Northeastern Illinois University
NEIU Digital Commons

Social Work Faculty Publications | Social Work

12-21-2023

"This Person is Safe": An Exemplar of Conducting Individual Interviews in Qualitative Research with Black Women

Quenette Walton
University of Houston - Main

Olulbunmi Oyewuwo
Northeastern Illinois University, o-oyewuwogassikia@neiu.edu

other co-authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://neiudc.neiu.edu/swk-pub

Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Walton, Q. L., Kennedy, P. P., Oyewuwo, O. B., & Allen, P. (2022). "This Person is Safe": An Exemplar of Conducting Individual Interviews in Qualitative Research with Black Women. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 21. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221147776

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at NEIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Work Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of NEIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact neiudc@neiu.edu.

Check for updates

Regular Article

International Journal of Qualitative Methods
Volume 21: 1–14
© The Author(s) 2022
DOI: 10.1177/16094069221147776
journals.sagepub.com/home/ijq
SAGE

"This Person is Safe": An Exemplar of Conducting Individual Interviews in Qualitative Research with Black Women

Quenette L. Walton[1], Priscilla P. Kennedy[1], Olubunmi B. Oyewuwo[2], and Phylicia Allen[3]

Abstract

Significant conceptual and empirical evidence has been found through qualitative research about the benefits, limitations, and uses of individual interviews. However, there is scant research illustrating how researchers use specific techniques that center participants' intersecting identities to build rapport, trust, and authentic connections during individual interviews, and especially during interviews with Black women. We illustrate how we used eight empirically grounded techniques in our qualitative individual interviews with Black women. Through our analysis of the interviews, the concept of safety emerged. "This person is safe" reflects the combined stories the women reported regarding their experiences engaging in individual interviews. In this article, we provide a brief background on individual interviewing in qualitative research, followed by the framing of our work. Thereafter, we provide context about the exemplar study, outline techniques shown to be effective in the literature, and provide examples from the exemplar study to show how each technique was used. Further research is needed to examine how researchers use various techniques in qualitative individual interviews in general, but with Black women more specifically.

Keywords

Black women, individual interviews, intersectionality, black feminist thought, qualitative research

Despite significant conceptual and empirical evidence in qualitative research about the benefits, limitations, and uses of individual interviews, efforts to illustrate how researchers use specific techniques to center participants' intersecting identities and build rapport, trust, and authentic connections during individual interviews with Black women have been limited. Qualitative research articles and books about conducting individual interviews with Black women explore many topics. For instance, scholars have focused on racial differences in engaging, recruiting, and interviewing Black women (Gibson & Abrams, 2004); challenges Black women face when conducting qualitative research with Black women on sensitive topics (Few et al., 2003); ethical concerns in relation to contextual challenges experienced by diverse research populations (Fletcher et al., 2019); being an insider/outsider in qualitative research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Summerville et al., 2021); negotiating the insider/outsider status in research, specifically with Black women (Brown, 2012; Obasi, 2012); examining how Black women researchers use cultural connections with other Black women during individual interviews (Harris, 2019); and how qualitative research has historically excluded or stereotyped Black women while considering White perspectives as the standard, even within critical research contexts (Fortier, 2017; Summerville et al., 2021).

Further, qualitative researchers have raised concerns about researchers' race in individual interviews (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Mizock et al., 2011). For instance, Mizock et al. highlighted how researcher-participant race interactions may yield different study results. More specifically, Mizock et al. found that for Black researchers conducting individual interviews with Black research participants, Black researchers

[1]Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston, Houston, TX, USA
[2]Department of Social Work, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL, USA
[3]Brown School at Washington University in St Louis, St Louis, MO, USA

Corresponding Author:
Quenette L. Walton, Graduate College of Social Work, University of Houston, 3511 Cullen Boulevard, Houston, TX 77204-4013, USA.
Email: qwalton2@central.uh.edu

Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage).

attempted to name participants' experiences or join in the participants' stories by filling in their words to enhance a sense of shared experience and understanding. Despite concerns raised, the authors noted researchers' and participants' race may influence meaning-making during individual interviews, which can positively or negatively impact data collected (Mizock et al., 2011). Dwyer and Buckle (2009) pointed out the hypocrisy in accusations of bias among Black researchers because the same arguments have not been directed toward White researchers who interview White participants.

We posit that qualitative researchers, regardless of race, need to be aware of the techniques they use in their work when conducting individual interviews with Black women research participants. In doing so, qualitative researchers will be able to make key decisions while developing and implementing interview guides that reflect a more nuanced understanding of research participants' lived experiences (Mizock et al., 2011). Additionally, when qualitative researchers are cognizant of the techniques they use in their work, they will also be able to self-reflect and make modifications during the interview, given the sociocultural context of the research participant (Mizock et al., 2011).

We recognize the number of Black women as researchers and participants in qualitative research is growing (Campbell et al., 2021); thus, research is needed that highlights individual interviewing techniques Black women qualitative researchers and members of other groups who have been historically marginalized and/or underrepresented as researchers and research participants may wish to employ in their qualitative studies with Black women research participants. We seek to fill this gap by illustrating techniques that support Black women qualitative researchers and members of other groups who have been historically marginalized, underrepresented, or excluded as both researchers and research participants who may bring their whole selves into the research process (Hordge-Freeman, 2018). We first provide a brief background on interviewing in qualitative research. Second, we frame our approach to this work using intersectionality and Black feminist thought. Third, we position ourselves in this work to demonstrate how we arrived at this topic. Fourth, we outline the individual interviewing techniques we used and provide examples from an exemplar study to show how each individual interviewing technique is used. We conclude with suggestions for conducting individual interviews with Black women.

Literature Review

The popularity of individual interviews in qualitative research can be attributed in large part to researchers' interest in exploring complex phenomena by capturing individuals' firsthand experiences, meaning-making, and perspectives (Bayeck, 2021). The appeal of individual interviews in qualitative research grew out of a recognition that behavioral science research with humans was oppressive, unethical, and failed to capture the context and complexity of individuals being studied (Jovanovic, 2011; Knapik, 2006; Mohr, 2009). When well executed, individual interviews are an indispensable technique that adds depth and value to qualitative research projects, yielding rich and meaningful data while also ensuring participants feel safe and comfortable with the interviewer (Bhattacharya, 2017; Robinson & Schulz, 2016). S. Kvale (1996) emphasized that expertise in individual interviewing in qualitative research is evidenced by its production of "knowledge claims that are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they carry the validation with them, like a strong piece of art" (p. 252). However, individual interviewing in qualitative research has a dismal track record in its treatment and representation of Black women by pathologizing and focusing on deviant behavior; interpreting and essentializing Black people's lived experiences through a White worldview or through one-dimensional representation (Stewart & Haynes, 2019); using samples that do not include Black women; and framing research with theories and interview methods that center Whiteness (Few et al., 2003; Stewart & Haynes, 2019; Summerville et al., 2021). In other words, individual interviewing within qualitative research has historically been framed with theories and interview methods that

- "…consistently situate Black deprivation, and not Black people, as the [research] problem in their analyses" (Stewart & Haynes, 2019, p. 1186);
- "do not reflect Black people in the fullness of their humanity" (Stewart & Haynes, 2019, p. 11,860);
- center and normalize knowledge that is founded on White values and perspectives (Mills et al., 2010); and
- assume that White concepts, theories, and research processes produce more trustworthy knowledge than other perspectives (Mills et al., 2010).

Relational Dimension of Interviewing

To outsiders who observe the natural flow of conversation between interviewer and participant, it may appear interviews are effortless (Bhattacharya, 2017). But the multitude of moving parts in an individual interview do not come together like magic; the process is much more complicated than choosing a method and following a checklist (Brinkmann, 2018; Roulston, 2010). Extensive work goes on behind the scenes and in the moment to make effective interviews appear to be so effortless (C. Collins & Cooper, 2014; Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007; Saldaña, 2018). For example, self-reflecting on their own communication style and relational skills helps interviewers understand the implications of the type of interview they will co-construct with research participants (Mallozzi, 2009; Roulston, 2010). Similarly, Weis and Fine (2000) expressed the need for qualitative researchers to take moments of reflection, which they refer to as speed bumps, to slow down and consider the ethical implications of the way they are approaching and representing participants' narratives.

In sociologist Goffman's 1979 article on footing, he focused on communication and the relational energy created between two people in conversation. Specifically, he emphasized the importance of alignment between interviewer and participant to establish a non-threatening environment in which participants feel safe to disclose their inner "…thoughts and feelings" (Goffman, 2001), an approach echoed by others (Haslett, 2011; K. Kvale et al., 2015). Goffman (2001) described a change of footing as a shift in alignment by the interviewer from speaking to listening or from actively interviewing the participant to talking informally for enjoyment. For example, the interviewer may initiate a change of footing by shifting their tone of voice, by animating something the participant said, or by using "fresh talk," which is an expression for extemporaneous conversation that is unrelated to the interview (Goffman, 2001, p. 277). Through these techniques, the interviewer and participant develop rapport and a mutual orientation to be co-constructors of knowledge so that participants do not feel like they are just having information extracted from them (Haslett, 2011; Knapik, 2006).

In their research on emotional intelligence in qualitative research, C. Collins and Cooper (2014) specified several attributes of skillful interviewers. The two primary characteristics of socially competent interviewers include emotional maturity, such as being aware of participants' cultural norms and power dynamics; and having strong interpersonal skills, such as being nonthreatening, therapeutic, empathetic, appreciative, and a learner (C. Collins & Cooper, 2014; Goleman, 1995). Brinkmann (2018) referred to the field of communicability as encompassing all aspects of communication that occur during an individual interview and posited that more research is needed about the context of communication in producing knowledge. Further, Brinkmann (2018) argued, "We don't often pause and consider that a stranger is willing to tell an interviewer so many things about their life simply because the interviewer presents themselves as a researcher" (p. 577).

Other scholars assert that there is a dearth of information on the relational aspects of interviewing and believe that understanding the evolution of relationships between researcher and participant is a key concept in conducting individual interviews in qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Several authors extol the value of building an interpersonal connection between interviewer and participant to facilitate departure from a neutral setting into a space where the essential self can be benevolently coaxed out into a safe environment (Mallozzi, 2009; Pezalla et al., 2012; Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007; Robinson & Schulz, 2016). Scholars have asserted that when minoritized participants—Black women and men, Latinx individuals, LGBTQIA + individuals—feel safe during individual interviews and feel there is a shared identity between them and the researcher, a shared understanding and distinctiveness emerges (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). For this study, the phrase "this person is safe" reflects the benefits of being a member of the group that is being studied and reflects a level of trust and openness between the researcher and participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). "This person is safe" ultimately reflects participants' comfort (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and willingness to share their experiences with the researcher "…because it is as if they feel, you are one of us and it is us versus them (those on the outside who don't understand)" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 58).

Power Dynamics in Interviewing

Due to the context of one-on-one interviewing, there is also a need for qualitative researchers to reflect more on the relationship between interviewer and participant around issues such as asymmetrical power dynamics during interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), a skilled interviewer manages this dimension with the participant by giving up control over the pace of the interview so the participant can move at their own speed, build confidence and trust, and eventually feel comfortable revealing personal information. Collaborative interviewing, in which researcher and participant have equal standing in how the interview is positioned, interpreted, and reported, is another approach to balancing power dynamics during an interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Similarly, Robinson and Schulz (2016) promoted rapport-based approaches to encourage spontaneity and self-disclosure from participants during interviews. They recommended strategies for interviewers such as active listening, physical signs such as leaning forward, and taking on a therapeutic role to help participants shift from a public-facing position to a more intimate stance that may lead to visceral narratives (Pugh, 2012; Robinson & Schulz, 2016). This dynamic has similarities with Goffman's (1967) conception of frontstage and backstage talk, wherein participants initially present themselves in a role that comports with cultural expectations, and after rapport is established, they drop the "front" and begin backstage talk by speaking in a way that challenges expected norms. Because rapport relies wholly on the interviewer's skills rather than on question design, the interviewer must continuously work to maintain rapport and solicit backstage talk with their participants over the course of the interview (Robinson & Schulz, 2016). Scholars have cautioned against using rapport unethically to manipulate and harvest data from participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005; Knapik, 2006). Scholars have also cautioned researchers to maintain their professional role while conducting qualitative interviews (Bulpitt & Martin, 2010; Dickson-Swift et al., 2008; Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022). In this context, researchers have been advised against using techniques that could blur the lines between being a researcher and becoming a therapist, as the researcher's role is to gain an intellectual understanding of a particular phenomenon the participant is experiencing (Bulpitt & Martin, 2010). Researchers are also urged to (a) remember the research interview benefits them and not their participants (Dickson-Swift

et al., 2008), (b) not conflate their roles, and (c) continuously practice reflexivity (Houghton et al., 2010).

However, when interviewers are committed to ethically developing and maintaining a high level of relational energy with participants, their rapport may continue and evolve into a partnership beyond the interview encounter (Mallozzi, 2009; Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). While it is a rare occurrence, the researcher/participant rapport is distinguished by "fostering a partnership of two unique individuals balancing both personal and professional goals" that may or may not extend beyond the study context (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007, p. 197).

Interviewing Black Women With a Social Justice Lens

From a social justice perspective, Corbin and Strauss (2015) remind qualitative researchers that "people have the right to let their voices be heard (p. 45)" and decide whether to participate in interviews so their stories can be told. For Black women in particular, the history of their representation in qualitative research has been abysmal and has engendered mistrust of the enterprise: Black women have been excluded from participation or worse, misrepresented and stereotyped (Few et al., 2003; Houston, 2000). Historically, traits such as promiscuity, intellectual weakness, and outspokenness have been used to disparage Black women in research findings (Houston, 2000). For example, Green et al. (2007) proposed cultural mistrust and fear of intellectual stereotyping prompted one quarter of participants to provide incorrect names and achievements in a study examining academic success among Black college students. More broadly, higher education has been implicated for excluding Black women researchers or keeping them out of the academic spotlight (Stewart & Haynes, 2019; Summerville et al., 2021). Finally, most social science research in communities of color is structured on deficit models and Eurocentric values, perspectives, and concepts of knowledge construction (Campbell et al., 2021; Fortier, 2017; Summerville et al., 2021).

Limited research exists on how qualitative researchers can use a social justice lens and relational skills such as rapport building, social competence, and empathy to positively influence data collection with Black women (Few et al., 2003; Goleman, 1995; Mallozzi, 2009; Robinson & Schulz, 2016). In individual interview settings, a participant's gut feelings about the interviewer's trustworthiness are consequential in determining the extent to which they feel safe disclosing personal thoughts and feelings (K. Kvale et al., 2015). However, resources for helping interviewers strengthen their ability to cultivate connections with racially minoritized and vulnerable participants are lacking in the qualitative research literature (C. Collins & Cooper, 2014; Fortier, 2017; Knapik, 2006). Knapik (2006) speculated that many researchers have devised their own interaction styles to support the co-construction of knowledge during individual interviews with Black women, but few of them have reported explicitly on their methods. In this article, we sought to address that gap by describing techniques shown to be effective in the literature and in the authors' experiences of conducting individual interviews in qualitative research with Black women.

The Frame

We intentionally frame our work and the techniques we describe when conducting individual interviews in qualitative research with Black women within intersectionality and Black feminist thought. Intersectionality focuses on the multiple forms of disadvantage compounded in Black women's lives based on their race, class, and gender (Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, it is important to note that multiple forms of disadvantage in Black women's lives are not fully understood as single-axis, mutually exclusive categories–such as just Black or woman or middle-class–but collectively as middle-class Black women (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989; Walton & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, 2017). In other words, intersectionality recognizes that identities are socially constructed, they are experienced simultaneously, and they allow space for examining oppression and discrimination from various angles (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, for our work and the techniques we put forth when conducting individual interviews with Black women in qualitative research, intersectionality supports our ability to examine Black women not just as Black or as women, but as Black women. Further, intersectionality enriches the techniques we used during our individual interviews with Black women by highlighting how the convergence of Black women's race, class, and gender identities plays out in qualitative research studies and requires researchers to be more attuned to the conceptual and practical connections of race, class, and gender throughout the research process. When scholars fail to consider intersectionality in framing their research about Black women, they may overlook important contextual factors in Black women's lives.

Complementing the use of intersectionality in our research is Black feminist thought (P. H. Collins, 1989), which situates the oppression that Black women experience in their social, political, cultural, and historical contexts. Black feminist thought also "takes into account elements and themes of Black women's culture and traditions and infuses them with new meaning. Black feminist thought rearticulates a consciousness that already exists" (P. H. Collins, 1989, p. 750). For decades, Black women were misrepresented, misappropriated, and misconstrued in qualitative research (Few et al., 2003). Qualitative research focused on deviance and negative developmental outcomes among Black women (Few et al., 2003). Researchers represented Black women by comparing them to White women, and researchers used traditional theories that did not holistically reflect Black women's experiences (Few et al., 2003; Settles, 2006; Settles et al., 2008). Further, almost all traditionally undesirable feminine qualities, from promiscuity and intellectual inferiority to outspokenness, have been used to disparage Black women (P. H. Collins, 2000; Essed, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995). Thus, we use Black

feminist thought to capture "the taken-for-granted knowledge of African-American women with the ways in which Black women (as researchers and research participants) create new self-definitions that validate Black women's standpoint" (P. H. Collins, 1989, p. 750). Together, intersectionality and Black feminist thought allowed us to intentionally center the Black women's race, class, and gender identities, as well as leverage the knowledge that Black women, both as researchers and research participants, brought with them to the individual interviews in our exemplar study.

Context

Context in qualitative studies is critical to gaining an in-depth understanding of real-world problems for individuals or groups in their natural settings (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Polit & Beck, 2017). Thus, the context of this article is an important aspect of how we arrived at our techniques when interviewing Black women for qualitative studies. The techniques draw from a recent qualitative study the first author conducted during the fall of 2020, in the throes of the rapidly changing global COVID-19 pandemic and the racial unrest happening in the United States. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, most communications about the pandemic in the United States at that time revealed Black Americans were dying at disproportionate rates from the COVID-19 virus compared to White people (Gravlee, 2020; Ray, 2020). This study also took place shortly after the very public death of Mr. George Floyd–an unarmed Black man–by police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020, which led to nationwide protests and racial unrest in the United States. Together, the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial unrest in the United States at the time of this study motivated many scholars' (including the first author's) interests in exploring why and how the COVID-19 pandemic was disproportionately affecting Black Americans, as well as why and how the deaths of unarmed Black Americans were happening. The two pandemics also inspired scholars to probe the ways in which complex interlocking systems of structural racism and structural inequities ultimately shaped and contributed to adverse COVID-19 outcomes among Black Americans (Gravlee, 2020; Ray, 2020). The salience of race at the time of the exemplar study was and continues to be a critical factor in understanding Black Americans' experiences in general, but Black women's experiences specifically. Thus, the impetus of this study was situated at the intersection of COVID-19 and racism; the impact these two pandemics were having on the lives of Black women given their unique social position based on race and gender; and the complex political and social context under which they live (Crenshaw, 1991; Laurencin & Walker, 2020; Obinna, 2021; Rushovich et al., 2021; Settles, 2006; Walton et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the aim of the study was to investigate how Black women made meaning of their experiences with COVID-19 and racism, and the impact the two pandemics had on their mental health. The first author conducted this study with 46 Black women who lived in different geographical locations (i.e., California, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Texas). The women ranged in age from 21 to 53 years with the average age being 35 years. Most of the women had a master's degree (43%, $n = 20$) and were single (39%, $n = 18$). In terms of their religion, women identified as being Catholic, Baptist, Buddhist, and Christian. Women self-reported the following occupations: nurses, social workers, mental health therapists, engineers, investment bankers, registered dietitians, and lawyers. The first author conducted all of the interviews using their personal Zoom account, recorded audio during the interviews, and had the recordings transcribed verbatim by a professional organization. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2.5 hours. Each participant received a $50 incentive for their participation in the study. Further, the study design, protocols, and materials were approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board. All women provided their informed consent before participating in the study.

Positionality

Like context, positionality is also an important aspect in qualitative studies. Thus, consistent with the use of qualitative approaches, it is important to acknowledge the positionality of the researchers (Bourke, 2014). The research team was composed of two tenure track faculty members and two social work doctoral students, all of whom are qualitative researchers. The first author is a Black woman and a tenure track faculty member at a research-intensive university in the South. She is also a licensed clinical social worker with more than 15 years of practice experience working with Black women in diverse clinical settings. She conceptualized and conducted the exemplar study that is the focus of this article. She was also responsible for recruiting, scheduling, conducting the interviews, leading the analytic process, and finalizing the key categories of the study. The second author is a White woman and the research assistant of the first author. She is a social work doctoral candidate at a large research-intensive institution in the South. She is a licensed master social worker, a social work practicum instructor, and a community practitioner with more than 5 years of experience working on community health issues. She was responsible for data analysis including coding, developing, and finalizing the key categories for the study. The third author is a Black Muslim woman and a tenure track faculty member at a Hispanic Serving Institution in the Midwest. She has extensive experience using qualitative research methods. She served as an expert auditor and helped inform and finalize category development. The fourth author is a Black woman and social work doctoral candidate at a large research-intensive university in the Midwest. Her research focuses on wellness and well-being among Black women with graduate degrees. She also assisted with data analysis including coding, developing, and finalizing the key categories for the study.

Our individual identities and collective knowledge and skills led us to raise critical questions about qualitative research in general, and about diverse qualitative research approaches with Black women specifically. For instance, during the data analysis phase of the exemplar study, we asked the following questions: (1) What does the literature tell us about qualitative research, individual interviewing, and Black women? (2) How do we make sense of the processes used by the first author in the exemplar study for this article in relation to other studies conducted with Black women using individual interviews? (3) Are there guidelines we need to consider when conducting individual interviews with Black women in qualitative research? And (4) What are key techniques that qualitative scholars use to inform how they conduct their individual interviews in general, but with Black women specifically?

In addition to these questions, we discussed our biases and assumptions about Black women participating in individual interviews for qualitative research studies and explored the techniques that other authors used in qualitative studies to engage Black women in individual interviews. The biases and assumptions we discussed included (a) the role and identity of the qualitative interviewer, (b) the setting in which the individual interview takes place during qualitative research studies, and (c) how our own identities—three Black women and one White woman—influence our engagement in the qualitative research process, including the individual interview. DeVault (1995) stressed the importance of understanding racial dynamics when qualitative interviewers and their participants have different racial and ethnic identities. For example, when an interviewer is considered an outsider, their positionality will undoubtedly affect whether the participant is forthcoming or distinctively tailors their speech depending on the cultural context (hooks, 1989; Taylor et al., 2016).

Lastly, we had extensive discussions about our individual identities (Black, Muslim, Christian, White, middle-class, highly educated, mothers) in relation to the research participants (Black women). Through these discussions, we acknowledged that our respective identities were about much more than being Black or White and women. We also acknowledged that our identities placed us in positions of power and privilege in some circumstances and in positions of disadvantage and oppression in other circumstances. In fact, we explored what the outcome may have been if the second author–a middle-class White woman and doctoral candidate–conducted the interviews for the study. Questions were raised about the participants' comfort levels (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) and feelings of safety (Bhattacharya, 2017; Robinson & Schulz, 2016), as well as the interviewer's skill and confidence with conducting qualitative individual interviews with Black women. We also wrestled with questions about what it meant for the first author–a middle-class Black Christian woman who is a mother and highly educated–to conduct the interviews compared to a middle-class Black Muslim woman who is also a mother and highly educated. Discussions focused on similarities and differences that could arise between the researcher and participants given their different religious backgrounds yet similar gender identities. Discussions also focused on geographical contexts such as study participants living in several different states, the fourth author living in the Midwest, and the first author living in the South. We discussed how these contexts could have influenced participants' responses during individual interviews depending on where they lived and how their state was responding to the rapidly changing COVID-19 virus and the racial unrest at the time of the study. In sum, critical reflection and dialogue about our positionalities were vital to how we approached this work and how we arrived at the techniques used when conducting individual interviews with Black women in qualitative research.

Techniques to Use When Interviewing Black Women

The techniques we put forth are grounded in intersectionality and Black feminist thought. Further, given our individual and collective experiences with interviewing Black women for qualitative studies, we offer eight techniques for qualitative researchers to use: (a) authenticity, (b) change of footing, (c) cultural connection, (d) cultural capital, (e) disclosure, (f) humble vulnerability, (g) universalization, and (h) validation. Table 1 highlights the techniques and their respective definitions. Following the table, we illustrate the use of the eight techniques from a qualitative study the first author conducted.

In illustrating these techniques, the authors note it is plausible for qualitative researchers of other races and ethnicities to use the techniques (e.g., a Latinx researcher who is interviewing a Latinx participant; a White researcher who is interviewing a Black participant). However, before using the techniques, researchers who are engaging in research with participants of backgrounds different from their own and who have been historically marginalized and excluded in research should practice reflexivity in considering (a) what knowledge is needed from the participant; (b) how to access that knowledge without doing harm; and (c) how to be aware of participants' intersecting identities, lived vulnerabilities, and social, political, historical, and cultural background that may influence the use of these techniques with the population they are interviewing (Charmaz, 2017; Kassam et al., 2020; Weis & Fine, 2000).

Illustration of Techniques

In this section, we illustrate the first author's use of the eight techniques. It should be noted that these techniques are not presented in the order they appear in the previous table, as these techniques were employed organically. Further, we posit that these eight techniques are not exclusive or linear. Lastly, it should be noted that these techniques can be used in isolation or in combination with one another, as illustrated in the excerpts below.

Table 1. Eight Techniques To Use When Interviewing Black Women.

Technique	Definition of the Technique
Authenticity	When interviewing, the assumption is that interviewers will be able to reach the authentic version of participants by being authentic themselves in a manner that stretches boundaries and shrinks the distance between interviewer and participant (Roulston, 2010)
Change of footing	Goffman's (2001) term refers to a shift in the tenor of conversation during an interview that is initiated by the interviewer, who animates the participant's words or speaks extemporaneously to solidify an atmosphere of rapport and trust where participants feel safe to share their personal stories
Cultural connection	According to Harris (2019), when black women are collaborating as interviewer and participant, their discourse opens up opportunities for cultural connection about issues such as the contradictions between black women's authentic selves and the stereotypes people believe about them
Cultural capital	When the interviewer and participant share similar social identities, there is not only an unspoken understanding between them, but also a willingness by both to extend their relationship beyond the interview; for example, by offering networking, support, and inviting the other person into group membership (Harris, 2019)
Disclosure	The interviewer shares personal information to help elucidate what the participant is sharing. According to Roulston (2010), self-revelation and disclosure by the interviewer help to establish a more intimate connection with participants during interviews
Humble vulnerability	Humble vulnerability means being "open to empathic understanding, open to other people's fragilities and idiosyncrasies, open to messy collaborations, open to being wrong" and acting from your moral center (Saldaña, 2018, p. 6)
Universalization	The power dynamic is minimized when both interviewer and participant are black women, allowing for deeper self-reported data due to universal issues faced by black women. "It's knowing that if you think and feel a certain way, then perhaps others do, too. And maybe that means a connection, a relationship, and possibly a universal truth" (Saldaña, 2018, p. 6)
Validation	When the interviewer and participant bond over shared feelings about a significant life experience, it validates the meaning that participants have come to associate with an experience and reminds participants they are the experts about how they make sense of their life worlds (Roberts, 2020)

Cultural Capital + Cultural Connection

Interviewer: I got the contact information, so …

Participant: Yes, please use it. And good luck with the interviews. I would love to hear where you're going with it, and love to use your work in class when you publish on it. Because we need this, we need this. I know you have articles—now I wanna think how I can incorporate it in my classes, in my graduate classes. So, I will definitely be putting your name on the syllabus.

Interviewer: Or if you need me to come talk, whatever, just, like, let's figure it out. Like, I want you to use me, right? Like, I think we need these connections, and I wanna be very explicit about that, and that's what I've told all the women, so, yeah. [Cultural Capital, Cultural Connection]

This excerpt captures the unique connection between Black women, not just connecting them through work professionally, but in a more personal way that allowed the participant to feel comfortable during the individual interview. Additionally, the cultural connection facilitated a mutually beneficial use of cultural capital to leverage the knowledge of the interviewer and to potentially expand the connection beyond the interview setting. Similar to Few et al.'s (2003) and Harris's (2019) work with Black women, cultural connections serve as a rapport-building technique and are critical for helping Black women feel safe to disclose sensitive information in a research setting.

Disclosure + Validation

Participant: Even if my work days fluctuated, what I could control was at least making sure that I got 30 minutes of exercise in, or like 10 minutes of meditation and stuff like that was in my routine, but it worked around everything else. And losing just like my overarching schedule, and then just with all the other chaos that was around me, I lost that motivation and then like I just lost my routine altogether. And I was kind of dead and then I didn't work out for a couple of months. And even now I'm slowly talking to myself to get back into it because I am a real procrastinator.

Interviewer: Yeah. When your routine is disrupted and it's disrupted not by choice in some ways, it's this massive pandemic that we're dealing with. It's like how do I get motivated to do it again. I completely understand that because that's where I'm at [Disclosure], so completely understand, so you are not alone in any way, shape, or form. So, I get it. [Validation]

In this excerpt, disclosure and validation were used. Disclosure was used not only to share personal information about the topic at hand, but also to enhance the discussion in the individual interview (Borrill et al., 2012). Validation served as a way for the interviewer to remind the participant that they are the expert of their own stories. In this excerpt, the interviewer confirmed that the participant was not alone in their experiences with the abrupt changes they were enduring because of

COVID-19 and racism and the impact of these two pandemics on their mental health.

Cultural Connection + Universalization + Validation

Interviewer: So, I think what you shared is vitally important and real in terms of mental health, right? Because everyone I've interviewed talked about it like it's okay. It's okay to get help. It's okay, but what research has been showing is that Black folks and Latin folks are not getting help for mental health. Either it's too costly, either they rely on church, either they continue to just move through until they break. [Cultural Connection, Universalization, Validation]

Participant: That definitely has been my experience growing up. I will be transparent and say mental health is kind of something that I've always struggled with. And I was always afraid to tell my family because it was one of those things like first of all what are you complaining for because you don't want for anything. [Example of participant Validating again with their example]

In individual interviews in qualitative research, creating a connection between the interviewer and participant and universalizing and validating the participant's lived experiences are vitally important. However, for Black women research participants, it is even more important that connections are made, so they feel comfortable engaging in the individual interviews and opening up about the topic being explored by the researcher. In the excerpt, connection, universalization, and validation were made between the interviewer and participant because the interviewer noted similar responses during earlier interviews. The interviewer also shared with the participant reasons why many Black women and other women of color are not seeking mental health support, which the participant agreed with. Lastly, the interviewer validated the participant's statement from the beginning of the excerpt. Together, these three techniques provided the interviewer with the opportunity to engage in a rich discussion with the participant about their lived experiences with COVID-19, racism, and their mental health, so much so the participant was able to validate what the interviewer shared by providing an example of their own.

Change of Footing + Cultural Connection + Validation

Participant: We were out there marching and we ended on the bridge in Forrest Park. And seeing all these people standing on the bridge, mainly White, chanting Black Lives Matter. I don't know, that just did something to my soul like, wow.

Interviewer: Yes. [Validation]

Participant: To see that and the speakers, this one White man was like 400 years of oppression, white folks, that's on us. I say – Y'all need to sit down and let this man talk.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, clear the space, we're good, clear the space. Because he's saying a word. [Change of Footing, Cultural Connection]

Participant: Okay, let him, child.

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

What is significant to highlight about this excerpt is the unspoken cultural connection made between interviewer and participant. The participant understood that when the interviewer said, "clear the space," there was a cultural connection made in that moment as both women were expressing solidarity about a White man discussing 400 years of oppression. In fact, the participant and the interviewer used a term that is commonly used in many Black churches to highlight the importance of remaining quiet for a fellow church goer to speak truthfully and without interruption. The interviewer's colloquial comment triggered a change in footing—a shift in the interview that made the participant feel safer (Goffman, 2001)—and allowed the participant to share more about their experiences and become more comfortable. The comfort that the participant and the interviewer had with each other also made it easier for the interviewer to validate the participant's experiences with a simple yes, as the participant knew and felt safe to continue with the interview.

Disclosure + Cultural Connection + Validation

Interviewer: So, this has been rich. It has been deep. What has been consistent has been about sisterhood. Right? That's what—I always ask, "What made you participate?" "My sister did it. My cousin did it. My friend told me to do it." Then, "Ain't nobody talking to us." [Disclosure, Cultural Connection, Validation]

Participant: Nobody's asking us these questions.

Interviewer: That's it. That's it. So, it's been– [Validation]

Participant: I felt myself breathe, by the way.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. [Validation]

Participant: When I said nobody—It was like, you're giving us something.

Interviewer: Yeah. It's an exchange to happen. [Validation]

Participant: You're giving us something, yeah. You're giving us space to think about this that is never asked of us and we no longer become caricatures of Black women—and you're like, "Yeah, we're not all the same."

Disclosure, cultural connection, and validation in the excerpt center on the participant's exchange with the interviewer when asked why they chose to participate in the individual interview. The interviewer shared—disclosed—with the participant what other participants shared about why they participated in the individual interview, and that disclosure

resonated with the participant. The disclosure led to cultural connection between the interviewer and the participant, so much so that when the participant said "Nobody's asking us these questions," the interviewer and the participant knew exactly why (i.e., they are Black women, and most research has centered Black women's experiences around deficit, deviance, exclusion, and stereotype; Few et al., 2003; Fortier, 2017; Summerville et al., 2021). Thus, the participant followed up with, "I felt myself breathe, by the way," which was another cultural connection and validation because the identity of the interviewer—another Black woman—was important to her and a reason why she could breathe and participate in the individual interview.

Change of Footing + Cultural Connection + Disclosure + Validation

Participant: We're always just moving around so much. So, honestly, and I'm one of those people, I'm a workaholic. I will keep going until something happens, and it's like you need to sit down.

Interviewer: That's it. But everyone has talked about the benefits [of the interview]. Some not so much, like, "Oh this is just too much to sit with." But some welcome the pause of not having to go, go, go, go, go and have shifted some of the things that they've done to really take care of themselves. So, it's been really cool to hear and to see the Black women and what they've been doing. And it's women not only in Houston but in California and Illinois and New York and Michigan. It's been really, really nice to connect with a number of women around this topic. [Change of Footing, Cultural Connection, Disclosure, Validation]

Change of footing happened in the excerpt when the interviewer animated what the participant disclosed and from there, began speaking extemporaneously to create the cultural connection. The interviewer changed the footing from "I'm a workaholic" to "everyone talked about that." In this context, the interviewer not only changed footing, but also created an explicit cultural connection among Black women in the study using disclosure, which also validated what the participant was sharing.

Authenticity + Cultural Connection + Validation

Participant: I started to get on the Zoom, today, I was, like, "Oh, I gotta get dressed [crosstalk]." You got on your pajamas—I said, "It's okay, you'll be able to answer those questions."

Interviewer: Yes, you could've had your hair wrapped up—I'm not asking for—just show up [laughter] [crosstalk]. [Authenticity, Cultural Connection, Validation]

Participant: "You put on earrings? She ain't worried about that."

Interviewer: I'm not, in any way, shape, or form, at all. [Validation]

Participant: But, see, I couldn't've, in the past, I couldn't have done that. So that's good. That means I'm showing up.

Interviewer: Yes, authentically. [Authenticity, Cultural Connection, Validation]

Authenticity in the excerpt was supporting the participant with being able to show up as they are by the interviewer saying, "just show up." Validation was the empathy the interviewer displayed to the participant, which allowed her to "just show up" and not worry about what others said about her appearance. In return, the participant's responses to the interviewer's openness to her validated the connection that was happening. The confirmation that the participant could have had her hair "wrapped up" was a cultural connection that facilitated the authenticity and humble vulnerability between the interviewer and participant, essentially mirroring the techniques.

Authenticity + Cultural Connection + Humble Vulnerability + Universalization + Validation

Participant: I ain't taking really good care of myself, I don't think.

Interviewer: Yeah. Well, you're journaling. That helps in terms of writing your prayers down. [Humble Vulnerability]

Participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: It's something. I'm not on Tik Tok or Twitter talking about, "Oh, I done lost all this weight." I done ate mine. So, you know, hey. [Laughter] I like a good meal, and I'm not cooking. I'm picking it up, right? [Authenticity, Humble Vulnerability]

Participant: I shop. That's kinda bad, but I mean, it's fun. Me and Amazon are cool. We real cool.

Interviewer: Yes. [Laughter] I get that, right? So, we do different things, and it helps us. [Cultural Connection, Universalization, Validation]

From the beginning of this excerpt, the participant was authentic about how she was feeling about not taking good care of herself. In this exchange, the interviewer was empathic and changed the footing to highlight the positive activities the participant was engaging in to take care of herself, such as journaling and writing her prayers down. This change of footing facilitated a cultural connection that continued on through the end of this excerpt, where both the interviewer and participant were reciprocating the techniques with each other, given the sense of safety they both felt. In the end, the language shifted from "I" to "we" and "us," which not only

validated but universalized their issues around the topic being explored during the individual interview.

Authenticity + Change of footing + Cultural Connection + Disclosure + Humble Vulnerability + Validation

> **Participant:** God forbid, like – I think that I am a boy mom definitely, just with my masculine and somewhat feminine energy, but bringing a Black boy into this world?
>
> **Interviewer:** Yes, something different, something— [Cultural Connection, Validation]
>
> **Participant:** It's just – I mean, it's just – it's so many dynamics to think about that – and I don't know if that's what they want us to think about. I'm unpartnered right now anyway so it ain't—
>
> **Interviewer:** But most people don't have to think about it, right? Black folks, you know, making decisions about having kids, and what does that mean, and where do you live, and what does that look like, right? Like, it's all these questions as you move through the world so you can be safe, then they can be safe. Do I – right? It's all these factors that come into play, yep. [Authenticity, Change of Footing, Cultural Connection, Disclosure, Humble Vulnerability, Validation]
>
> **Participant:** It's too much.
>
> **Interviewer:** It is. I have a 2-year old who—a little girl. And, you know, the innocence and the joy, but out there it's something different, you know? So, it's a wild place to be. [Authenticity, Humble Vulnerability, Disclosure]

In this excerpt, the interviewer validated the anguish expressed by the participant. Next, the interviewer changed footing to universalize the idea of what it means to bring a Black child into the world. The participant introduced the idea of the dynamics of having a Black male child, and the interviewer expounded on those dynamics by animating the participant's experiences, which solidified the cultural connection between two Black women with Black children and the concerns they have about their children's lives. In this context, the exchange that happened between the interviewer and participant supported the authenticity and disclosure of both, deepening their connection and rapport. Reciprocation of a technique also transpired in this excerpt through the universalization of the participant's experience and the universalization of the interviewer's experience.

Summary

With these excerpts, we illustrate how qualitative researchers can employ the eight techniques to engage Black women in individual interviews. We also demonstrate how specific vocabulary and language patterns were used between the researcher and the participant to facilitate and strengthen connections during the individual interview (Harris, 2019). Once a connection was made, the participants at times employed the same techniques as the interviewer, probably unbeknownst to them.

Discussion

Qualitative researchers employ various techniques when conducting individual interviews with diverse populations. For qualitative researchers conducting individual interviews with Black women, we put forth eight techniques qualitative researchers should consider. The techniques we engaged in reflect an important aspect of qualitative interviewing that allows the researcher and the participant to develop rapport, and for the participant to comfortably lead, explore, and discuss the topic being addressed during the individual interview (Few et al., 2003). Rapport building also helps with understanding actions that are unfolding between the interviewer and participant (Roulston, 2010). In fact,

> when people talk to one another, they are also performing actions (for example, clarifying, justifying, informing, arguing, disagreeing, praising, excusing, insulting, complimenting, and so forth). In interview talk, this means that in any sequence of utterances, speakers show how they have oriented to and made sense of other speakers' prior talk (Roulston, 2010, pp. 218–219).

Thus, we hope the techniques we put forth encourage qualitative researchers or those who use individual interviews in their research to develop interview guides that center (i.e., do not reduce Black women's lived experiences as passive objects who are acted upon) the research participants they seek to learn more about. We also hope the techniques we outlined prompt further discussion about the various techniques that qualitative researchers and other scholars who conduct individual interviews use in general, but with Black women specifically.

When conducting individual interviews with Black women, qualitative researchers and others who use individual interviews are responsible for participants' involvement in knowledge production (Knapik, 2006). Thus, in reviewing and illustrating how we used several techniques in qualitative research when conducting individual interviews with Black women, we hope to have provided insight into how Black women feel safe during qualitative interviews. We also hope to have provided insight into three key issues of how we were responsive to participants' contributions to knowledge development in the individual interview. First, when conducting individual interviews with Black women, it is important for the researcher to understand that context matters, and context influences the participant's lived experiences given the topic being explored (Charmaz, 2006; 2014; Few et al., 2003). As Few et al. noted, contextualizing requires the researcher to educate themselves about the historical, political, cultural, and social factors influencing Black women's lives. When researchers contextualize the research process given the

historical, political, cultural, and social factors that Black women face, their knowledge and sensitivity to the individual they are interviewing will help to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of Black women's lived experiences (Few et al., 2003).

Second, intersectionality and Black feminist thought are frameworks that should be considered and incorporated into future qualitative research studies with Black women. Given the racism and sexism that Black women experience, there is an exigent need for qualitative research studies that employ techniques truly centering Black women's lives during the individual interview. For instance, individual interview questions that take into account the social, political, cultural, and historical context of Black women's lives would allow Black women to talk about who, what, and how they experience the world in which they live and provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of Black women in relation to the phenomena they are investigating. For example, if the interviewer (first author) had asked the participants in the exemplar study of this article about their race, class, or gender as single-axis or mutually exclusive categories–such as just Black or woman or middle-class–then she would not have been able to fully examine their lived experiences in relation to the structural realities of COVID-19 and racism. However, when the interviewer asked the participants about their identities using an intersectional approach (e.g., What does it mean to be a Black woman in the United States?), the tenor of the interview changed (Goffman, 2001), and the participants' disclosure about their lived experiences of COVID-19 and racism in the United States opened up opportunities for deeper conversations.

Third, presenting the findings from individual interviews in qualitative research with Black women creates an opportunity for other scholars to better understand what it means for Black women to live at the intersection of their identities and attune researchers to their own positionalities in the research process. Armed with an ethic of caring and a better understanding of Black women's intersecting identities, researchers of all races and gender identities can create opportunities for upending stereotypes about Black women and shifting cultural beliefs about the value of Black women's voices (Pascoe Leahy, 2021).

Finally, qualitative researchers should be conscious of (a) how they use themselves as research instruments, (b) the role of power relations and the complexity they bring into the research space, and (c) what they leave with their research participants when the individual interview ends (Charmaz, 2014; Kassam et al., 2020). This consciousness is part of a greater sense of ethical responsibility and reciprocity that qualitative researchers have to participants in return for sharing their stories (Pascoe Leahy, 2021). For example, qualitative researchers should minimize harm to participants by being attuned to any signs of distress, which requires watching and listening attentively "with both the head and the heart" (Pascoe Leahy, 2021, p. 9). In addition, qualitative interviewers can exhibit reciprocity by explaining to participants they are contributing to research that has a compelling social purpose (Pascoe Leahy, 2021). For instance, in the exemplar study for this article, the first author explained to participants at the conclusion of each interview that they were contributing to a larger narrative centering Black women's intersecting identities and knowledge during a time of historic political and cultural struggle in the United States.

Qualitative researchers who are not Black women should recognize that regardless of the techniques they employ, there may be limitations to the extent they can develop a trusting connection with Black women during individual interviews or fully understand and analyze interview data (Gibson & Abrams, 2003). For instance, among the eight techniques described in this article, cultural capital, cultural connection, and universalization would not be relevant in the context of a White researcher who is interviewing a Black woman because these techniques are germane only when the interviewer and participant have similar social identities (Harris, 2019). It is also plausible, for instance, that a Latinx interviewer who is interviewing a Latinx participant could use techniques like cultural capital, cultural connection, and universalization because of their similar social identities.

In the same vein, the dynamic of extending a relationship beyond the interview space may be unique to Black women researchers and participants due to their shared experience of being pathologized in social science research or left out of it completely (Gibson & Abrams, 2003). During the exemplar study, several participants expressed interest in following up with the researcher about the results of the study in which they participated because many of them reported, at the end of their interviews, that no one had ever asked them about their experiences. Lastly, it is vitally important for qualitative researchers to be aware of the ethical implications of disclosing what other participants have said in interviews, such as living in small communities, because participants may know others who were interviewed.

Limitations

While there are strengths to the techniques the authors outlined when conducting individual interviews with Black women during qualitative research, the techniques should be interpreted in light of several limitations. Although the participants in the exemplar study responded to the techniques outlined, we cannot assume that Black women are a monolith and that the techniques we highlighted will work with all Black women. Further, all of the women had a bachelor's degree or higher. Therefore, it is important to note that the techniques may not have been as effective if the researcher and participants had not shared identity at the intersection of the identity markers explored: race, gender, and class. Additionally, it is critical to note that the interviewer of the exemplar study was a Black woman researcher with more than 15 years of clinical practice experience with other Black

women. It is possible the interviewer's identity made the Black women in the exemplar study feel safe and comfortable with discussing their experiences of COVID-19 and the racial unrest happening in the United States at that time. Thus, it is important to note that a researcher's ability to build rapport with participants, regardless of their social identities, varies from person to person (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). For example, the interviewer (the first author) for the exemplar study used the eight techniques organically. Her approach reflected a natural affinity for and connection with her participants, which appeared to facilitate the participants' comfort with discussing sensitive topics. More research is needed to explore the use of these techniques with other qualitative researchers (e.g., Indigenous, Latinx, White, LGBTQIA + researchers) who may wish to employ these techniques in their qualitative studies with Black women research participants.

Conclusion

The eight empirically grounded techniques we illustrated in our qualitative individual interviews with Black women provide guidance for qualitative researchers to consider when conducting individual interviews with this group of women. Given the context of the United States at the time of the exemplar study–COVID-19 and racial unrest–the lives of many individuals, including Black women, were changing significantly. At a time of great change and increased desire among qualitative scholars to understand the impact of COVID-19 and racial unrest on Black American lives, the need for techniques to engage Black Americans and Black women specifically in individual interviews for qualitative studies should not be ignored.

When interviewing Black women for qualitative studies, it is vital for researchers to employ specific techniques that build rapport, trust, authentic connection, and help Black women feel safe. As this article illustrates, it is incumbent on novice and experienced qualitative researchers and others who conduct individual interviews to share the techniques they use to amplify voices often silenced or ignored in the literature. It is on us as researchers to do the work of building new theories designed to better understand and serve diverse populations, especially in the research process (Campbell et al., 2021).

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the University of Hosuton Graduate College of Social Work Maternal Health Equity Research and Training Center.

ORCID iD

Quenette L. Walton https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2845-6726

References

Bayeck, R. Y. (2021). The intersection of cultural context and research encounter: Focus on interviewing in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *20*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406921995696

Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide.* Routledge.

Borrill, J., Lorenz, E., & Abbasnejad, A. (2012). Using qualitative methods to explore non- disclosure: The example of self-injury. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *11*(4), 384–398. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691201100406

Bourke, B. (2014). Positionality: Reflecting on the research process. *The Qualitative Report*, *19*(33), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1026

Brinkmann, S. (2018). The interview. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.) *The sage handbook of qualitative Research* (5th ed., pp. 576–597). Sage.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2005). Confronting the ethics of qualitative research. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *18*(2), 157–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720530590914789

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the carft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Brown, N. E. (2012). Negotiating the insider/outsider status: Black feminist ethnography and legislative studies. *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, *3*(Fall), 19–34. https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jfs/vol3/iss3/3

Bulpitt, H., & Martin, P. J. (2010). Who am I and what am I doing? Becoming a qualitative research interviewer. *Nursing Research*, *17*(3), 7–16. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2010.04.17.3.7.c7741

Campbell, R. D., Dennis, M. K., Lopez, K., Matthew, R., & Choi, Y. J. (2021). Qualitative research in communities of color: Challenges, strategies, and lessons. *Journal of the Society for Social Work & Research*, *12*(1), 177–200. https://doi.org/10.1086/713408

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Charmaz, K. (2017). Special invited paper: Continuities, contradictions, and critical inquiry in grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917719350

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs*, *38*(4), 785–810. https://doi.org/10.1086/669608

Collins, C., & Cooper, J. (2014). Emotional intelligence and the qualitative researcher. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *13*(1), 88–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691401300134

Collins, P. H. (1989). The social construction of Black feminist thought. *Signs*, *14*(4), 745–773. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174683

Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989(1), Article 8. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6),1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

DeVault, M. L. (1995). Ethnicity and expertise: Racial-ethnic knowledge in sociological research. *Gender and Society*, *9*(5), 612–631. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124395009005007.

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E. L., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). Risk to researchers in qualitative research on sensitive topics: Issues and strategies. *Qualitative Health Research*, *18*(1), 133–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307309007

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *8*(1), 54–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105

Essed, P. (1991). *Understanding everyday racism*. Sage Publications.

Few, A. L., Stephens, D. P., & Rouse-Arnett, M. (2003). Sister-to-sister talk: Transcending boundaries and challenges in qualitative research. *Family Relations*, *52*(3), 205–215. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3700271

Fletcher, F. E., Rice, W. S., Ingram, L. A., & Fisher, C. B. (2019). Ethical challenges and lessons learned from qualitative research with low-income African American women living with HIV in the South. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, *30*(4 suppl), 116–129. https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2019.0122

Fortier, C. (2017). Unsettling methodologies/decolonizing movements. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, *6*(1), 20–36. https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/social_work/media/V6i1-02_fortier.pdf

Gibson, P., & Abrams, L. (2003). Racial difference in engaging, recruiting, and interviewing African American women in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *2*(4), 457–476. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325003024005.

Gibson, P., & Abrams, L. (2004). Racial difference in engaging, recruiting, and interviewing African American women in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *2*(4), 457–476. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325003024005

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual*. Anchor.

Goffman, E. (1979). Footing. *Semiotica: Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies*, *25*(1/2), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1979.25.1-2.1

Goffman, E. (2001). Footing. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.) *Discourse theory and practice: A reader* (pp. 93–110). Sage.

Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.

Gravlee, C. C. (2020). Systemic racism, chronic health inequities, and COVID-19: A syndemic in the making? *American Journal of Human Biology*, *32*(5), Article e23482. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.23482

Green, T. D., Bischoff, L., Coleman, C. L., Sperry, L., & Robinson-Zanartu, C. (2007). The whole truth and nothing but the truth? African American students and university research participation. *Journal of Black Studies 37*(5), 655–676. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021934705283905

Guy-Sheftall, B. (1995). *Words of fire: An anthology of African-American feminist thought*. The New Press.

Harris, J. L. (2019). Black women talking: Using language to develop bonds between Black women during interview data collection. *Michigan Sociological Review*, *33*(Fall 2019), 25–45. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26868250

Haslett, B. (2011). *Communicating and organizing in context: The theory of structurational interaction*. Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203809372

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking Black*. South End Press.

Hordge-Freeman, E. (2018). Bringing your whole self to research: The power of the researcher's body, emotions, and identities in ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918808862

Houghton, C. E., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2010). Ethical challenges in qualitative research: Examples from practice. *Nursing Research*, *18*(1), 15–25. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2020.10.18.1.15.c8044

Houston, M. (2000). Multiple perspectives: African American women conceive their talk. *Women and Language 23*(1), 11–17. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A64151592/AONE?u=googlescholar&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=7355558c

Jovanovic, G. (2011). Toward a social history of qualitative research. *History of the Human Sciences*, *24*(2), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695111399334

Kassam, S., Marcellus, L., Clark, N., & O'Mahony, J. (2020). Applying intersectionality with constructivist grounded theory as an innovative research approach for studying complex populations: Demonstrating congruency. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *19*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919898921

Knapik, M. (2006). The qualitative research interview: Participants' responsive participation in knowledge making. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods 5*(3), 77–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500308

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice*, *23*(1), 274–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090

Kvale, K., Synnes, O., & Jacobsen, F. F. (2015). Reflexivity on an empirical study about cancer patients' perception of good caring in light of Goffman's Theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *14*(1), 146–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691501400103

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Laurencin, C. T., & Walker, J. M. (2020). A pandemic on a pandemic: Racism and COVID-19 in Blacks. *Cell Systems*, *11*(1), 9–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cels.2020.07.002

Mallozzi, C. (2009). Voicing the interview: A researcher's exploration on a platform of empathy. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *15*(6), 1042–1060. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800409334227

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (Eds.) (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study Research*. Sage. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397

Mizock, L., Harkins, D., & Morant, R. (2011). Researcher interjecting in qualitative research. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, *12*(2), Article 13. https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1566/3182

Mohr, J. (2009). Oppression by scientific method: The use of science to 'other' sexual minorities. *Journal of Hate Studies* *7*(2), 21–45. http://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.57

Obasi, C. (2012). Negotiating the insider/outsider continua: A Black female hearing perspective on research with deaf women and Black women. *Qualitative Research*, *14*(1), 61–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112465632

Obinna, D. N. (2021). Essential and undervalued: Health disparities of African American women in the COVID-19 era. *Ethnicity & Health*, *26*(1), 68–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2020.1843604

Pascoe Leahy, C. (2021). The afterlife of interviews: Explicit ethics and subtle ethics in sensitive or distressing qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *1–18*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211012924

Pezalla, A., Pettigrew, J., & Miller-Day, M. (2012). Researching the researcher-as-instrument: An exercise in interviewer self-reflexivity. *Qualitative Research* *12*(2), 165–185. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794111422107

Pitts, M. S., & Miller-Day, M. (2007). Upward turning points and positive rapport development across time in researcher-participant relationships. *Qualitative Research*, *7*(2), 177–201. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107071409

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2017). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice* (10th ed.). Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.

Pugh, A. (2012). What good are interviews for thinking about culture? Demystifying interpretive analysis. *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* *1*(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1057/ajcs.2012.4

Ray, R. (2020). Why are blacks dying at higher rates from COVID-19?https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/04/09/why-are-blacks-dying-at-higher-rates-from-covid-19/

Roberts, R. (2020). Qualitative interview questions: Guidance for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report* *25*(9), 3185–3203. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4640

Robinson, L., & Schulz, J. (2016). Eliciting frontstage and backstage talk with the iterated questioning approach. *Sociological Methodology* *46*(3), 53–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/0081175016632804

Roulston, K. (2010). Considering quality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research* *10*(2), 199–228. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109356739

Rushovich, T., Bouilcault, M., Chen, J. T., Danielsen, A. C., Tarrant, A., Richardson, S. S., & Shattuck-Heidorn, H. (2021). Sex disparities in COVID-19 mortality vary across US racial groups. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *36*(6), 1696–1701. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-06699–4

Saldaña, J. (2018). Researcher, analyze theyself. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918801717.

Settles, I. H. (2006). Use of an intersectional framework to understand Black women's racial and gender identities. *Sex Roles*, *54*(9–10), 589–601. https://doi/10.1007/s11199-006-9029-8

Settles, I. H., Pratt-Hyatt, J. S., & Buchanan, N. T. (2008). Through the lens of race: Black and White women's perceptions of womanhood. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *32*(4), 454–468. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00458.x

Stewart, S., & Haynes, C. (2019). Black liberation research: Qualitative methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *32*(9), 1183–1189. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1645912

Summerville, K. S., Campbell, E. T., Flantroy, K., Powell, A. N., & Shelton, S. A. (2021). Finding ourselves as Black women in Eurocentric theory: Collaborative biography on learning and reshaping qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *21*(4), 456–468. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-06-2020-0050

Taquette, S. R., & Borges da Matta Souza, L. M. (2022). Ethical dilemmas in qualitative research: A critical literature review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *21*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221078731

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Walton, Q. L., Campbell, R. D., & Blakey, J. M. (2021). Black women and COVID-19: The need for targeted mental health research and practice. *Qualitative Social Work*, *20*(1–2), 247–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325020973349

Walton, Q. L., & Oyewuwo-Gassikia, O. B. (2017). The case for #BlackGirlMagic: Application of a strengths-based, intersectional practice framework for working with Black women with depression. *Affilia*, *32*(4), 461–475. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109917712213

Weis, L., & Fine, M. (2000). *Speed bumps: A student-friendly guide to qualitative research*. Teachers College, Columbia University.