

## Reflexivity

### What is reflexivity?

Reflexivity refers to researchers' self-reflection about how their positionality influences knowledge generation and the products of their research.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Conducting qualitative research with an awareness of one's positionality can increase the transparency and credibility of the research process and products.<sup>4</sup>

Reflexivity may include reflection on the following:

- How the researcher's identity, values, assumptions, experience, and/or training shape the research process (personal reflexivity)
- How the researcher relates to the research participants and how this influences the research (interpersonal reflexivity)
- How the research design and methods influence the data collection (methodological reflexivity)
- How the analytic choices may influence the research product, including what data are or are not included (analytic reflexivity)<sup>3</sup>

### How do I incorporate reflexivity into my research?

The most common way that qualitative researchers incorporate reflexivity into their work is through reflexive writing. Reflexive writing practices, including journaling, memoing or writing field notes, allow individual researchers or research teams to document methodological decisions and reflect on their relationship to and influence on the research process.<sup>3</sup> Using a set of reflective questions can be helpful to guide reflexive writing.<sup>4,5</sup>

Other ways to foster reflexivity include conducting team-based and/or participatory research. Working in teams, especially multi-disciplinary teams, provides opportunities to challenge individual assumptions and collectively interpret data.<sup>3,6</sup> In order to foster reflexivity, teams should engage in intentional reflexive discussions. Participatory research, in which the participants are also researchers, also facilitates collective knowledge generation and opportunities to challenge individual assumptions.<sup>3</sup> Incorporating participatory strategies into your research, like member checking, is another way to foster reflexivity.

### How do I address reflexivity in a manuscript?

In manuscripts and other research products, you can incorporate aspects of reflexivity by addressing the following in your methods:

- The researchers' relationship to the research content or context
- The dynamics between researchers and participants, and how these were considered in recruitment, data collection, and analysis

- A description of the research procedures and decisions made, including the rationale for decisions

Some researchers also include a more detailed reflexivity statement in their manuscript. This can be incorporated in the methods section or included as a supplementary file.

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<sup>1</sup> Finlay L. Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qual Research*, 2002; 2(2), doi.org/10.1177/146879410200200205

<sup>2</sup> Pillow W. Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 2003; 16:2, 175-196. doi:1080/0951839032000060635

<sup>3</sup> Probst B, Berenson L. The double arrow: How qualitative social workers use reflexivity. *Qual Social Work*. 2014;13(6) 813-827. doi:10.1177/1473325013506248

<sup>4</sup> Peddle M. Maintaining reflexivity in qualitative nursing research. *Nurs Open*. 2022;9(6):2908-2914. doi:10.1002/nop2.999

<sup>5</sup> Rae J, Green B. Portraying reflexivity in health services research. *Qual Health Res*. 2016;26(11):1543-1549. doi:10.1177/1049732316634046

<sup>6</sup> Rankl F, Johnson GA, Vindrola-Padros C. Examining What We Know in Relation to How We Know It: A Team-Based Reflexivity Model for Rapid Qualitative Health Research. *Qual Health Res*. 2021;31(7):1358-1370. doi:10.1177/1049732321998062