: 10.4159/harvard.9780674061200

OCDE. (1972). *Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities.* Paris: OCDE. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000057878

Olivier, B. (2022). 'Massive Deception Masquerading as Information and Communication: A (Largely) Derridean Perspective'. *Phronimon.*, *23*(1), 1–31. DOI: 10.25159/2413-3086/10811

Omodan, B. I. (2024). *Research Paradigms and their Methodological Alignment in Social Sciences: A Practical Guide for Researchers*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003484066

Omodan, B. I., & Dastile, N. P. (2023). Analysis of participatory action research as a decolonial research methodology. *Social Sciences (Basel, Switzerland)*, *12*(9), 507. DOI: 10.3390/socsci12090507

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Abrams, S. S. (2025). Critical dialectical pluralism as a transformative multidimensional metaparadigm and metaphilosophy for mixed methods research. Methods in Psychology, 12, 100178. Nwafor, U. M. (2024). On the decolonial paradigm of development. In Beyond Decolonial African Philosophy (pp. 196–211). Routledge. DOI: 10.1016/j.metip.2025.100178

Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. (2004). Enhancing the Interpretation of "Significant" Findings: The Role of Mixed Methods Research. *The Qualitative Report.*

Oranga, J. (2025). Mixed methods research: Application, advantages and challenges. *Journal of Accounting Research. Utility Finance and Digital Assets*, *3*(4), 370–375.

Ouattara, I. (2017). L'Objectivité dans les Sciences Historiques: Entre Mythe, Exigence et Idéal. *Revue de l'Université de Moncton*, *48*(2), 91–128. DOI: 10.7202/1061869ar

Owen, R., Macnaghten, P., & Stilgoe, J. (2013). Responsible research and innovation: From science in society to science for society, with society. *Science & Public Policy*, *40*(6), 751–760. DOI: 10.1093/scipol/scs093

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., & Mulrow, C. D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 Statement: An Updated Guideline for Reporting Systematic Reviews. *BMJ (Clinical Research Ed.)*, *372*(71). PMID: 33782057

Pansera, M., & Owen, R. (2023). Embedding justice in research and innovation: Towards a pluriversal responsible innovation framework. *Research Policy*, *52*(2), 104627.

Park, S. (2023). Constructivism. In International Organization and Global Governance (pp. 133–143). Routledge.

Parker, J. L., Richard, V. M., Acabá, A., Escoffier, S., Flaherty, S., Jablonka, S., & Becker, K. P. (2024). Negotiating Meaning with Machines: AI's Role in Doctoral Writing Pedagogy. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, *35*(3), 1218–1238. DOI: 10.1007/s40593-024-00425-x

Patton, C. M., & Broward, J. (2023). The Giants and Forerunners of Phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and their Predecessors. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *7*(4), 79–94. DOI: 10.29333/ajqr/13600

Pavlovskaya, M. (2018). Critical GIS as a Tool for Social Transformation. *The Canadian Geographer. Geographe Canadien*, *62*(1), 40–54. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/cag.12438

Peake, L., & Mikhail, M. (2024). Feminist methodologies and methods. In *Doing Feminist Urban Research* (pp. 175–189). Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781032668727-16

Pearl, J. (2009). *Causality: Models, Reasoning, and inference* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511803161

Pebesma, E., & Bivand, R. (2023). 'Spatial Data Science: With Applications in R.' *Spatial Data Science: With Applications in R*. .DOI: 10.1201/9780429459016

Peirce, C. S. (1931–1958). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vols. 1–8). Harvard University Press.

Peirce, C. S. (1878). How to make our ideas clear. *Popular Science Monthly*, *12*, 286–302.

Pendergast, D., Bradford, K., & Grootenboer, P. (2021). What is meant by'teacher quality'in research and policy: A systematic, quantitative literature review. *Education Thinking*, *1*(1), 57–76.

Philipse, H. (2021). *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*. PUP. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1fkgd98

Piecychna, B. (2023). Hans-Georg Gadamer's Philosophy of Understanding and its Implications for a Model of Hermeneutical Translation Competence. *Perspectives.*, *31*(1), 74–87. DOI: 10.1080/0907676X.2022.2145909

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education : QSE*, *16*(2), 175–196. DOI: 10.1080/0951839032000060635

Pinto, T. (2024). 'Africa Shows ESG is Near an Adapt-or-Die Moment.' *GIS*. https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/africa-esg/

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioural Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879–903. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879 PMID: 14516251

Pogge, T. (2005). Real World Justice. *The Journal of Ethics*, *9*(9), 29–53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25115814. DOI: 10.1007/s10892-004-3313-z

Pontika, N., Klebel, T., Correia, A., Metzler, H., Knoth, P., & Ross-Hellauer, T. (2022). Indicators of research quality, quantity, openness, and responsibility in institutional review, promotion, and tenure policies across seven countries. *Quantitative Science Studies*, *3*(4), 888–911. DOI: 10.1162/qss_a_00224

Popa, N. (2022). Operationalizing historical consciousness: A review and synthesis of the literature on meaning making in historical learning. *Review of Educational Research*, *92*(2), 171–208. DOI: 10.3102/00346543211052333

Popper, K. (2005). *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge. (Original work published 1959) DOI: 10.4324/9780203994627

Popper, K. R. (1959). *The logic of scientific discovery*. Hutchinson.

Potur, A. A., & Kayihan, K. S. (2011). Theoria, Praxis, Poiesis: A Continuum Scheme. *Archnet-IJAR*, *5*(2). https://www.archnet.org/publications/5517

Pretorius, L. (2024). Demystifying research paradigms: Navigating ontology, epistemology, and axiology in research. *The Qualitative Report*, *29*(10). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.46743/2160-3715/2024.7632

Prochner, I., & Godin, D. (2022). Quality in research through design projects: Recommendations for evaluation and enhancement. *Design Studies*, *78*, 101061. DOI: 10.1016/j.destud.2021.101061

Putnam, H. (1995). *Pragmatism: An open question*. Blackwell.

Rahal, R. M., Fiedler, S., Adetula, A., Berntsson, R. P. A., Dirnagl, U., Feld, G. B., Fiebach, C. J., Himi, S. A., Horner, A. J., Lonsdorf, T. B., Schönbrodt, F., Silan, M. A. A., Wenzler, M., & Azevedo, F. (2023). Quality research needs good working conditions. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *7*(2), 164–167. DOI: 10.1038/s41562-022-01508-2 PMID: 36755134

Randall, J. H., & Woodbridge, F. J. (1960). *Aristotle*. Columbia University Press. DOI: 10.7312/rand90400

Reamer, F. (2013, September 2nd). *Social Work Values and Ethics*. 4th ed. Columbia University Press. https://www.perlego.com/book/774701

Ren, C., Wang, W., & Luo, H. (2010). 'Research on the GIS-Based Business Decision System. *2010 18th International Conference on Geoinformatics. Geoinformatics 2010*. DOI: 10.1109/GEOINFORMATICS.2010.5567767

Rescher, N. (1997). *Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason*. University of Notre Dame Press.

Resseguier, A. (2021). *Thinking AI with a Hammer. Kate Crawford's Atlas of AI*. AI and Ethics., DOI: 10.1007/s43681-021-00115-7

Ricoeur, P. (2024). 'Discourse, Metaphysics, and Hermeneutics of the Self.' *Études Ricoeuriennes/Ricoeur Studies. 15*(2). pp.193-206.

Ricœur1, P. (1990). *Soi-Même Comme un Autre.* Seuil.

Ricoeur, P. (1978). *The Rule of Metaphor. Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*. Routledge et Kegan Paul.

Ricœur, P. (1986). *Du Texte à L'Action: Essais d'Herméneutique II*. Seuil.

Riedler, M., & Eryaman, M. Y. (2025). Quantum Entanglements, Diffractive Readings: Montage and Meaning-Making in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *24*, 16094069251392418. DOI: 10.1177/16094069251392418

Ritella, G. (2025). *'The Cultural Dimension of Space-Time in Technology-Mediated Learning.' Technology as Cultural Mediator: Theories and Experiences from Different Contexts*. Springer.

Rockwell, E. (2011). *La Experiencia Etnográfica Historia y Cultura de los Procesos Educativos*. Paidós.

Roeber, B., Sosa, E., Steup, M., & Turri, J. (Eds.). (2024). *Contemporary debates in epistemology*. John Wiley & Sons.

Romme, A. G. L. (2016). *The quest for professional pragmatism: Business and management research as a practice*. Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198737735.001.0001

Rorty, R. (1979). *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*. Princeton University Press.

Rosemblat, G., Fiszman, M., Shin, D., & Kilicoglu, H. (2019). Towards a Characterisation of Apparent Contradictions in the Biomedical Literature Using Context Analysis. *Journal of Biomedical Informatics*, *98*, 103275. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbi.2019.103275 PMID: 31473364

Rosenberg, S. (2017, November). 'Why Artificial Intelligence is Still Waiting for its Ethics Transplant.' *WIRED*. https://www.wired.com/story/why-ai-is-still-waiting-for-its-ethics-transplant/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Roth, R. E. (2021). Cartographic Design as Visual Storytelling: Synthesis and Review of Map-Based Narratives, Genres, and Tropes. *The Cartographic Journal*, *58*(1), 83–114. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1080/00087041.2019.1633103

Rovelli, C. (2006). 'Chapter 2: The Disappearance of Space and Time.' *Philosophy and Foundations of Physics*. (Vol. 1, Issue C). DOI: 10.1016/S1871-1774(06)01002-3

Royal, T. A. C. (2012). Politics and knowledge: Kaupapa Māori and mātauranga Māori. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, *47*(2), 30–37.

Rozental1, S., van Dartel, M. & de Rooij1, A. (2025). 'How Artists Use AI as a Responsive Material for Art Creation.' *ISEA*. (p. 477). https://www.isea-symposium-archives.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025_Rozental_How-Artists-Use-AI-as-a-Responsive-Material.pdf

Rule, P. (2024). Dialogue, Horizon and Chronotope: Using Bakhtin's and Gadamer's Ideas to Frame Online Teaching and Learning. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *43*(3), 305–323. DOI: 10.1007/s11217-024-09933-8

Russell, B. (2025). *Logic and knowledge*. Taylor & Francis. DOI: 10.4324/9781003605096

Ruszev, S., Rogers, L., Gurgun, S., Stockton-Brown, M., Gee, M., Davis, T., Yang, X., Griffiths, C., Zhang, K., Cheng, B., Slaymaker, J., & Prajitna, S. (2024). 'Shared-Posthuman Imagination: Human-AI Collaboration in Media Creation White Paper.' *Bournemouth University*. https://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/40681/7/10.18746_epxn-da67.pdf

Ruthrof, H. (2022). *'Introduction: Gadamer–Benchmark of Hermeneutics.' The Roots of Hermeneutics in Kant's Reflective-Teleological Judgment*. Springer International Publishing.

Sabahrwal, D., Sood, R. S., & Sood, S. (2024). 'Media and Al: Navigating the Future of Communication.' *Researchgate.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381229239_Media_and_Al_Navigating_The_Future_of_Communication

Saliya, C. A. (2023). Research Philosophy: Paradigms, world views, perspectives, and theories. In *Social research methodology and publishing results: A guide to non-native English speakers* (pp. 35-51). IGI Global.

Sanders, M. (2022). Ética e Interdisciplinariedad en la Filosofía y la Teoría Literaria. *Perífrasis*, *13*(26), 142–163. DOI: 10.25025/perifrasis202213.26.08

Santos, B. D. (2009). *Une Science Postmoderne: Épistémologies du Sud*. Desclée de Brouwer.

Sarangi, S. (2024). Walking a Tightrope: The Ethical Dilemma of Rigour and/or Relevance in Interpretation-Driven Qualitative Inquiry. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice.*, *18*(3), 343–370. DOI: 10.3138/jalpp.28415

Sarup, M. (1993). *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (2nd ed.). Pearson.

Saunders, M. N., & Darabi, F. (2024). Using multi-and mixed methods research designs. In *Field guide to researching employment and industrial relations* (pp. 71–87). Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781035313891.00018

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research Methods for Business Students* (9th ed.). Pearson Education.

Saussure, F. d. (1971). *Cours de Linguistique Générale.* C. Bally & A. Sechehaye, Éds. Payot Œuvre originale publiée en 1916).

Schiffer, Z. (2025, August 20th). 'AI Isn't Coming for Hollywood. It's Already Arrived.' *WIRED.* https://www.wired.com/story/artificial-intelligence-hollywood-stability/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Schiffer, F. (2019). The Physical Nature of Subjective Experience and its Interaction with the Brain. *Medical Hypotheses*, *125*, 57–69. DOI: 10.1016/j.mehy.2019.02.011 PMID: 30902153

Schmager, S., Pappas, I. O., & Vassilakopoulou, P. (2025). Understanding Human-Centred AI: A Review of its Defining Elements and a Research Agenda. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *44*(15), 1–40. DOI: 10.1080/0144929X.2024.2448719

Schmidgen, W. (2023). Appreciation After Critique. *New Literary History*, *54*(2), 1085–1111. DOI: 10.1353/nlh.2023.a907160

Schuldt, J. P., Konrath, S. H., & Schwarz, N. (2011). "Global Warming" or "Climate Change"? Whether the Planet is Warming Depends on Question Wording. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *75*(1), 115–124. DOI: 10.1093/poq/nfq073

Schulze, U. (2021). "GIS works!"—But Why, How, and for Whom? Findings From a Systematic Review. *Transactions in GIS*, *25*(2), 768–804. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/tgis.12704

Schuman, H., & Presser, S. (1981). *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys: Experiments on Question Form, Wording, and Context*. Academic Press.

Schwarz, N. (1999). Self-Reports: How the Questions Shape the Answers. *The American Psychologist*, *54*(2), 93–105. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.54.2.93

Searle, J. (2002). *Consciousness and Language*. CUP. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511606366

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences* (4th ed.). Teachers College Press.

Seigfried, C. H. (1996). *Pragmatism and feminism: Reweaving the social fabric*. University of Chicago Press.

Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Allen Lane.

Shahid, M. U., & Ali, M. (2025). Enablers and Policy Framework for Construction Waste Minimization Under Circular Economy: Stakeholder Perspectives. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(9), 4129. DOI: 10.3390/su17094129

Shannonhouse, L., Dosal-Terminel, D., Kwag, D., Hall, M. E. L., Park, C. L., McMartin, J., Silverman, E. J., Aten, J., O'Connor, M. H., & Kapic, K. (2024). "God was with me": A qualitative study of Christian meaning-making among refugees. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *37*(1), 166–177. DOI: 10.1002/jts.22997 PMID: 38019108

Sharp, J. (2020). 'Subjectivity.' in ed. Audrey Kobayashi. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography.* Elsevier. pp117-120.

Shin, I., Riforgiate, S. E., Godager, E. A., & Coker, M. C. (2025). Remote Worker Communication Technology Use Related to Role Clarity, Coworker Support, and Work Overload. *Sustainability (Basel)*, *17*(7), 2830. DOI: 10.3390/su17072830

Shruthi, B., & Srihari, M. (2025). *Understanding Algorithmic Bias in Movie Recommendation Systems: A Study on User Experience and Cultural Representation.* SJCC International Journal of Communication Research., https://sjcc.ac.in/journal/articles/vol-2-issue-1/article-5.pdf

Sh, S.SH. (2015). Application of Geographic Information System (GIS) in Forest Management. *Journal of Geography & Natural Disasters.*, *05*(03). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.4172/2167-0587.1000145

Shuaib, A., Arian, H., & Makhseed, A. (2025). 'Beyond the Algorithm: A Perspective on Tackling Bias and Cultural Sensitivity in AI-Guided Aesthetic Standards for Cosmetic Surgery in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region.' *National Library of Medicine.* https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12416507/

Shwartz, V. (2024, February 13th). 'Artificial Intelligence Needs to be Trained on Culturally Diverse Datasets to Avoid Bias.' *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/artificial-intelligence-needs-to-be-trained-on-culturally-diverse-datasets-to-avoid-bias-222811

Silalahi, A. D. (2024). Some Debates of Hermeneutic and Legal Interpretation: Critical Analysis of Hans-Georg Gadamer Philosophical Hermeneutics. *Mimbar Hukum.*, *36*(1), 213–233. DOI: 10.22146/mh.v36i1.9493

Silverman, D. (2020). *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (6th ed.). SAGE.

Smith, J. A., & Judd, J. (2020). COVID-19: Vulnerability and the power of privilege in a pandemic. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, *31*(2), 158–160. DOI: 10.1002/hpja.333 PMID: 32197274

Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2025). Understanding Sources of Bias in Research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *28*(3), 137–139. DOI: 10.1136/ebnurs-2024-104231 PMID: 39762016

Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (3rd ed.). Zed Books. DOI: 10.5040/9781350225282

Smith, N., Georgiou, M., Jalali, M. S., & Chastin, S. (2024). Planning, Implementing and Governing Systems-Based Co-Creation: The DISCOVER Framework. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *22*(1), 6. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1186/s12961-023-01076-5 PMID: 38191430

Sokhi, R. S., Moussiopoulos, N., Baklanov, A., Bartzis, J., Coll, I., Finardi, S., Friedrich, R., Geels, C., Grönholm, T., Halenka, T., Ketzel, M., Maragkidou, A., Matthias, V., Moldanova, J., Ntziachristos, L., Schäfer, K., Suppan, P., Tsegas, G., Carmichael, G., & Kukkonen, J. (2021). Advances in air quality research–current and emerging challenges. *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics Discussion*, *2021*, 1–133. DOI: 10.5194/acp-2021-581

Sonck-Rautio, K., Lahtinen, T., & Tynkkynen, N. (2024). Consumer meaning-making of packaging functions for sustainable food packaging–Insights from qualitative research in Finland. *Current Research in Environmental Sustainability*, *7*, 100259. DOI: 10.1016/j.crsust.2024.100259

Soysal, Y., & Türkmen, S. (2024). ' Reinterpreting the Member Checking Validation Strategy in Qualitative Research Through the Hermeneutics Lens.'. *Qualitative Inquiry in Education: Theory & Practice.*, *2*(1), 42–63. DOI: 10.59455/qietp.19

Spezzacatena, M., & Marsico, G. (2024). Emerging Meaning-Making: Combining Qualitative Methods in a Study of Women's Ambivalence Toward Makeup. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *37*(3), 259–273. DOI: 10.1080/10720537.2023.2178042

Stanley, M. (2023). *'Qualitative Descriptive: A Very Good Place to Start.' Qualitative Research Methodologies for Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003456216-4

Steccolini, I. (2023). Methodological Paper What counts as "good" qualitative accounting research? Researchers' perspectives on assessing and proving research quality. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *36*(3), 1032–1057. DOI: 10.1108/AAAJ-05-2022-5808

Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M., & Baumgartner, H. (1998). Assessing Measurement Equivalence in Cross-National Consumer Research. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, *25*(1), 78–90. DOI: 10.1086/209528

Stengers, I. (1997). *Power and invention: Situating science*. University of Minnesota Press.

Sternberg, R. J., & Kaufman, J. C. (2010). Diverse Perspectives on Creativity. *Cambridge Core, /*(), 91–318. https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/cambridge-handbook-of-creativity/diverse-perspectives-on-creativity/4CAC17BCAC0DE5D0841757745A754945DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511763205

Stilgoe, J., Owen, R., & Macnaghten, P. (2013). Developing a framework for responsible innovation. *Research Policy*, *42*(9), 1568–1580. DOI: 10.1016/j.respol.2013.05.008

Stoecker, R., & Avila, E. (2021). From mixed methods to strategic research design. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *24*(6), 627–640. DOI: 10.1080/13645579.2020.1799639

Stoecker, R., & Falcón, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Handbook on participatory action research and community development*. Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: 10.4337/9781839100970

Stubbs, M. (1996). *Text and Corpus Analysis*. Blackwell.

Sullivan, D. O. (2006). Geographical Information Science: Critical GIS. *Progress in Human Geography*, *30*(6). Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1191/0309132505ph581pr

Susen, S. (2021). 'Jürgen Habermas.' Kivisto, P. Ed. *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Theory. Volume I: A Contested Canon.* (pp. 369-394). Cambridge University Press.

Takona, J. P. (2024). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach. *Quality & Quantity*, *58*(1), 1011–1013. DOI: 10.1007/s11135-023-01798-2

Tang, M.T. (2021). 'In Defense of Ricoeur's Hermeneutic Interpretation of Freud's Psychoanalysis.' *Segni e Comprensione*. (100).

Tang, G. (2025). Using mixed methods research to study research integrity: Current status, issues, and guidelines. *Accountability in Research*, *32*(5), 807–828. DOI: 10.1080/08989621.2024.2449041 PMID: 39749792

Tasso, B. C. (2022). Narrative as Action: Paul Ricœur and the Emancipatory Power of Interpretation. *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics.*, *45*(2), 37–45.

Taylor, C. (2016). *The language animal: The full shape of the human linguistic capacity*. Harvard University Press. DOI: 10.4159/9780674970250

Taylor, C. (2023). *'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man.' The Philosophy of Society*. Routledge.

The Data Scientist. (2024, December 24). 'What Are the Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Fields?' *The Data Scientist.* https://thedatascientist.com/what-are-the-ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-fields/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

The Guardian. (2016, June 10). 'This is What Happens When an AI-Written Screenplay is Made into a Film.' *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/10/artificial-intelligence-screenplay-sunspring-silicon-valley-thomas-middleditch-ai

Thelwall, M. (2024). Can ChatGPT evaluate research quality? *Journal of Data and Information Science*, *9*(2), 1–21. DOI: 10.2478/jdis-2024-0013

Thelwall, M. (2025). Evaluating research quality with Large Language Models: An analysis of ChatGPT's effectiveness with different settings and inputs. *Journal of Data and Information Science*, *10*(1), 7–25. DOI: 10.2478/jdis-2025-0011

Thomas, D. (2024, July 12th). 'Ethical Implications of AI in Creative Industries.' *Medium*. https://medium.com/aimonks/ethical-implications-of-ai-in-creative-industries-9b9174dd21e0?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Tomkins, L., & Eatough, V. (2018). *'Hermeneutics: Interpretation, Understanding and Sense-Making.' SAGE handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*. SAGE.

Tompkins, J. (1981). *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-structuralism*. JHUP.

Toor, K. (2025). *Is That Me?": Gendered Online Violence Through AI-Generated Images*. Simon Fraser University. [Masters Thesis], https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2025-10/etd24026.pdf

Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. (2000). *The Psychology of Survey Response*. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511819322

Trächtler, J. (2024). The World as Witty Agent-Donna Haraway an the Object of Knowledge. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *15*, 1389575. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1389575 PMID: 39372962

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *16*(10), 837–851. DOI: 10.1177/1077800410383121

Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Tracy, S. J. (2024). *Qualitative Research Methods: Gathering Proof, Making Sense of it, and Showing How it Affects People*. John Wiley & Sons.

Tracy, S. J. (2025). Practicing Qualitative Research Under the "Big Tent": Origins, Development, and Continuing Relevance of the Eight Big-Tent Framework for Qualitative Quality. *Qualitative Inquiry*, ●●●, 10778004251348167. DOI: 10.1177/10778004251348167

Truijens, F. L., De Smet, M. M., Vandevoorde, M., Desmet, M., & Meganck, R. (2023). What is it like to be the object of research? On meaning making in self-report measurement and validity of data in psychotherapy research. *Methods in Psychology (Online)*, *8*, 100118. DOI: 10.1016/j.metip.2023.100118

Tsao, J., Liang, C. X., Nogues, C., & Wong, A. (2025). Perceptions and Integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Creative Practices and Industries: A Scoping Review and Conceptual Model. *AI & Society*. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s00146-025-02667-2

Tsao, J., & Nogues, C. (2024). Beyond the Author: Artificial Intelligence, Creative Writing and Intellectual Emancipation. *Poetics*, *102*, 101865. DOI: 10.1016/j.poetic.2024.101865

Tsourgianni, A. (2025). *The Human Perspective on Artificial Intelligence (AI): How Do People Perceive and Relate to AI in the Social Sphere?* University College London. [PhD Thesis], https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10210891/1/Tsourgianni_10210891_thesis.pdf

Tuan, Y. F. (1979). Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective. *Philosophy and Geography*, 387–427. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/978-94-009-9394-5_19

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases. *Science*, *185*(4157), 1124–1131. DOI: 10.1126/science.185.4157.1124 PMID: 17835457

Tyagi, A. K., & Bansal, R., Anshu, & Dananjayan, S. (2022, December). A Step-To-Step Guide to Write a Quality Research Article. In *International Conference on Intelligent Systems Design and Applications* (pp. 374-383). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

UNESCO. (2023, April 21st). 'Artificial Intelligence: Examples of Ethical Dilemmas.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics/cases

UNESCO. (2024). 'Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes

UNESCO. (2024, November 28th). 'Generative AI: UNESCO Study Reveals Alarming Evidence of Regressive Gender Stereotypes.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/generative-ai-unesco-study-reveals-alarming-evidence-regressive-gender-stereotypes

UNESCO. (n.d.). 'Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.' *UNESCO*. https://www.unesco .org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics

United Nations. (2025, August 9th). 'Global issues.' United Nations: Peace, Dignity and Equality on a Healthy Planet. https://www.un.org/en/global-issues

University of Berkeley. (2023, October 10). 'Artificial Imagination: The Rise of Generative AI.' *University of Berkeley Exec Ed.* https://executive.berkeley.edu/ thought-leadership/blog/artificial-imagination-rise-generative-ai

University of Minnesota. (2024, May 17th). 'Debunking 5 Artificial Intelligence Myths.' *Minnesota Carlson.* https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/graduate/resources/ debunking-5-artificial-intelligence-myths

van den Hoonaard, W. van den (2023, September 2nd). *Seeking a Research-Ethics Covenant in the Social Sciences.* University of Alberta Press. https://www.perlego .com/book/4213624

Van Herk, H., & Goldman, S. P. K. (2022). 'The Advancement of Measurement Invariance Testing in Cross-Cultural Research (1999–2020).' H. Baumgartner & B. Weijters Eds. *Measurement in Marketing.* (pp. 95–119). Emerald.

Varela, F. J., Thomson, E., & Rosch, E. (1993). *L'inscription corporelle de l'esprit: sciences cognitives et expérience humaine*. No Title.

Vella, J. (2024). In Pursuit of Credibility: Evaluating the Divergence Between Member-Checking and Hermeneutic Phenomenology. *Research in Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, *20*(7), 665–669. DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2024.04.001 PMID: 38575497

Vella, J. (2025). Reclaiming Dialogue: Focus Groups and Hermeneutic Phenomenology. *Research in Social & Administrative Pharmacy*, *21*(10), 811–816. DOI: 10.1016/j.sapharm.2025.05.013 PMID: 40467397

Venkatesh, V., Brown, S. A., & Sullivan, Y. W. (2023). *Conducting mixed-methods research*. VT Publishing.

Vessey, D. (2021). *'Gadamer on Tradition.' The Gadamerian Mind*. Routledge.

Virkler, H. A., & Ayayo, K. G. (2023). *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*. Baker Books.

Visual Alchemist. (2024, September 8). 'Ethical Implications of AI Art in a Creative Future.' *Visual Alchemist.* https://visualalchemist.in/2024/09/08/ethical-implications -of-ai-art-in-a-creative-future/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Vuković, M., Urošević, S., & Dašić, D. (2023). 'Threats to Objectivity in Social Science Research.' *Sport. Media and Business.*, *9*(2), 143–158.

Wählisch, M. (2024). 'AI and the Future of Mediation.' *University of Birmingham*. https://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/255472364/Accord_30_Still_Time _to_Talk_-_Adaptation_and_innovation_in_peace_mediation_0.pdf

Walsh, C. (2020). *Decoloniality and epistemic justice*. Duke University Press.

Watson, A. (2024). A Postmodernist Qualitative Research Approach: Choosing Between Descriptive and Interpretive Phenomenology. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. PMID: 39737771

Weatherbed, J. (2025, May 7th). 'Figma's big AI update takes on Adobe, WordPress, and Canva.' *The Verge.* https://www.theverge.com/news/662678/figma-buzz-draw -make-sites-announcement-availability?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Webber, Q. M. R., Albery, G. F., Farine, D. R., Pinter-Wollman, N., Sharma, N., Spiegel, O., Vander Wal, E., & Manlove, K. (2023). Behavioural Ecology at the Spatial–Social Interface. *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*, *98*(3), 868–886. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1111/brv.12934 PMID: 36691262

Weber, M. (1949). "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." E. A. Shils & H. A. Finch Eds. & Trans. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences.* (pp. 50–112). Free Press. (Original work published 1904).

Weber, M. (1992). *Le Savant et le Politique* (Freund, J., Trans.). Plon.

Wellington, J. (2013). *Searching for integrity: The Politics of Ethics in Higher Education Research*. Routledge.

West, C. (1989). *The American evasion of philosophy: A genealogy of pragmatism*. University of Wisconsin Press.

White, E., & Davis, M. (2023). Exploring Subjectivity: A Critique of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research Review Letter.*, *1*(02), 96–103.

Wilcock, A. (2024). Shifting consciousness: Challenges to ontological assumptions in feminist research. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *50*, 101004. DOI: 10.1016/j. emospa.2024.101004

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2012). *What Are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury Academic.

William, F. K. A. (2024). Interpretivism or constructivism: Navigating research paradigms in social science research. *Interpretivism or Constructivism: Navigating Research Paradigms in Social Science Research*, *143*(1), 5–5.

Woods, P., & Sikes, P. (2022). *Successful Writing for Qualitative Researchers*. Routledge. DOI: 10.4324/9781003143406

World Economic Forum. (2024, August 9th). 'These are the Biggest Global Risks We Face in 2024 and Beyond.' *WEF Global Cooperation*. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/01/global-risks-report-2024/

World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *310*(20), 2191–2194. DOI: 10.1001/jama.2013.281053 PMID: 24141714

Xavier, B.I.O.Y. and Escach-Dubourg, T. (2022). 'A Hermeneutic Reading of Law and Legal Theory: Regarding Paul Ricœur.' *Meta-theory of Law. 235*. Steltenpohl, C. N., Lustick, H., Meyer, M. S., Lee, L. E., Stegenga, S. M., Reyes, L. S., & Renbarger, R. L. (2023). Rethinking transparency and rigor from a qualitative open science perspective. *Journal of Trial & Error, 4*(1). Hacking, I. (1999). *The social construction of what?*. Harvard university press.

Yang, Y. (2024). Complexity theory for complexity reduction? Revisiting the ontological and epistemological basis of complexity science with critical realism. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *54*(4), 368–383. DOI: 10.1111/jtsb.12412

Yang, Y. (2025). Racial Bias in AI-generated Images. *AI & Society*, *28*(3), 5425–5437. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1007/s00146-025-02282-1

Yo, M. H., Song, S., & Kim, J. (2025). 'Multilingual Capabilities of GPT: A Study of Structural Ambiguity.' *National Library of Medicine*. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12233270/

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., & Creswell, J. W. (2023). Generating meta-inferences in mixed methods research: A worked example in convergent mixed methods designs. *Methodological Innovations*, *16*(3), 276–291. DOI: 10.1177/20597991231188121

Younas, A., Fàbregues, S., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2025). Framework for types of meta-inferences in mixed methods research. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *25*(1), 1–14. DOI: 10.1186/s12874-025-02475-8 PMID: 39856568

Yulianto, H. (2021). Philosophy of management science: Ontology, epistemology, and axiology perspectives. *Cross-Border Journal of Business Management*, *1*(1), 152–162.

Zeunert, J., Hawken, S., & Gowers, J. (2025). Visualising and Valuing Urban Agriculture for Land Use Planning: A Critical GIS Analysis of Sydney and Neighbouring Regions. *Land (Basel)*, *14*(4), 854. DOI: 10.3390/land14040854

Zhang, C., Shao, Y., Yuan, Y., & Shen, W. (2025). Artificial Intelligence Reshapes Creativity: A Multidimensional Evaluation. *PsyCh Journal*, pchj.70042. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1002/pchj.70042 PMID: 40764253

Zhou, J., Li, R., Tang, J., Tang, T., Li, H., Cui, W., & Wu, Y. (2024). 'Understanding Nonlinear Collaboration between Human and AI Agents: A Co-design Framework for Creative Design.' *Cornell University*. https://arxiv.org/abs/2401.07312?utm_source =chatgpt.com DOI: 10.1145/3613904.3642812

Zormpas, E., Queen, R., Comber, A., & Cockell, S. J. (2023). Mapping the Transcriptome: Realizing the Full Potential of Spatial Data Analysis. *Cell*, *186*(26), 5677–5689. Advance online publication. DOI: 10.1016/j.cell.2023.11.003 PMID: 38065099

About the Contributors

Catherine Bedwei-Majdoub is Course Leader and Associate Professor at Ravensbourne University London with a PhD and specialism in Semantics, Hermeneutics, and Philosophy of the Word. Her professional experiences consist of managerial, event, and marketing roles at well-known hospitality brands such as Rocco Forte, Thistle, and myHotels (New World Hospitality). She has worked as a business consultant on projects in Poland, the UK, and Ghana. Her academic leadership and curriculum development are student-centred, industry-inspired, and extensive across undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional programmes. With master's qualifications in Marketing Management and Philosophy, her teaching experience and research supervision include Marketing Communications, Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility. Additionally, she has delivered guest lectures in phenomenology, metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of religion in England and abroad. Her research and publications are interdisciplinary and attempt to address the deeply existential, anthropological and pressing ethical and global issues facing contemporary society, business, and education.

***

Denisa Abrudan is an Associate Professor at the Department of Management& Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, West University of Timi oara (Romania). Her main research and teaching activities are developed within the management area, focusing on HRM, performance management, and leadership. Passionate about Education, Dr Abrudan is founder of FEAA UVT International HRM School focused on developing HRM and Leadership skills through innovative and transformative approach of Education. Dr Abrudan has more than 20 years' experience in organizing international projects on leadership and human resource management. In the research area, she is focused on creating and identifying a new system that organizations can transform the way they do business.

As a Visiting Professor in Hungary, Denisa delivered lectures in Tunis, Bahrain, Norway, The Netherlands, UK, Poland, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Serbia, Malaysia. She has developed a few international academic partnerships in People Management and Leadership areas with important universities from Europe and USA. She obtained two national awards in HE. Denisa's desire is to continue inspiring her students to find excellence in their professional path and create a great international academic HRM and Leadership community.

Munir Ahmad is a seasoned professional in the realm of Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), Geo-Information Productions, Information Systems, and Information Governance, boasting over 25 years of dedicated experience in the field. With a PhD in Computer Science, Dr. Ahmad's expertise spans Spatial Data Production, Management, Processing, Analysis, Visualization, and Quality Control. Throughout his career, Dr. Ahmad has been deeply involved in the development and deployment of SDI systems specially in the context of Pakistan, leveraging his proficiency in Spatial Database Design, Web, Mobile & Desktop GIS, and Geo Web Services Architecture. His contributions to Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) and Open Source Geoportal & Metadata Portal have significantly enriched the geospatial community. As a trainer and researcher, Dr. Ahmad has authored over 50 publications, advancing the industry's knowledge base and fostering innovation in Geo-Tech, Data Governance, and Information Infrastructure, and Emerging Technologies. His commitment to Research and Development (R&D) is evident in his role as a dedicated educator and mentor in the field.

Anorgul Atajanova is an Associate Professor in the field of information and digital education technologies with over 25 years of academic and teaching experience. She holds the academic degree of Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (PhD equivalent). Throughout her career, she has held various academic and administrative positions at Urgench State University and the Tashkent University of Information Technologies. Her professional expertise focuses on automated information processing systems, digital and educational technologies, information security, and the integration of modern ICT tools into higher education. Her research interests include digital transformation of education, intelligent learning systems, data processing methods, and pedagogical applications of information technologies. She has actively contributed to curriculum development, academic leadership, and the advancement of digital education practices in Uzbekistan's higher education system.

Augustin Bado is a well-published and distinguished philosopher specializing in Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, and Bioethics. Based in Spain and Burkina

Faso, Dr Bado is an expert in International Development Cooperation (Public Health), Grief Intervention, Counselling, Humanization of Health, Health Pastoral Care, and Ecclesiastical Studies. Dr Bado teaches Philosophy and Bioethics, Health Pastoral Care (Anthropology of Suffering), Transhumanism, and the Ethics of Responsibility. His research works towards the betterment of culture, society, and humanity. It is focused on: Support in situations of existential vulnerability: illness, suffering, and grief; Transhumanism and humanization of health; Applied ethics; Intercultural bioethics; Ethical responsibility; African anthropology; Personalism..

Phillippa Beasley-Swanson at Ravensbourne University London. She is also a Senior Finishing Artist and former Head of Picture with over fifteen years' experience in professional post-production for film and television. She has delivered high-end content for all major broadcasters and streaming platforms and is a DaVinci Resolve Blackmagic Design certified trainer and Dolby Vision Certified Professional. Prior to joining Ravensbourne, she worked as an award-winning colourist specialising in long- and short-form production across HDR and SDR workflows. Her practice-led expertise encompasses colour grading, online editing, and post-production pipeline design, supported by advanced proficiency in DaVinci Resolve, Avid Media Composer, Adobe Premiere Pro, and Baselight. Her professional credits include *Shark vs. Ross Edgley* (Disney/National Geographic), *The Football Academy* (BBC), *My Week with Maggi Hambling* (Sky Arts), and *Help! My House is Haunted* (Discovery). Her research is grounded in industry-facing, practice-based enquiry, examining post-production workflows and the impact of artificial intelligence on media production, with particular attention to AI-assisted finishing, authorship, and ethical and creative implications for contemporary screen industries.

Hassiba (Biba) Fadli is a Senior Lecturer and Module Leader in Supply Chain Management at Anglia Ruskin University, UK. Her work focuses on inclusive and innovative learning design, AI-enabled microlearning, and the ethical use of generative AI in higher education. She specialises in translating complex supply chain concepts into accessible, practice-based learning experiences for diverse and international student cohorts, bridging academic research, sustainability, and real-world industry practice.

Naureen Farhan is Course Leader for Computing & Emerging Technologies at Ravensbourne University London. Prior to her current role in the UK, she served as Assistant Professor at Bahria University Karachi (2014–2023), supervising UG and PG research and teaching modules in Computer Science and Information Technology. Her research interests include Internet of Things (IoT), 5G heterogeneous networks, radio resource management using machine learning clustering techniques,

security in heterogeneous network environments, and emerging areas such as quantum computing and AI deployment in industrial settings. She has published in peer-reviewed journals and conferences such as MDPI Sensors and Applied Sciences. Dr. Farhan's work has garnered international attention, with her research cited by peers worldwide. Her contributions to the field of computer networks have not only advanced academic understanding but have also influenced practical implementations in the industry. By addressing critical issues in 5G networks, her research supports the development of more robust and efficient communication systems globally. In recognition of her expertise, Dr. Farhan has been invited to speak at various international conferences and workshops, sharing her insights on next-generation network technologies. Her collaborative projects often involve partnerships with other leading institutions and industry stakeholders, reflecting her commitment to advancing technology through collective effort.

Chris Jones is a Practitioner-Pedagogue and Senior Lecturer in Marketing Communications and Management at Ravensbourne University London, where he also serves as Interim MBA Course Leader. His research and teaching centre on marketing effectiveness, creativity, and behavioural change, with a particular emphasis on how under-resourced enterprises can deploy creativity as a strategic equaliser. Dr Jones completed his Doctorate in Business Administration at the University of Sunderland, where his thesis examined the marketing practices of Afro-Caribbean entrepreneurs in South London, reframing their adaptive strategies through the lens of scarcity mindset and creative capital. He is the Founder and Chief Effectiveness Officer of the Ministry of Marketing Effectiveness (MOME). An author, consultant, and public speaker, Dr Jones bridges scholarship and practice to champion evidence-based creativity as a driver of sustainable business success.

Emil Joseph, a distinguished academician with a PhD in Commerce specializing in Human Resource Management (HRM), brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his role as an Assistant Professor at St. Joseph's College of Commerce, Bengaluru. He holds advanced degrees in Commerce (M.Com) and Banking and Finance (MBA), which have fortified his expertise in these domains. Dr. Joseph's professional journey encompasses significant tenures at prestigious institutions such as SRM University, Yuvakshetra College, and Bharathamatha College, where he has consistently demonstrated his commitment to academic excellence and student development. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Joseph contributes to the scholarly community as a reviewer for renowned publishers such as Emerald and IGI Global.

Christina Kalaitsidou is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management whose award-winning research investigates how reward systems, trust, and cultural diversity influence employee motivation and organisational performance. She specialises in advancing inclusive, data-informed HR practices that support well-being and sustainable outcomes in diverse workplaces.

Ismatulla Khayrullayev graduated from the Faculty of Mathematics, Samarkand State University. He has 33 years of scientific and pedagogical experience. He published his research in foreign and republican scientific and methodological journals, as well as in the collections of scientific and theoretical conferences. He actively participates in various spiritual and educational events organized at the university. He has published more than 90 scientific works, including 4 monographs and 3 textbooks. He was awarded the commemorative medal "25 years of independence of Uzbekistan.

Maryam Khodaviren is a Senior Lecturer in Business Management at Ravensbourne University London, with expertise in human resource management and organisational behaviour. Her work focuses on ethics, corporate social responsibility, and interpretive approaches to understanding organisational practice across academic and industry contexts. She is actively engaged in employability and industry collaboration, leading work-based learning initiatives that connect students with real organisations and practice-based learning opportunities.

Muktha Kumar is an Associate Professor of Commerce with over three decades of experience in teaching, research, and academic administration. She holds a doctoral degree in Commerce and specialises in Goods and Services Tax (GST), Direct Taxation, Management, and Higher Education studies. She has published research papers in peer-reviewed journals and has actively contributed to curriculum design, faculty development programmes, and academic governance at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Chi Maher has several years of international experience across industry and academia. Her career spans across organisational leadership, team management, teaching and supervising doctoral students. Professor Maher is deeply motivated by a commitment to scaffolding learning for students from diverse backgrounds and with varied prior educational experiences, helping students to achieve academic and personal success. Professor Maher has authored several books and more than thirty articles published in national and international scientific journals, as well as by global academic publishers. Her professional experience bridges both industry and academia, with significant contributions to strategic management and career management. Throughout her career, one thing has remained constant: her

unwavering commitment to using her expertise, knowledge, and networks in service of societal good. Whether Professor Maher is advising organisations, supporting students, mentoring colleagues or shaping public policy through research, Professor Maher's mission is clear, to bridge the gap between academia and action, ensuring that every interaction, partnership, and initiative leaves everlasting impactful legacy.

Daniel Oladiran is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Business, Management and Commerce at Ravensbourne University London. With experience spanning engineering, healthcare, and business, he blends industry practice with academic leadership in teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. His career includes roles at Nestlé, in consultancy, and within the NHS, where his doctoral research developed a resilient change management Implementation Framework addressing challenges in healthcare technology adoption. At Ravensbourne where he currently leads MBA dissertation projects and Evidence-Based Business Decision Module. He is recognised for innovative and inclusive postgraduate education, curriculum design, and industry collaboration. His research focuses on Change management, Leadership, Strategy, and Sustainability. Alongside academia, he leads a consultancy supporting entrepreneurs, SMEs, and public sector leaders with strategy, leadership development, and sustainable change.

Sergiu Sidei is a Research Associate, with over 15 years of experience in social enterprise, management, and systems change. His work focuses on creating impactful interventions for disadvantaged adults, drawing from his extensive background across the charity, public, and community sectors. Beginning his career as a frontline social worker, Sergiu developed a strong understanding of how effective leadership and management can address complex organizational challenges. This foundation has shaped his commitment to driving both organizational efficiency and measurable social value. He holds an MSc in Charity Management and has led projects that align strategy, impact, and sustainability. These experiences have deepened his belief in the power of social enterprises to generate lasting value. Sergiu is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Social Enterprise Management, where his research explores how ethical leadership, systems thinking, and innovation can enhance the resilience and impact of social enterprises. Passionate about ethical responsibility and transformative leadership, Sergiu's work bridges theory and practice, demonstrating how organizations across sectors can achieve sustainable progress and meaningful social change.

Sein Tin is Year Lead and Lecturer in Business at Ravensbourne University London. His research and professional experience span entrepreneurship and business management. He combines practical entrepreneurial experience with

academic inquiry to investigate how businesses and entrepreneurs innovate, grow, and create sustainable value in dynamic markets. His work also examines the integration of enterprise practice into higher education, with a focus on inclusive, industry-engaged learning that develops students' skills and capabilities for contemporary business environments.

Index

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

T

W