

Understanding Ourselves in Qualitative Research Through Collaborative Sense-making

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2023, the iSchool at Syracuse University offered a new PhD course entitled IST 800 Information Studies Seminar: Qualitative Research Methods. This course was intended to teach students about various qualitative methods. A key part of the curriculum was centered on a discussion of how researchers are implicated by their epistemological and ontological positionality and how this awareness should inform their methodological decisions and analytical interpretations. As part of the course, students were asked to keep a weekly sense-making journal, which was intended as a routine medium through which students could reflectively engage with the various author claims, arguments, and philosophical perspectives that were raised in the course readings and shared class discussions. After the course ended, several of the students from the course embarked on a collaborative autoethnographic project to examine how their respective learnings about qualitative methodologies had shaped their individual research ontologies and epistemologies. This poster provides an overview of this collective analysis.

We argue that the reflexive nature of the course acted as a generative springboard for us (i.e., the students) to explore and question our values, sensitivities, and, ultimately, our worldviews; in tandem, the assigned sense-making memos gave us a chance to proactively develop our researcher positionalities. It is our hope that sharing the insights from this autoethnographic project will support other early career researchers in understanding how to critically engage their own positionality, and will provide information science educators inspiration for their own research methodology pedagogy.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

students, pedagogy, research methods, curriculum, education programs/schools

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

qualitative research, collaborative autoethnography, information science, positionality, reflexivity

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