Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry
INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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Scholars. Activists. Friends.
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Norman K. Denzin
Michael D. Giardina
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Introduction

Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry

Norman K. Denzin & Michael D. Giardina

If teachers are truly concerned about how education operates as a crucial site of power in the modern world, they will have to take more seriously how pedagogy functions on local and global levels to secure and challenge the ways in which power is deployed, affirmed, and resisted within and outside traditional discourses and cultural spheres.

—Giroux (2012)

Proem

On November 6, 2012, the world looked on as U.S. President Barack Obama was reelected by an Electoral College landslide of 332 to 206 votes; he also recorded 51% of the popular vote, thus becoming the first presidential candidate since Dwight Eisenhower to top 51% twice (Benen, 2013). Yet, despite this seeming-if-fleeting affirmation of liberal values (i.e., gay rights, women’s rights, New Deal social welfare programs, environmental
concerns, engaged global vision, and so on) and public rebuttal of the regressive racial, economic, and political politics of contemporary American conservatism and its fundamentalist Tea Party faction (i.e., lower taxes for the wealthy, unregulated free-market economics, an anti-gay, anti-Black, anti-woman, anti-immigrant agenda, etc.), the campaign season was a brutal reminder of a divided, fractured, and dislocated U.S. body politic. From Mitt Romney’s “Randian callousness” (Sullivan, 2012) in decrying that 47% of Americans are self-described victims, to his running mate Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) raising the specter of a “clash of civilizations” and equating Roe v. Wade to the infamous Dred Scott Supreme Court decision that upheld slavery, the mainstream of the American Right has become ever-more fundamentalist, and a sizable portion of the population seems to have drifted along with it, especially at the local level.

To consider but two examples: In just the last electoral season (i.e., 2012), we witnessed elected members of Congress take not only extreme public positions but positions that resided at the level of the absurd. For example, Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO) made waves with his statement on rape that “if it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to shut the whole thing down” (quoted in Saletan, 2013, para. 1). Although the furor caused by his statement contributed in large measure to his loss in the Missouri senate race, he wasn’t the only candidate for political office making such outlandish statements about rape. In fact, William Saletan (2013) reminds us that Akin’s “gaffe” wasn’t really a gaffe at all; in fact, it was but a very public pronouncement of the political right’s ideological entrenchment on the issue of women’s reproductive rights. And, more recently, in the wake of the tragic shooting that took place at an elementary school in Connecticut—one that saw the death of twenty innocent schoolchildren and six staff members—we have witnessed common-sense gun safety recommendations shouted down from powerful gun lobbies (i.e., the National Rifle Association) and politicians alike, blaming the tragedy not on easy access to high-powered assault rifles or poor access to mental health treatment but on everything else: the usual litany of demonized targets—video games, Hollywood films, secularism, etc.
Previous volumes in our series (see Denzin & Giardina, 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) have been largely grounded within and positioned as a response to such a U.S.-based (if not driven) context of social-political life brushing up against the (politics of the) research act,3 ebbing and flowing in rhythm to the contextual specificities that, since we started our ongoing project, has been framed against the backdrop of:

• a global economic downturn, precipitated in large measure by a perfect storm of liquidity crises; the bursting of the housing bubble (and attendant foreclosures); large-scale government bailouts of banks that had engaged in risky and unregulated financial products such as credit default swaps (but were deemed “too big to fail” based on their importance to the global economic system); and the resulting if problematic austerity measures enacted throughout many countries to stabilize the economy from collapsing into another Depression (to name but a few key aspects);

• the ongoing military engagement with, and presence in, Afghanistan since 2001, which, when coupled with the occupation of Iraq that occurred through much of the same time, cost an estimated US$3 trillion (see, e.g., Stiglitz & Bilmes, 2008) and the lives of at least 6,000 U.S. troops and several hundred thousand civilians in those two countries (not to mention the tens of thousands of troops injured in combat). These conflicts also gave rise to the sanctioned and systemic use of torture(!) by the United States during the Bush administration (see Sullivan, 2009) as well as contributing to further damaging the U.S. economic landscape;

• frightening patterns and incidences of climate change, which saw three devastating weather events cripple New Orleans in 2005 (Hurricane Katrina), the New York/New Jersey tri-state area in 2012 (Hurricane Sandy), and the South Asian region in 2004 (Indian Ocean tsunami), the latter of which resulted in the deaths of more than 230,000 people in one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history;

• ongoing public policy assaults on public employees, teachers, and union members by right-wing politicians such as Gov.
Scott Walker (R-WI) and Gov. Rick Scott (R-FL), which include, but were not limited to, radical measures against collective bargaining rights, retirement and pensions, and health insurance;

- exploding technological innovations in personal and mobile communication, such as the launch of social media sites Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, as well as the now-normal global use of Smartphone technology pioneered in the likes of Apple’s iPhone, RIM’s BlackBerry, and Samsung’s Galaxy products; and

- the continued cultural and legislative assaults on women, racial and ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians, including restricted access to and demonization of family-planning clinics and services, increases in state-level legislative attacks on immigrant populations (e.g., Arizona’s SB-1070 bill), and the demonization of same-sex marriage.

Put differently, for much of the last decade we have been writing within and against: a post-9/11/01 neoliberal social order of increased surveillance, militarism, and conflict and diminished equality, civil rights, and social justice; a university system that privileges “reemergent scientism” (see Maxwell, 2004), bibliometrics (see Cheek et al., 2006), and the commodification of knowledge; a political context in which higher education is mocked or derided by extremist politicians, held suspect by an ever-growing number of citizens, and at odds with itself on how best to reform and remake itself for the future; and an economic condition that privileges the free-market status quo in all quarters of life. As such, our viewpoint is necessarily colored through such a kaleidoscopic lens.

This volume seeks to chart new a new course—a new direction, if you will—for our community of scholars. In taking up “global dimensions” of qualitative inquiry, however, we readily acknowledge the contested terrain on which such an idea is premised. As such, our use of the term is meant to suggest the need for us to look beyond our (own) borders and comfort zones and engage with the rapidly changing landscape outside of our midst, in all its myriad forms. Indeed, as Michael Skey (2012) reminds
us, “One of the key challenges facing the social sciences at the current time is developing new theoretical frameworks for understanding what has been labeled a ‘borderless world’” (p. 471).

In their book *Globalizing Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Interventions in Theory, Method, and Policy*, Cameron McCarthy and his collaborators (2007) laid the groundwork for such work, arguing that qualitative researchers in the present moment should endeavor to write against “the Anglocentric ethnographic gaze” that has saturated a substantial amount of interpretive inquiry, and that has used the White male gaze of the West as the “paradigmatic subject-object of history and the motivator for critical research and cultural and political interventions” (p. xvii). They likewise implore researchers to confront the “unreflexive dualism” that tends to dominate work conducted on and in “the global” (especially in and from the Global North); that is, a false dualism that views globalizing processes as occurring “out there” or away from us in a mobile, dynamic sense, and as such not impacting local particularities of poverty, health, or immobility. Instead, they suggest, those engaging with “the global” must be cognizant of a global order and the global processes embedded therein that are actively “articulated to both micro and macro dimensions of contemporary life” and that point to:

> the cultural work entailed in the organization of globalizing effects, not “at a distance” but in our neighborhoods, in our everyday lives, and in our bodies, as we negotiate social distinctions and cultural and political choices relating to home, identity, nation, and language, and raced, gendered, sexual, and class-based forms of affiliations. (p. xix)

As Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2008b) frame it, to theorize the global in the present tense is to view it as a form of “neocolonial fragmentation” that calls for “new research styles, styles that take up the reflexive, queer, polyphonic, narrative, ethical turn” (p. 26).

Writing on methodological challenges to and interdisciplinary analytical possibilities embedded in the negotiation of such geographies of power in an ever-more globalizing cultural frame, James R. Faulconbridge (2012) suggests (albeit in a slightly
different context) that researchers must engage with the pace of change circulating around them, acknowledge the “qualitative variability” of such processes “across space and leading to the continued geographical unevenness of the economy,” and actively situate themselves within the “spatial reach” of power relations (pp. 748–751). In a similar vein, Garth L. Lean (2012) has, following the work of Mišela Mavrič and John Urry (2009) and Michael Haldrup (2011), argued that traditional forms of qualitative fieldwork “needs to be coupled with ‘new’ techniques that establish a broader, more holistic view of mobile social practices” and that account for interpretive inquiry being conducted across various social media platforms and spatial geographies (p. 156). On this front, we need look no further than Grant Kien’s (2009) work on and espousal of global technography as a field of inquiry (i.e., ethnographies of technology in everyday social situations, especially those dealing with transnational forms of mobility).

Such approaches or practices, of course, must go beyond merely studying (post)colonial, transnational, or cosmopolitan objects, discourses, and spaces. In considering qualitative inquiry at the confluence(s) of the global-local nexus (see Morley & Robins, 1995), Michelle Fine, Eve Tuck, and Sarah Zeller-Berkman (2008) present us with a way of inquiry about/with those “in a place, across places, and then those who dare to trace global footprints of domination and resistance” (p. 158; emphases in the original). For Fine et al., this means understanding that participants in such projects have “sovereign rights” and “complex personhood[s],” which as a “prerequisite to democracy involves the cease-and-desist of Eurocentric, colonizing power formations,” including the rights to: “resist or reject Eurocentric theory,” resist or reject versions of themselves that are fantasies of the power elite,” “explore epistemological differences,” “choose what is and what is not on the table for documentation,” and “work and learn and exist in wholeness and to thrive in their relations with other peoples” (p. 170).

Thus, there is a need to move away from necessarily considering simply the geographic and cartographic dimensions of the research act (especially with respect to what George Marcus [1995] terms multi-sited ethnography) to taking a stance in favor
of “overtly politicized inquiry with an explicit mandate to pursue social justice while prioritizing indigenous and subjugated knowledges” (Darnell & Hayhurst, 2011, p. 187). For as Paulo Freire (1998) maintained (and here we are paraphrasing), the capitalist system and globalization theory that speaks of ethics hide the fact that their ethics are those of the marketplace and not the universal ethics of the human person. It is for these matters that we ought to struggle courageously if we have, in truth, made a choice for a humanized world (Freire, 1998, p. 114). Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira (2009) caution us, however, to think about how we formulate our role as researchers, both personally and professionally, within such a project. They ask us to consider questions such as: “Who can speak for whom? Under what power relations? Which bodies continue to determine what constitutes legitimate scholarship? Which bodies continue to be excluded from the making of scholarship?” (Diversi & Moreira, 2009, p. 230). To this end, questions of “who speaks for whom and who owns the past—are, in their purest form, ethical issues” that need to be reformulated so that we may “participate morally and authentically” with such communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a, p. 568).

These are not questions that exist in the abstract, especially for those working within the spaces of qualitative inquiry, and who on a daily basis are faced with the necessity of defending their status as researchers. Julianne Cheek (2008), for example, notes that at the same time qualitative researchers write and celebrate the growth and expansion of “the field”:

We also hear a loud and clear message about the continued contraction of spaces for both qualitative research and researchers. These contracted spaces are bounded by narrowing understandings about research and what constitutes research evidence. Such a contraction is an outworking of the politics of evidence. (p. 122)

This is not a lonely vantage point. Deconstructing Bush-era cultural politics, Joe L. Kincheloe and Kenneth Tobin (2006) similarly note that: “Many of the gains many of us thought we had made twenty years ago are under assault and many of the epistemological fights for the benefits of multiple ways of doing
educational research in which we were forced to engage in the 1980s are breaking out again” (p. 3). They use the term “recovery moment” to refer to “a reeducation of the public to accept Eurocentric and often male ways of both being and seeing” that has taken hold within social, cultural, political, and economic realms, including the ways we “conceptualize and validate research” (p. 3). On this point, we agree with Lauren Berlant (1997), who suggests that such an institutional backlash against critical scholarship (especially of the cultural studies or interpretive strands):

is frequently a euphemism for discomfort with work on contemporary culture around race, sexuality, class, and gender. It is sometimes a way of talking about the fear of losing what little standing intellectual work has gained through its studied irrelevance (and superiority) to capitalist culture. It expresses a fear of popular culture and popularized criticism. It expresses a kind of antielitism made in defense of narrow notions of what proper intellectual objects and intellectual postures should be. (p. 265; emphasis added)

This shouldn’t surprise us.

Consider the example put forth by Deborah Ceglowski and colleagues (2011) in their article “Aced Out: Censorship of Qualitative Research in the Age of ‘Scientifically Based Research.’” They contend that, from the inception of graduate school, most researchers are “socialized into understanding, accepting, and perpetuating the master narrative” of gold standard scholarship—one that “narrowly specifies and controls acceptable kinds of research, as defined by a limited number of researchers—mostly White and male” (p. 680). This view is largely supported by Vance Randall et al. (1999), who, drawing from the work of Sandra Harding (1992), Phil Carspecken (1996), and John Stanfield (1994), posit that the institutional structures of the university and the academy necessarily “leads to the creation of a conventionalized system that judges which inquiries warrant publication or adoption, and ultimately which constructs of truth and knowledge are given public voice to influence educational practice itself” (p. 10). Or, as Michael Silk and colleagues (2010) put it, the current context of (evidence-based) research is one in which “the training that most
doctoral students receive, and in particular the orientation provided in most research design courses, results in the vast majority of students gaining an implicit and explicit understanding of, and comfort with, foundational (see Amis & Silk, 2005; Smith & Hodkinson, 2005) beliefs of how to ‘do’ rigorous research” (Silk et al., 2010, p. 112; emphases in original).

At the same time, as Henry Giroux (2012) wrote in a recent essay on “gated intellectuals” and the role they play in establishing boundaries to protect the status quo and isolate citizens from one another:

Higher education is increasingly being walled off from the discourse of public values and the ideals of a substantive democracy at a time when it is most imperative to defend the institution against an onslaught of forces that are as anti-intellectual as they are anti-democratic in nature [...] it is one of the last strongholds of democratic action and reasoning and one of the most visible targets along with the welfare state. (para. 7)4

Against this tide, Giroux calls for a project of “borderless pedagogy that moves across different sites—from schools to the alternative media—as part of a broader attempt to construct a critical formative culture” that enables us “to reclaim [our] voices, speak out, exhibit moral outrage and create social movements, tactics, and public spheres” in the service of a radical, progressive democracy (2012b, para. 10). It is a project that writes itself against the narrow compartmentalization of knowledge and standardization of experience, against the calls for the professionalization of the academy and the neoliberalization of higher education, and against “the dominant and structural status quo” (Ortiz, 2012, para. 7). A project that, in fact, “refuses the insular, overly pragmatic, and privileged isolation of the academy” (Giroux, 2012a, para. 22). A project that calls on us to “assertively join in the battle over ideas, reclaim the importance of critique, develop a discourse of hope and occupy many quarters and sites so as to drown out the corporate funded ignorance and political ideologies that strip history of its meaning, undermine intellectual engagement and engage in a never-ending pedagogy of deflection and disappearance” (Giroux, 2012b, para. 13). It is, in short, a project that demands that we
take up the mantel of public intellectualism across the divides and disciplines once more, reorienting us toward fulfilling a pro-active scholar-activist agenda. For let us never forget: “The very notion of being an engaged public intellectual is neither foreign to nor a violation of what it means to be an academic scholar, but central to its very definition” (Giroux, 2012a, para. 31).

This volume is one step in this direction. From essays on social media and remix culture to indigenous communities of research in the Global South, from postcolonial border crossings to new developments in arts-based research, our collected authors have heeded this call. Their chapters indeed contribute to this notion of a borderless pedagogy, of engaging not only the spatial locations and practices of research, but of pushing (if not smashing) through the gates of the academy, of laying down a challenge to the proverbial "methods establishment" (see Fielding, this volume), of what it means to do research in the highly contested place of the historical present.

The Chapters

Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry is comprised of three parts: Theory, Praxis, and Method. Kenneth J. Gergen (“Qualitative Inquiry and the Challenge of Scientific Status”) begins our volume with a critical overview of the hegemony of empiricist foundationalism and the turn to social epistemology before turning to the social construction of scientific knowledges and the possibilities it presents for qualitative inquiry.

In his chapter “Qualitative Research in a Glocalizing World,” Nigel G. Fielding focuses on the growth of citizen research, crowdsourcing, and convergence culture as embedded within social media and the global interconnectedness of people. To wit, he considers the need to engage with what he terms “the globalization of methods,” to push back against the “methods establishment,” and look to what research outside the academy might herald (including but not limited to cyber-activism and -research and Indigenous methodologies). In so doing, he also asks us to consider the political economy of such a course, mindful of how the “professorial filter” and marginalization of viewpoints remains a very real impediment to the promise such a future of research holds.
Annette Markham concludes this opening section with a chapter titled “Remix Cultures, Remix Methods: Reframing Qualitative Inquiry for Social Media Contexts.” In it, she situates qualitative inquiry in a digital age in which “we are witnessing a startling transformation in the way cultural knowledge is produced and how meaning is negotiated,” which includes a “de-privileging of expert knowledge, decentralizing culture production, and unhooking cultural units of information from their origins.” We might think of this as YouTube videos that mash together music, words, and video in forms of protest (as we saw in Egypt), crowdsourcing, and alternative forms of (noncommercial or noncorporate) journalism. To this end, she examines particular elements of (qualitative) remix that move us toward disrupting traditional ways and means of conducting research in and among digital culture and contexts.

Part II directs our attention to methodological praxis as it relates to Indigenous, postcolonial, and decolonizing contexts and ways of being. To begin, Bekisizwe S. Ndimande (“The Role of Indigenous Languages and Focus Groups in Qualitative Inquiry: Experiences from the Global South”) challenges us to consider the importance of language and setting when conducting research (especially with communities whose first language is not English). Drawing from his interview and focus group research with Indigenous communities and parents in South Africa, Ndimande (himself an Indigenous South African researcher fluent in several of the languages spoken in the Gauteng Province where he conducted his research) shows the decolonizing potential of conducting research in the participants’ native tongues. This was especially important in the case of focus group settings, where “the researcher’s use of the Indigenous languages of the groups adds to the informality” of the setting and helps foster a “joint effort and commitment” between the researcher and participants. While acknowledging that “a decolonizing agenda has been hindered by ‘othering’ the Global South in the post-colonial era,” Ndimande is nevertheless hopeful that research in this vein can aid in bringing “all communities to the center, especially those who are still on the margins.”

Cynthia B. Dillard’s chapter (“On a Bead and a Prayer: The Importance of [Re]membering African Womanhood in the
Diaspora”) is next, drawing specific attention to the memory work associated with the (literal) metaphor of handmade beads “as containers and symbols of cultural memory, helpful in examining questions of identity, spirituality, knowledge, subjectivities, and the complexity of African cultural production.” Writing from an endarkened feminist perspective, Dillard challenges us to engage with the sacredness of the Diaspora through the art of storytelling and ritual in method, which, in turn, has the potential to create new stories, new memories, and new spaces of resistance and change.

Kakali Bhattacharya’s chapter (“Border Crossing: Bridging Empirical Practices with De/colonizing Epistemologies”) concludes Part II, offering a self-reflexive interrogation of border crossing, colonizing discourse, and the decolonizing possibilities “created, re-worked, or re-imagined through these crossings.” Specifically, Bhattacharya presents two examples drawn from her own classroom pedagogy in which she is forced to come to terms with her own lenses of resistance and critique in the face of the messy realities of life for her students. In both cases, she meditates on the “rupturing of binaries” that are revealed in what she might otherwise have assumed to be oppressive discourses, and discusses the implications this might hold for border intellectuals.

Part III highlights three methodological issues for research in, of, and among global dialogue and discourse. Richard Siegesmund (“Dewey, A/r/tography, and Ab-Use of Global Dialogue”) begins by addressing arts-based educational research (ABER) and the particular method of a/r/tography. Although he situates a/r/tography as being “heavily postmodern,” he also links it to John Dewey’s and Gayatri Chaktravorty Spivak’s work on aesthetics (among others) and shows the “intellectual historic connectedness” that ties their perspectives back to the Enlightenment. Through their work, he argues, “there is an appeal that our research must deal with authentic human sensory response,” one that may open up a space for an “aesthetic inquiry that risks to care … in a time of anaestheticizing globalization.”

Jerry Lee Rosiek’s chapter (“Beyond the Autoethnography versus Ironist Debates: Using Charles Sanders Peirce and Cornel West to Envision an Alternative Inquiry Practice”) considers the
relevance of pragmatism to contemporary methodological discussions. He engages C. S. Peirce’s view of semiotics (and his triadic view of the sign) and Cornel West’s explication of prophetic pragmatism, the confluence of which points “to the possibility of a methodological practice in which interpretations of social phenomena would be warranted, not by an implied exclusive correspondence to some preexisting metaphysical presence, but by the appeal of the ontological possibilities generated by an interpretation.”

Part III closes with Donna M. Mertens’s chapter (“Navigating the Terrain of Social Justice: Multiple Voices in Mixed Methods Research”), which engages with multiple paradigms (e.g., constructivist) in arguing that mixed methods research presents potential avenues toward social justice that “are not possible using a single methodology.” To that end, she focuses considerable attention on the transformative paradigm, and the promise it holds for social justice research.

The volume concludes with Laura L. Ellingson’s timely Coda (“Are You Serious? Playing, Performing, and Producing an Academic Self”), which powerfully suggests that researchers need to find room among our seriousness for the “play” of research. She goes on to detail the “passion and pleasure” we might endeavor to locate within our research acts; the “playful immersion” (or deep attention) we might find within our analysis of empirical material; the possibilities heralded by “playing outside the box” (or being creative) with research design; deploying the notion of “the trickster” and “playing the fool” (or active performer) to subvert and rethink boundaries; and, methodologically speaking, being an epistemic player who takes pleasure from multiplicity (i.e., one who moves freely among methodological and epistemological possibilities). Taken collectively, Ellingson reminds us of the productive place of “play,” and how we might use it to our benefit in spite of the rigid and serious boundaries in our professional midst.

Coda

“We have a job to do. Let’s get to it.”

Just as we invoked this phrase to conclude last year’s volume, and in the volumes that came before it, we do so here yet again
to signal that our work is not done. To reinforce, yet again, that we have a moral and professional obligation to our communities and ourselves to actively, consciously, and politically insert ourselves into debates such as those outlined above and throughout this volume. Howard Zinn, the late American activist historian, once said, “You can’t be neutral on a moving train.” History is still on the move. What are we waiting for? Go out, and change the world.

Notes

1. Benen (2013) also notes that Obama is only the sixth president in U.S. history to achieve such a feat, joining Andrew Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, William McKinley, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Dwight Eisenhower.

2. Saletan (2013) goes on to list numerous other instances during the 2012 election cycle in which this ideological entrenchment is quite clear, including Rep. Joe Walsh’s (R-IL) claim that there are never any instances in which abortion is necessary to protect the life of the woman and Richard Mourdock, the Republican nominee from Indiana for the U.S. Senate, intoning that “even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that it is something that God intended to happen.” As Saletan concludes, “Every time the GOP claims to have purged rape mythology, rape theology, and rape extremism, another congressman opens his mouth. What worries me isn’t how many Republicans have repeated this stuff in public, but how many more believe it.”


4. Although Giroux is specifically referring to gated intellectuals as being public figures like Thomas Friedman or David Brooks who, through their standing and visibility in newspapers such as the New York Times legitimate the harshest realities of neoliberalism, we think it is fair to apply that term to academics, for although their gate-keeping may not reach the level of public influence as those listed above, they nonetheless impact the nature of research and scholarship on a fairly broad level.
Introduction

References


Introduction Global Dimensions of Qualitative Inquiry


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**Qualitative Inquiry and the Challenge of Scientific Status**


Qualitative Research in a Globalizing World


Remix Cultures, Remix Methods


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The Role of Indigenous Languages and Focus Groups in Qualitative Inquiry


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Border Crossing


Beyond the Autoethnography versus Ironist Debates


Navigating the Terrain of Social Justice


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Coda Are You Serious?


