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Article

Emotional Intelligence and the Qualitative Researcher

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Abstract

In this conceptual article, we explore the idea of refining the role of the researcher. Using emotional intelligence as a framework, we synthesize methodological writing about the role of the researcher and ways to enhance the connection between humans in qualitative research. Emotional intelligence can strengthen the ability to connect with participants, skillfully listen during the interview process, and more clearly understand the lifeworlds participants articulate.

Keywords: role of the researcher, emotional intelligence

> In the course of writing about the fundamentalist Christian school and community, I stumbled upon (and over) the angular contours of my own strong feelings.
> —from *The Color of Strangers, The Color of Friends* (Peshkin, 1991, p. 4)

In the quotation above, Peshkin (1991) names a common element that accompanies most qualitative researchers on their research journeys: strong feelings. Peshkin claims that a central aspect of these strong feelings was the fact that he is Jewish. Like many researchers, his strong feelings caused him to stumble, and hopefully to reflect on the source of these feelings, as well as the ways in which they impacted his fieldwork. "As a result," Peshkin (1991) claims, "I was alerted to the necessity of being mindful—throughout, not at the end of, my inquiry—of what sentiments and values were being evoked" (p. 4). As a seasoned researcher, Peshkin was able to be mindful; he reflected on the source of his emotions throughout the research process. Yet, many novice researchers either deny their feelings or struggle to identify those feelings about their research and then are lost in their efforts to grapple with these feelings once they are uncovered. Awareness (being mindful) is but the first step in the process of reflecting on how strong feelings might impact or illuminate the fieldwork of qualitative research. In therapy, one has a professional (the therapist) to guide you as you sort through strong feelings. Not so in qualitative research. In fact, graduate courses do little to address feelings evoked through the research process and how to handle them. Behar (1996) found anthropological inquiry to be:

> Loss, mourning, the longing for memory, the desire to enter into the world around you and having no idea how to do it, the fear of observing too coldly or too distractedly or too raggedly, the rage of cowardice, the insight that is always arriving late, as defiant hindsight, a sense of the utter uselessness of writing anything and yet the burning desire to write something. (p. 3)

Behar (1996) concluded her initial thoughts about this kind of inquiry by reflecting that this is not the anthropology being taught in our colleges and universities, and regretfully noting that "It doesn't sound like the stuff of which Ph.D.'s are made" (p. 3).

Face to face social interaction is the most regularly experienced social reality. The core of social and personal being rests in immediate contact with other humans. However, observing human behavior in order to write about it can be an odd and precarious form of contact (Behar, 1996). This social reality makes qualitative research one of the most interesting and contested forms of collecting data for empirical studies. In the dominant quantitative paradigm of social and behavioral science, research instruments (e.g., surveys) are tested, controlled, and examined for validity and reliability. Questions and responses that bring down the overall strength of the analysis are refined or removed. In qualitative research, the parallel process to refining the instrument rests primarily with researcher reflexivity. The more self-aware and forthright the researcher is, the better the audience can understand the perspective of the research. Qualitative scholars assume that self-awareness should lead to better social interactions, when developed as an important quality of a researcher.

Qualitative inquiry is unique because it requires both emotional maturity and strong interpersonal skills to "collect data" or, more precisely, hear the stories of others and use their words to describe phenomena. Because these abilities are difficult to assess, qualitative research has done much to encourage full descriptions of the role of the researcher. However, in-depth descriptions of the role of the researcher are not a panacea, and researchers frequently do not enhance their interpersonal abilities in order to learn to connect with participants in ways that strengthen the findings of qualitative studies. In addition, information about how to grapple with the emotions

associated with fieldwork and how these emotions might be used to gain further insight during the research process is often on the periphery of qualitative literature (Behar, 1996).

In this conceptual article, we take the idea of refining the instrument, a researcher, a step further. Using emotional intelligence (EI) as a framework, we synthesize some of the best methodological writing about the role of the researcher and ways to enhance the connection between humans in qualitative research. We argue that Goleman's (1995) theory of EI can play a vital role in supplementing methodological development. EI can strengthen a researcher's ability to connect and communicate with participants, skillfully listen and react during interviews, and eventually come to more clearly understand the lifeworlds participants articulate. This article will reflect on the role of EI in the researcher's use of ethnographic tools, suggest ways in which Goleman's (1995) work might be useful to both novice researchers and those who teach them, and provide a rubric that is helpful in assessing the emotional strengths and weakness of the qualitative researcher.

Qualitative Evolution and Understanding

Scholars agree that emotional reflexivity, a preeminent skill for conducting qualitative research, is an important remedy to quandaries in the field (Luttrell, 2010). Schwandt (2001) defined reflexivity as the "process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences," and claimed that the researcher is actually part of the setting or context he or she is seeking to understand (p. 224). When researchers include the outcome of emotional reflexivity in their writing, the implicit becomes explicit. Although emotional reflexivity should be an important part of the "methodological palette," little was published on the role of fieldwork experiences and emotions until the 1970s (Spencer & Davies, 2010).

With the introduction of emotion into methodological consideration, understanding of the qualitative research process shifted from one where observation of the participant involved dispassionate observers with an objectifying methodology, to participant observation, a more emotionally engaged methodology (Tedlock, 1991). Although scholarly discussions increased about the topic of emotions, little guidance was available about how emotion might be used productively in the research process. Heald and Deluz (1994) noted that anthropological practice has been characterized by a divorce of the personal from the professional. Burman (2001) suggested that the exclusion of emotion from scholarship and research is a general feature of academic practice. Hiding subjectivity or even labeling it as objectivity is considered "central to the maintenance of traditional power relationships and surrounding academic practices" (Burman, 2001, p. 315).

Questions about the role of subjectivity have also persisted. Epistemology, proclivities, and biases are often recognized as something that shapes the findings of a study. Traditional empiricism has demanded a "detached and uninvolved stance towards … subjectivity, since subjectivity in experimental, quantitative, and qualitative research could produce potentially distorting 'irregularities'" (Davies, 2010, p. 234). However, Davies and Spencer (2010) contested this argument, advanced in the 1970s and 1980s, that subjectivity undermines understanding in the research process. They assert that subjectivity, when properly handled, actually strengthens the validity of findings.

In the past, the idea of accounting for the emotional aspects of the work has been regarded as overly subjective, narcissistic, and even navel-gazing. The work on reflexivity by Luttrell (2010) and others has advanced the conversation. For example, Spencer (2010) advocated that self-reflexivity is not complete if it does not include emotional reflexivity, which is "a very intricate

process, and places serious demands upon the fieldworker to know themselves – not only in terms of the positions we occupy but also in terms of our bodily and psychological proclivities and the dynamics of our 'inner self'" (p. 32). This kind of relational observation is intended to keep "traditional empiricism in check" and to humanize fieldwork through challenging the desire for certainty or a definite truth (Spencer, 2010, p. 33). Important information can be gleaned about the research process and its findings from observing both one's bodily and psychological proclivities. Researchers should consider "how field emotions affect the data we collect, frame, and interpret" as well as how emotions are often structured by, and arise from, the field encounters themselves (Davies & Spencer, 2010, p. 16). These assertions confirm scholarly work in the field of adult development, which has recently turned from the examination of purely cognitive functions, such as transformational learning, to include narrative, spiritual, and somatic learning (Merriam, 2008).

Qualitative methods typically do not include heavily pre-structured or standardized procedures; instead, they often require spontaneous decisions to be made in the field, thus requiring researchers to have a high level of aptitude and EI. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) noted that these skills rest on personal judgments that are learned through practice and judged through the "strength and value of the knowledge produced" (p. 17). However, there is a missing link in the research process when the quality of the knowledge produced is the only criteria utilized. The quality of a study does not necessarily indicate the kind of research skills needed to produce rigorous research. Because graduate education is designed to give new researchers the opportunity to acquire skills, there should be intermediary feedback between those spontaneous decisions in the field and the strength and value of the knowledge produced. We argue that Goleman's (1995) notion of EI and the ways in which it can be assessed and enhanced may provide an additional tool to advance the technique and pedagogy used in the process of teaching qualitative research skills.

Emotional Intelligence

Objective empiricism undergirds traditional academic research and the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) characterizes the traditional perspective on intelligence. Many have worked to expand beyond rigid and positivistic research and ways of knowing (Luttrell, 2010; Spencer & Davies, 2010), and the notions of multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983) and EI (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) have expanded the understanding of intelligence, or diverse ways of being talented. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as being able to monitor and regulate feelings to guide thought and action through five basic competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman (1995) built upon their work and described EI as abilities that are distinct and complementary to the cognitive abilities measured by IQ. EI is a capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those in others for the purpose of motivating and managing our relationships and ourselves.

Given the complexities of human interactions and the subsequent complexities in research that uses interaction as a method of data collection, the components of EI offer an innovative way to learn and develop qualitative research techniques. The emotional competence framework includes two dominant areas: (a) personal competence, which determines self-management, and (b) social competence, which determines the handling of relationships (Goleman, 1998). Personal competence plays a role in examining epistemologies and research proclivities, while social competence can help to examine social interactions, an area that is not often evaluated in qualitative research courses. Both areas are crucial to understanding the value of analyzing EI in qualitative research.

Personal Competence

Although there are many components to personal competence, the three primary aspects from Goleman's (1998) framework that are relevant to qualitative research are self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. Self-awareness is, in essence, knowledge of one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuition. This knowledge includes emotional awareness, which is the recognition of emotions and the impact of those emotions, and it includes self-confidence, which is a strong sense of self-worth and capability. Qualitative research has a well-established tradition of focusing on the role of the researcher, and much of the self-awareness category has been covered in the literature. This component is a platform on which other elements of personal competence are built.

Self-regulation is the management of one's internal states, impulses, and resources. Although qualitative training has often encouraged greater self-awareness, the actual management of that awareness has not always been addressed. Ironically, human subjects procedures mandate the management of emotions and impulses in participants, encouraging researchers to secure counseling for participants who encounter disturbing emotions from the research process. However, few scholars acknowledge that disturbing emotions may also be dredged up in novice qualitative researchers or provide tools for handling these. Key aspects of self-awareness include self-control (keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check) and trustworthiness (maintaining standards of honesty and integrity). Trustworthiness has also been covered extensively under the idea of ethics in research (Glesne, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). Other aspects include adaptability or flexibility in handling change, and innovation (being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches, and new information).

Motivation, which encompasses the emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals, is the last component of personal competence. In the context of this article, motivation is applied to research goals. The drive to achieve a standard of excellence and the initiative and readiness to act on opportunities are other aspects of motivation. Optimism, the final aspect of motivation, is not typically discussed in research settings. Within the EI framework, optimism refers to persistence in pursuing goals, despite obstacles and setbacks. This component may prove to be essential in some studies, as obstacles can often become a pathway to more meaningful studies.

Social Competence

Empathy and social skills are the two key components of social competence. Empathy is an awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns. The understanding of self in personal competence is generally a prerequisite for understanding others. Empathy includes the ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives and take an active interest in their concerns. Additionally, interest in others is an important ethical disposition for qualitative researchers, and political awareness is also important. Political awareness is the ability to read a group's emotional currents and power relationships. Although recognition of power relationships is important in critical areas of research, it is perhaps more important when interacting with participants in a study.

Social skills include the ability to respond to others, which is crucial when the researcher is the only instrument to collect data. Communication that includes open listening and building bonds through instrumental relationships proves to be powerful when connecting with communities. This article builds upon each of these characteristics through the research compiled in Goleman's (1995, 1998) work and important concepts established in qualitative methodological literature.

Assessing EI for Qualitative Research

Although the EI framework was not developed for qualitative research, there are many areas of overlap that can be leveraged to help researchers better understand their interactions with participants. Glesne (2011) presented several interviewer attributes that will ensure high-quality interactions and are useful to consider when engaging in research that involves interviews.

One attribute is an awareness of power and hierarchy. Power and hierarchy may not be perceived as relevant to all approaches and studies. A more critical perspective in social science might advocate that power and hierarchy are almost always present in some way because of the nature of participant-researcher relationships. The ability for a researcher to categorize and analyze information provided by participants constitutes a tool that is often inaccessible to participants. This attribute is akin to political awareness, as noted in the EI framework. Working to make a relationship with participants less hierarchical often depends on philosophical and theoretical dispositions, as well as the purpose of research. Glesne (2011) noted that "Qualitative researchers are neither always emotionally removed and controlling of the research process, nor are they always openly sharing of their own opinions and seeking collaborations" (p. 127). In order to maintain a balanced approach, EI is demonstrated by the need to be mindful of status differences and strategies to minimize them. Mindfulness is crucial in studies that involve differences in age, ability, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and other identities that inherently induce hierarchical power relationships. One way to minimize hierarchy is to choose a topic and a method that requires more self-disclosure and relies upon research participants to define the parameters of the study (e.g., participatory action research).

Several other interviewer attributes are closely linked, including the researcher being nonthreatening, therapeutic, caring, and grateful. A safe and nonthreatening environment is built on good rapport and a connection between the researcher and participants. According to Glesne (2011), a "good interviewer never does anything to make respondents look or feel ignorant" (p. 126). Furthermore, when considering the time, effort, and cooperation that respondents provide, communicating appreciation throughout the process is readily within the power of the researcher to provide. Through this process, participants learn about themselves, the researcher, and the research. As a result, the interactions can become therapeutic. It is a sign of an emotionally intelligent connection when participants are able to safely say what they feel. Often, this connection requires patience and probing to solicit deeper explanations and evaluations. Researchers who are able to build a safe and trustworthy environment are then responsible for the well-being of participants.

The final attributes include being anticipatory and a learner. It is important to reflect on research and anticipate broadly what might happen next. Being anticipatory is, in some ways, in tension with being a learner. In a learner frame of mind, a researcher sets aside assumptions or pretensions that they might know what a participant means when stating something. Although assumptions prevent researchers from asking for more information, they can also be useful for simplifying relationships and avoiding repeatedly asking for more clarification. Balance is key to emotionally intelligent research.

We combined the various researcher attributes with the EI framework to form a rubric for emotionally intelligent qualitative research. Evaluating a researcher might be considered contentious and personal. However, this rubric is intended to be a tool for self-reflection that allows researchers to coarsely evaluate their interactions. Rubrics are generally blunt instruments that provide descriptions of varying levels of demonstration according to the criteria. However blunt, the use of this rubric is offered as a tool in the development of self-regulation, a key attribute of EI and necessary for high quality, ethical research.

Table 1

Emotionally Intelligent Qualitative Research

Criteria	Underdeveloped	Developed	Highly Developed
Self-Awareness	The researcher has engaged in little to no self-reflection in preparation for the study. Self-awareness is limited and results in awkward research relationships that do not yield rich and thick descriptions. Participants seem confused about the intent of the research and the identity of the researcher.	The researcher has engaged in self-reflection on identity, presuppositions, and values. The researcher demonstrates some awareness that these areas may impact participants, but she/he is unclear on how to place limitations on the study. Participants in the study react to traits of which the researcher is unaware.	The researcher has (a) engaged in thorough self-reflection on identity and presuppositions, and offers (b) a balanced presentation to participants in the study and (c) a strong sense of the value and limitations of the study. The researcher is aware of the degree to which her/his identity has an impact on the participants.
Self-Regulation	Transcriptions or reflections on interactions with participants demonstrate the researcher took a lot of time to speak and share opinions instead of inquire. The researcher demonstrates lack of in-depth interest in the participant; active listening skills are not well tuned; and the researcher demonstrates difficulty in anticipating the needs of participants.	The researcher is able to listen without inserting self. However, the researcher may tend to over share information about the study, leaving less room for the participant to speak. The researcher is dimly able to anticipate the concerns or needs of the participant and may be confused about when to bracket an opinion.	The researcher listens carefully during interviews or focus groups. Assumptions or presuppositions are withheld long enough to allow participants to explain the full range of their perceptions, but shared when necessary to be forthright and honest. The researcher balances the need to listen and learn, but also anticipates questions, concerns, and the needs of the participant.
Empathy	The researcher is either distant and uninterested in the underlying emotions in the participants, or overly involved in trying to play the role of the counselor. The need to extract some quotations for a findings section of a paper supersedes the need to show genuine concern and gratitude for the individual(s) participating in the study.	The researcher empathizes with participants but is not alert to the line between research processes and counseling processes. The researcher may offer advice where not solicited. Although the researcher is genuinely grateful to have had the opportunity to accumulate more data, she/he may not demonstrate genuine gratitude for the individual who spent time with her/him.	The researcher feels and shows gratitude for the time dedicated by the participant. Participants often demonstrate a level of emotion and/or realization that they had not previously thought through the issues presented in the questions. The researcher is careful not to counsel, but recognizes the degree to which the nature of the questions have presented a therapeutic experience. The researcher is also clear that she/he is not a trained therapist and refers participants to such when necessary.
Power and Politics	The researcher may ask inappropriate questions and ignore important power dynamics related to cultural or gender issues. Some participants may share only limited information or refrain from participating in the study due to inattention to power dynamics. Hierarchies go unrecognized or remain implicit as opposed to defined and explained as part of building rapport.	Some preliminary thought is given to certain power dynamics, but there is not a thorough treatment of the role of gender, culture, and other key issues. The researcher may minimize some of the ways she/he actually has power and instead engage in critical reflection.	The researcher recognizes the power dynamics in the setting of the study, including but not limited to cross-cultural, gender, and other identity and positional dynamics. The design of the study reflects careful inclusion of community members. During interviews or focus groups, the researcher is sensitive to the dynamics and creates a safe space for sharing. Participants often feel comfortable to share what might be considered "dangerous information."

The rubric has been presented at the American Educational Research Association annual conference and in our advanced qualitative research classes. In general, the tool has been regarded as not only a summary of desired traits, but also a way to map goals for becoming a better instrument of data collection. Students in our classes rated themselves across all levels of development in each of the four criteria. The philosophical tension that accompanies a rubric in a field that does not typically use evaluations of this ilk is illustrated by the question: how can the qualities of an emotionally intelligent qualitative researcher be determined? Qualitative literature highlights that certain attributes lead to higher quality interactions, but a greater complexity is whether or not those interactions lead to stronger data and/or findings. Although these complexities are not resolved here, we advocate if the development of EI in qualitative research generates greater levels of comfort, care, and appreciation for participants then it will likely provide insights into the deepest aspects of their perspectives. In quantitative survey research, the wording of the questions is ultimately important, but in qualitative studies, the importance of the surrounding context (driven by EI and researcher relationships) is infinitely greater and more complex.

<div align="center">**Experiential Issues and Themes**</div>

Qualitative researchers are often faced with a continuum that includes a quick extraction of salient quotations and subsequent abandonment of participants on one end and total empathy and immersion in the lives of participants on the other. Behar (1996) added that the "intellectual mission is deeply paradoxical: get the 'native point of view,' . . . without actually 'going native'" (p. 4). The following themes explore the role EI might play in balancing the needs of participants and the need to create knowledge. We discuss our own experiences in the areas of self-awareness and self-regulation, power and politics, and empathy. The primary themes are drawn from Table 1 and then combined with issues, including gender and cultural competency, to provide a deeper analysis on the role of EI. The sources of our reflections for this section include numerous field experiences and classroom examples.

Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation

There is a range in qualitative approaches, from caretaker and therapist on one side to the take and leave hasty quotation extraction on the other. Many disciplines emphasize that researchers should have a high level of care for their participants. This concern is especially salient in the medical field, where participants are often ill or dying (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). On one level, care is emphasized by researchers who advance methodologies to work with and for the participants (e.g., participatory action research) as opposed to a means to an end for the researcher. On another level, Institutional Review Boards enforce federal guidelines for research ethics. In spite of growing emphasis on the treatment of participants and federal/institutional requirements, there is wide latitude for motivation and approach toward a study. In most cases, the role of EI and positive researcher attributes call for balance. On one side of the spectrum, we have heard students (one in particular with a background in journalism) talk about how annoying participants are when they drone on about things the researcher does not care about. The student emphasized that she just wants to get a few quotations and get out of there. On the other hand, it is easy to become entrenched in the life of a participant and to take on a caretaker approach.

For example, McCarthy Brown (1992) stated that she would do anything to help her participant, Mama Lola, a Vodou Priestess, even by making her participants' house payments if necessary. Wolcott's (2002) "sneaky kid" experience may also represent over-involvement. In Wolcott's (2002) account of ethics and intimacy in fieldwork, he outlined reasons for allowing a teenage man to take up residence on his property. Subsequently, Wolcott began a physically intimate

relationship and a narrative research project with the person. If EI is something that can be enhanced and developed in researchers, then balance and role understanding may be useful byproducts. There is a wide range on the continuum between uncaring and overly-involved. Refining and balancing the role of the researcher to avoid taking advantage of situations for personal gain and being positioned with a savior-complex is important for individuals, but also for the field of research.

Power and Politics

The most frequent discussions of the role of power in qualitative research are related to ethics. For example, would it be ethical for an employer to conduct research on employees, or is it possible for a teacher to ask students to participate in a study without any coercion? Every situation is highly contextual, but in general, it is assumed that there should be some skepticism and caution about including participants in a study when a researcher holds some degree of positional power. However, there are more complex forms of power that are not as obvious as positional power. Education, socio-economic class, culture, gender, race, and other components form socially constructed versions of power. Researchers have been thoroughly criticized for studying other cultures and subcultures only to deliver a rendering of that group to an academic audience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Ignoring a critical perspective on power is not simply a dispositional weakness; it also creates a weaker connection with participants and is an indicator of a lower level of EI. Researchers who care to critically examine their power create a more balanced framework for engaging with people willing to participate in a study.

Another often-ignored aspect of power is when the participants have greater positionality and influence. In a study on the World Bank (Collins, 2011; Collins & Rhoads, 2010), I encountered significant colonial perspectives from a few of the Bank officials participating in the study. When I heard comments that minimized the perspective of people in less developed countries or suggested that research is used to support what they already know in lieu of discovering something new, EI informed my approach. If someone lacking that kind of power or positional agency conveyed some "dangerous information," some researchers might feel compelled to offer more feedback. In the case of a power holder like a Bank official, I did not need to disclose my feelings about their opinion or give them a complete overview of my critical theoretical framework. Instead, bracketing my perception of their work allowed for a more robust explanation and consequently a more thorough analysis of their use of power. Understanding and balancing roles related to power calls for different methodological approaches for the oppressed and the oppressors.

Gendered Power and Politics

Gender issues must be taken into consideration when conducting qualitative research. Men and women researchers generate different reactions in participants, and researchers must be aware of the impact of their gender on the research endeavor. Today's scholars are concerned with issues such as the conducting of cross-gender interviews (Gatrell, 2006; Lee, 1997), considerations of male and female migrant status (Garg, 2005), and the impact of reflection on the interview process for women (Skene, 2007).

Gender issues in research are often issues of power. Previous research on cross-gender interviewing noted that women may tend to hesitate in interviews, not because they are afraid, but because they are trying to think of ways to express themselves that avoid dominant male vocabularies (Devault, 1990). Female interviewers face the dilemma of whether to ask indirect questions that may reinforce the image of women as dependent or more direct questions which may be seen as too aggressive in certain circles (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In 1985, Gurney

suggested that, "Female interviewers may need to work out a style that combines being nonthreatening and professional" (p. 43). Although we hope that circumstances have changed as of 2014, interviewers always face issues involving role expectations, a complicated tangle of what participants expect and what researchers themselves expect their role to be. As Smith (1999) stated, "oppression takes different forms, and there are interlocking relationships between race, gender and class which makes oppression a complex sociological and psychological condition" (p. 167). The dilemmas researchers face are both methodological and epistemological; in other words, in both the techniques of research and the underlying presuppositions about knowledge, gender and power are involved.

In the past, scholars have recommended a period of observation in the field so that interviews then "emerge out of an existing relationship" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 113). Yet, that existing relationship may still be fraught with patriarchal assumptions about gender and the role of women. Smith (1999) stated that the work of "Western feminists has been countered by the work of black women and other 'women with labels'" (p. 167), suggesting that even women interviewing women across racial and class barriers may be problematic. For example, Ceglowski (2002) described the tangled relationships she negotiated while studying other women in a Head Start program. She explored three aspects of her relationships with her participants: (a) relationships among the researcher's multiple community relationships, (b) relationships with mentors, and (c) relationships with the staff and children of the center. Ceglowski (2002) stated that "these relationships do not follow a smooth path; rather, they shift over time and from one moment to the next based on the context at hand" (p. 7).

Although I (Cooper) have been fairly successful at establishing trusting relationships with my participants (especially women), things do not always go smoothly. When I was a novice researcher interviewing journal keepers, one of my participants started sharing the contents of her journal and wandered into the topic of how her husband was sleeping with her sister. She was awash in pain. In searching for how to respond, my choices were to

- go into therapy mode (even though I am not a trained therapist);
- interrupt her and get her back to my research agenda; and
- listen, to understand (here is where Goleman's empathy category emerges).

I chose the third option. For nearly an hour, I listened to her talk about something that had nothing to do with my research, but everything to do with her being a human being trying to find her way through life. However, if I had been a more experienced researcher, I may have been able to manage my emotions, my participants', and the interview process better (see Goleman's skill set on the management of emotions). Another example is when I (Cooper) was interviewing a woman who revealed that her father used to abuse her. When I returned to interview her for a member check, she asked me to remove the part about being abused. Naturally, I agreed. Although that kind of trust can never be violated, it brings with it a whole new set of dilemmas.

The EI framework can help researchers in a number of ways. First, personal competence or self-awareness is required to (a) understand the issues involved in any qualitative research setting and then to (b) uncover the accompanying tangle of emotions (for both researcher and participant). At various points in her research journey, Ceglowski (2002) described herself as being involved in a nightmare, wanting to crawl into a hole, ashamed, queasy, and embarrassed. Second, the EI framework requires self-regulation. In other words, it is challenging to deal with these relationships and their accompanying emotions. Ceglowski (2002) also acknowledged this challenge: "I hold onto my fragile sense of control and plow ahead, often aimlessly" (p. 12). Third, the EI framework suggests the need for social competence, the understanding and

negotiation across gender, class, and racial issues. At times, it may seem overwhelming to imagine how to teach our students to handle these issues or how a novice researcher negotiates them. We believe that the EI framework is a useful tool to recognize the reaction to researcher presence and to navigate environments accordingly.

Cultural Competency and Empathy

International and intercultural competences have influenced ethnographic interviews for decades. This section explores how EI might play a role in learning, adapting, and conducting interviews in diverse environments. Collecting data across cultures or countries requires a lot of attention to human interactions. Here, ethnographic tools offer an approach to learning about the social and cultural life of institutions or communities and use the researcher as a primary tool of data collection (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The ethnographic research process involves longer term, in-person interactions in the research community. In the early 20th century, ethnographers lived in a community for up to 2 or 3 years. Currently, ethnographers work for shorter amounts of time in the field and focus their studies to a narrower topic and still accomplish high-quality research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Given the connections between languages of origin and culture, rigorous transnational research upheld an ethnographic ideal of learning the language of the culture being studied. LeCompte, Schensul, Weeks, and Singer (1999) identified that a hallmark of anthropology has been "its dedication to understanding the perspective of the people living in the communities under study" (p. 10). The search for local meanings is termed the emic approach, which comes from phonemic, or the meaning of sounds. Geertz (1973) referred to this type of study as thick description. The benchmark of this approach requires language fluency for the population of interest. This need for fluency could mean that many developing nations and cultures do not get studied.

In some cases, if a researcher is very unfamiliar with the host culture, the research may have to be discontinued altogether. Without the proper preparation, an entire study can become useless, especially if the researcher is unable to stay in the country long enough to understand cultural conventions and to enlist the help of participants to make meaning of the data. When I (Cooper) was a new faculty member, I was given the opportunity to travel to Korea with the Dean, who had a higher education grant. Because of my field, I was the appropriate person to go. I decided to use this opportunity to conduct some research and interview academic women. Using a snowball sampling technique (I knew no one), I contacted some women and set off on my journey. Because I did not know my way around the city of Seoul, I asked the women to come to my hotel room. I sat, in my space, and asked questions from my feminist American frame, until one participant said (with some frustration), "Why are you asking these questions?" Her question haunted me. Why was I asking these questions in a country where I did not know the culture or the language and where I knew very little about these women's lives? Of course, I wanted to learn about their lives (my purpose), but as I had arrived only two days prior, I did not even know the right questions to ask. The woman's question was an indication that I lacked self-awareness and self-regulation. In spite of my inadequate preparation for the study, I had enough EI to realize that I was off track, completely out of my element, and that I was not gathering useful information, except perhaps about myself as a researcher. I never published the study.

Studies that involved travel in Africa (Collins, 2011, 2012) and Asia (Collins, 2011) yielded several lessons in reflecting on the role of culture and EI. In Thailand, I (Collins) quickly picked up that hierarchies and protocols were highly important. One particular day, I was able to secure a last minute meeting with a high-ranking official in the ministry of education in Thailand. My host was very concerned to learn that I did not have a necktie or a jacket that day and worked quickly to remedy the situation. The experience of having someone dress me left me with mixed

emotions, ranging from thankfulness to annoyance. I was thankful to have someone looking out for me through a lens I did not have, but I was also slightly embarrassed and felt infantilized. A few weeks later while travelling in Sub-Saharan Africa, I was asked if I was part of the CIA and if my research was on behalf of the United States government. The same kind of attire that I was asked to wear in Thailand produced suspicion in Uganda. In Uganda, I was also challenged with a more informal set of rules; it took an entire day of sitting in an office to secure a meeting with someone. My days consisted of inquiring, waiting, explaining my purpose, waiting for a response, and if successful, being presented with a meeting time for a day later in the week. When returning to one office for a scheduled meeting, I had to wait a few hours after the scheduled interview time for the meeting to take place. In this region, the sense of time was very different than my narrow, linear, and Western view of time. Allowing for constantly evolving conceptions of time, formalities, protocols, and relationships proved to be a difficult task. Had I spent more time being self-aware of the limitations of my conception of time, the requirement to be more flexible might not have been so difficult. Cultural understanding calls for reflexivity, so that the researcher becomes more aware of how to relate to the people in the environment. EI is not cultural sensitivity training, but an opportunity to develop appropriate reactions and social interactions, even when lacking specific pieces of cultural knowledge.

Conclusion

Qualitative research produces in-depth information with context-dependent facts. This nuanced view of reality is of great value in fields that are dominated by positivistic approaches to research. Context-dependent knowledge often suffers from the misunderstanding that information based on a case cannot be generalizable and therefore does not really contribute to scientific development. Formal generalization may be overrated, because knowledge is often transferable even where it is not formally generalizable (Flyvbjerg, 2011). A researcher is intricately woven into the context of a qualitative study and is therefore essential in understanding the study. Qualitative researchers who report their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts, and hypotheses, and also note where the data has compelled them to think differently, communicate the changing nature of the context of the study and the instrument. EI in the qualitative research process offers the possibility of a more nuanced role, greater flexibility, and more insightful findings, and therefore EI is a useful instrument in the conducting of a study.

In this article, we make two arguments: first, tools for understanding and refining human emotions and connections are lacking in the qualitative research endeavor, and second, Goleman's (1995) notion of EI is useful to both the researcher in the field and those teaching novice researchers. Several examples of research experiences underscore these assertions and point to a rubric of EI that is helpful in assessing both strengths and weaknesses in the qualitative researcher. We believe the need for EI is an important and underexplored area in the qualitative research process and offer researchers this tool to grapple with the disorientation and dissonance that the qualitative research process often produces (Spencer & Davies, 2010). Ultimately, we hope this approach will improve the quality of fieldwork for both novice and experienced qualitative researchers.

In quantitative methods of research and analysis, there are extensive sets of rules and procedures for approaching difficult situations or even problematic results (e.g., replacing missing data). There are published and generally accepted thresholds for what might be considered rigorous research (e.g., statistical significance or confidence levels). However, in qualitative research, the best suggestions are to utilize various techniques, and if they produce strong results then they can be regarded as good (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Rigorous training in the craft of research interviewing is not commonplace in social science methodology programs today (Kvale &

Brinkmann, 2009). Perhaps as a consequence of the perception that research typically involves rule-governed methods of data gathering, academia provides minimal emphasis on extended personal training of researchers using ethnographic tools. The incorporation of EI as a set of criteria to evaluate and provide feedback and the use of the rubric we have offered have potential transformational possibilities in the continuous improvement of veteran researchers, as well as the education of novice researchers just entering the field.

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