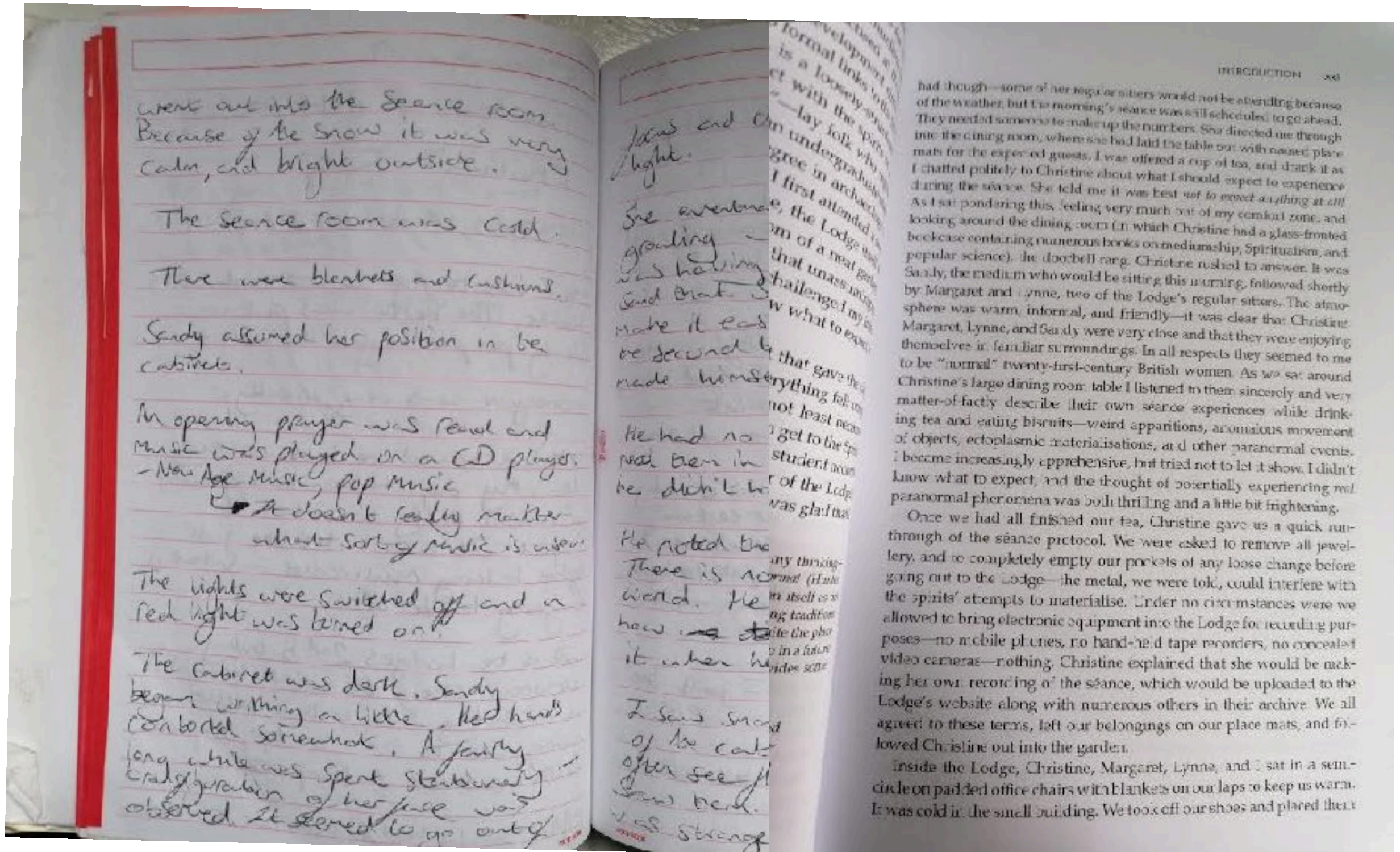


Thinking About Writing Up

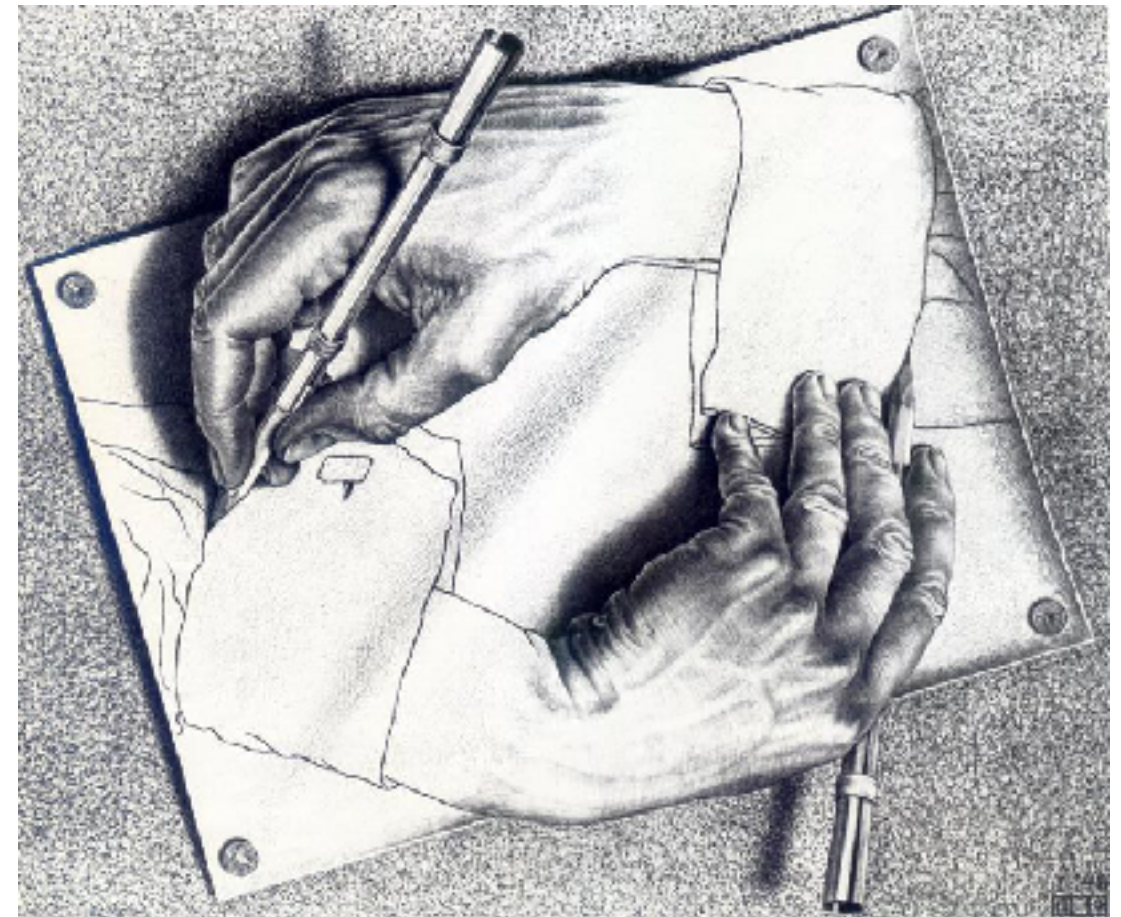


Overview

- Getting started...
- Thinking about writing...
- How do you refer to your research participants/informants...?
- Research as co-created.
- Reflexive Reflection.
- Basic writing tips.

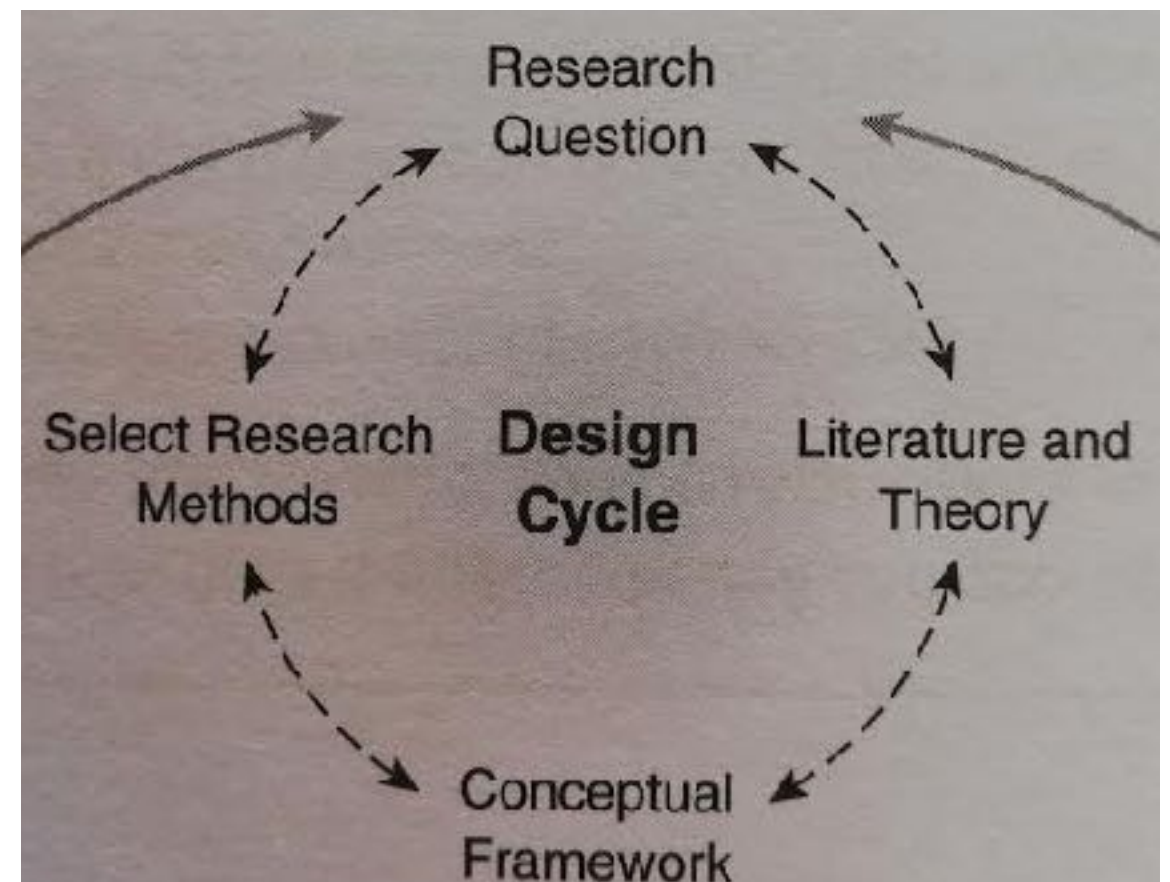
Research Design

- “Most treatments of research design across the social sciences (social-cultural anthropology excepted) take a variables-based, hypothesis-testing, (quasi-)experimental approach to the topic that is quite different from the word-based, abductive, field and archival research approach common to interpretive empirical work...” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 3).
- “...this way of proceeding does not describe very well a whole segment of scientific research: that conducted under the heading of interpretive social science...” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 1).
- Interpretive social science takes place in the real world, which is messy and unpredictable - not necessarily suitable for experimental or quasi-experimental methods.
- “...ethnography is thick description. What the ethnographer is in fact faced with...is a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which [they] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render...” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10).
- How do we design (and carry out) a research project that provides a thick description of the messy real world?



Research Design

- Hennink, Hutter & Bailey (2020) argue that there are four key components to designing a research project:
 1. Developing the research question and study objectives.
 2. Reviewing research literature and incorporating theory.
 3. Developing a conceptual framework.
 4. Select qualitative methods (2020, p. 30).
- “Research design is about making choices and articulating a rationale for the choices one has made” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 2).
- This is the function of your ‘academic rationale’ and ‘methodology’ sections - to show why you have chosen to do your research in the way that you have done it.



Philosophical Assumptions

- John Creswell suggests that researchers position themselves in relation to five philosophical assumptions:
- “...ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetorical, and methodological assumptions. The qualitative researcher chooses a stance on each of these assumptions...” (Creswell, 2007, p. 15).

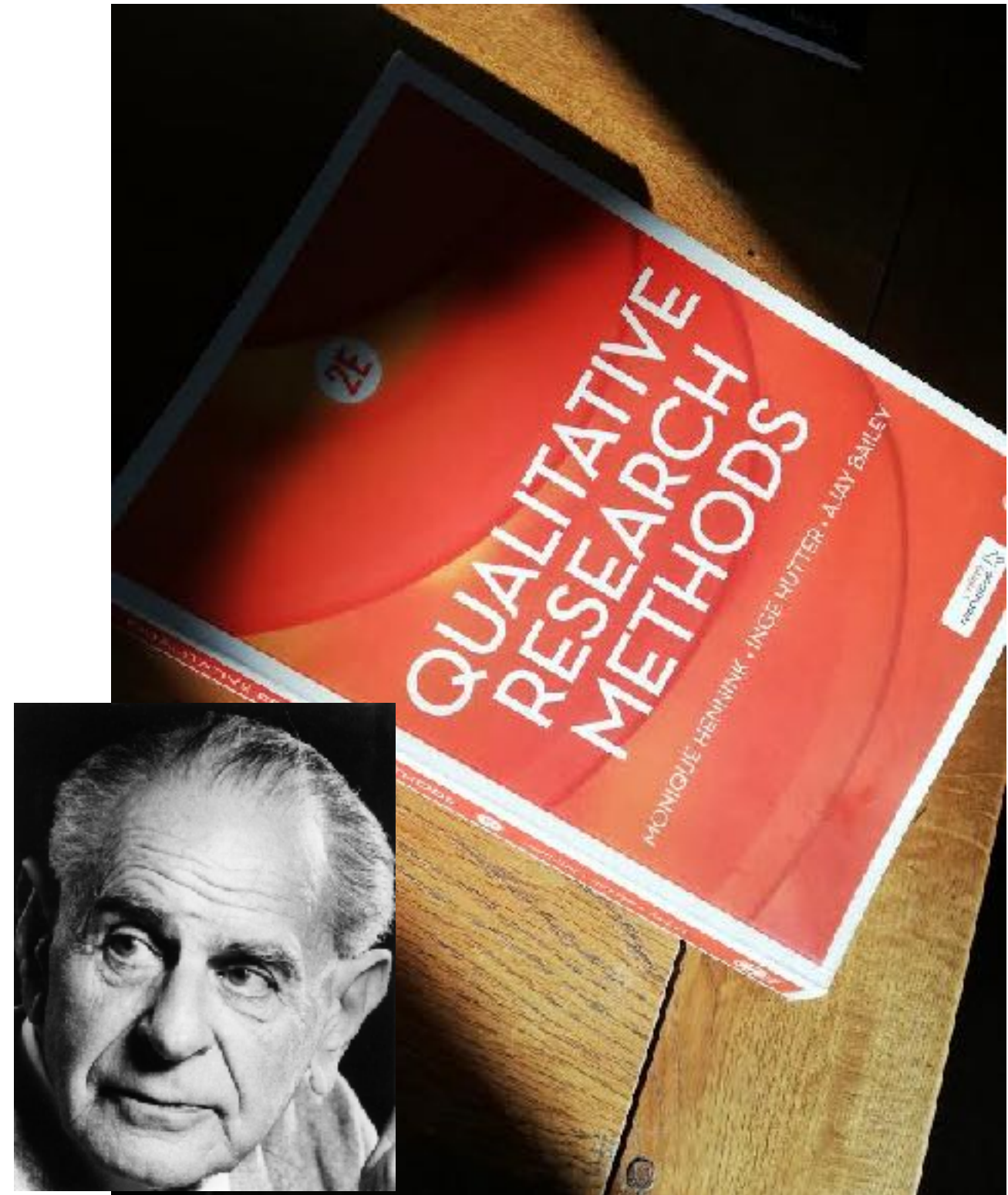
Table 2.1 Philosophical Assumptions With Implications for Practice

<i>Assumption</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Implications for Practice (Examples)</i>
Ontological	What is the nature of reality?	Reality is subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in the study	Researcher uses quotes and themes in words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives
Epistemological	What is the relationship between the researcher and that being researched?	Researcher attempts to lessen distance between himself or herself and that being researched	Researcher collaborates, spends time in field with participants, and becomes an “insider”
Axiological	What is the role of values?	Researcher acknowledges that research is value-laden and that biases are present	Researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes his or her own interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of participants
Rhetorical	What is the language of research?	Researcher writes in a literary, informal style using the personal voice and uses qualitative terms and limited definitions	Researcher uses an engaging style of narrative, may use first-person pronoun, and employs the language of qualitative research
Methodological	What is the process of research?	Researcher uses inductive logic, studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design	Researcher works with particulars (details) before generalizations, describes in detail the context of the study, and continually revises questions from experiences in the field

(Creswell, 2007, p. 17).

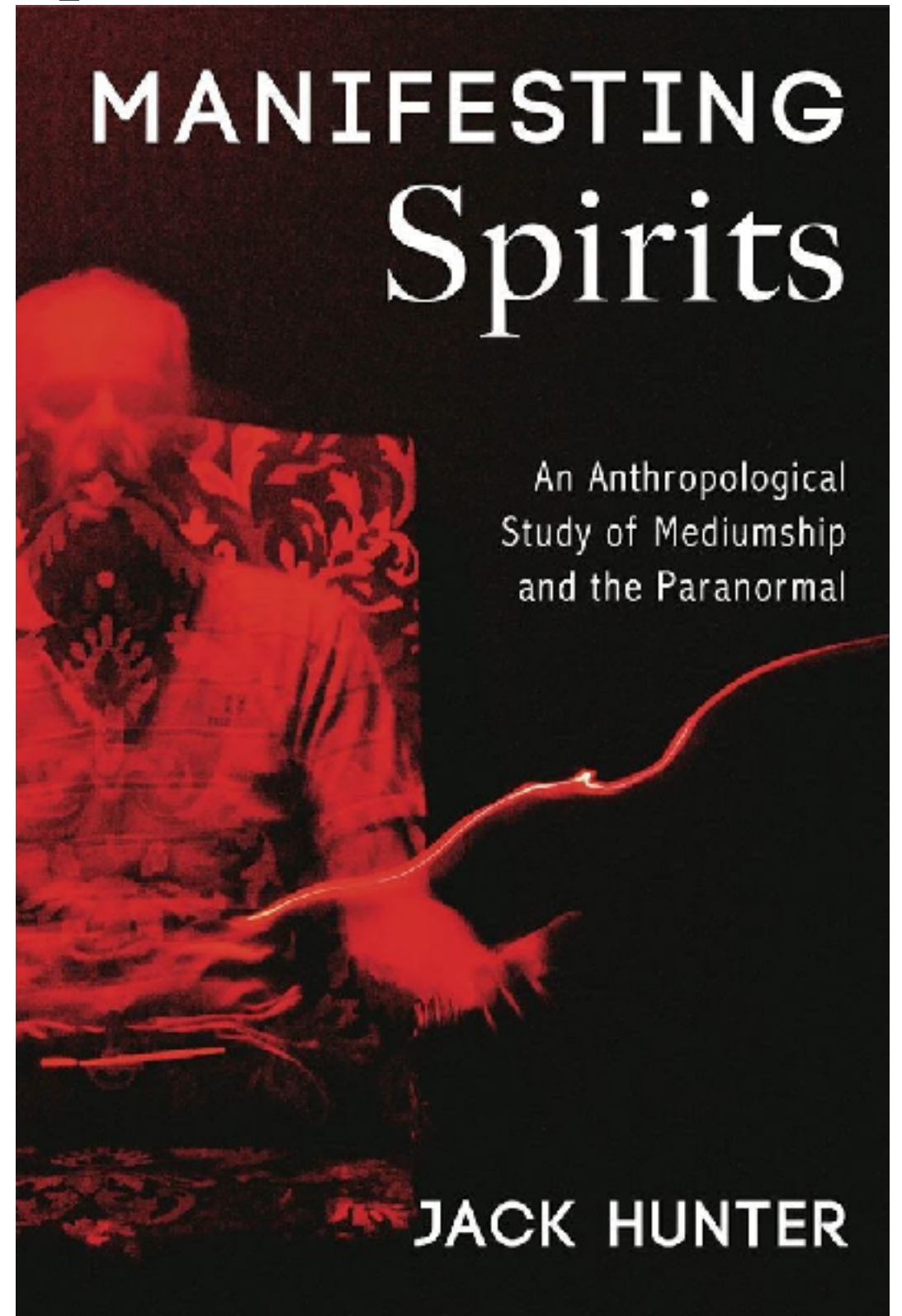
Choosing an Appropriate Question

- Your question should be manageable - and answerable in principle.
- Karl Popper - hypotheses should be falsifiable to be scientific.
- Hennink, Hutter & Bailey make a distinction between research topic, objectives and research question.
- **Topic** - may be drawn from other sources, publications, studies, issues, etc.
- **Objectives** - what do you want to achieve with the project, e.g. contribute to academic knowledge, to policy change, etc. Will it be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory research, and so on.
- **Research Question** - General question formulated from the objectives - a question that will help to meet them.



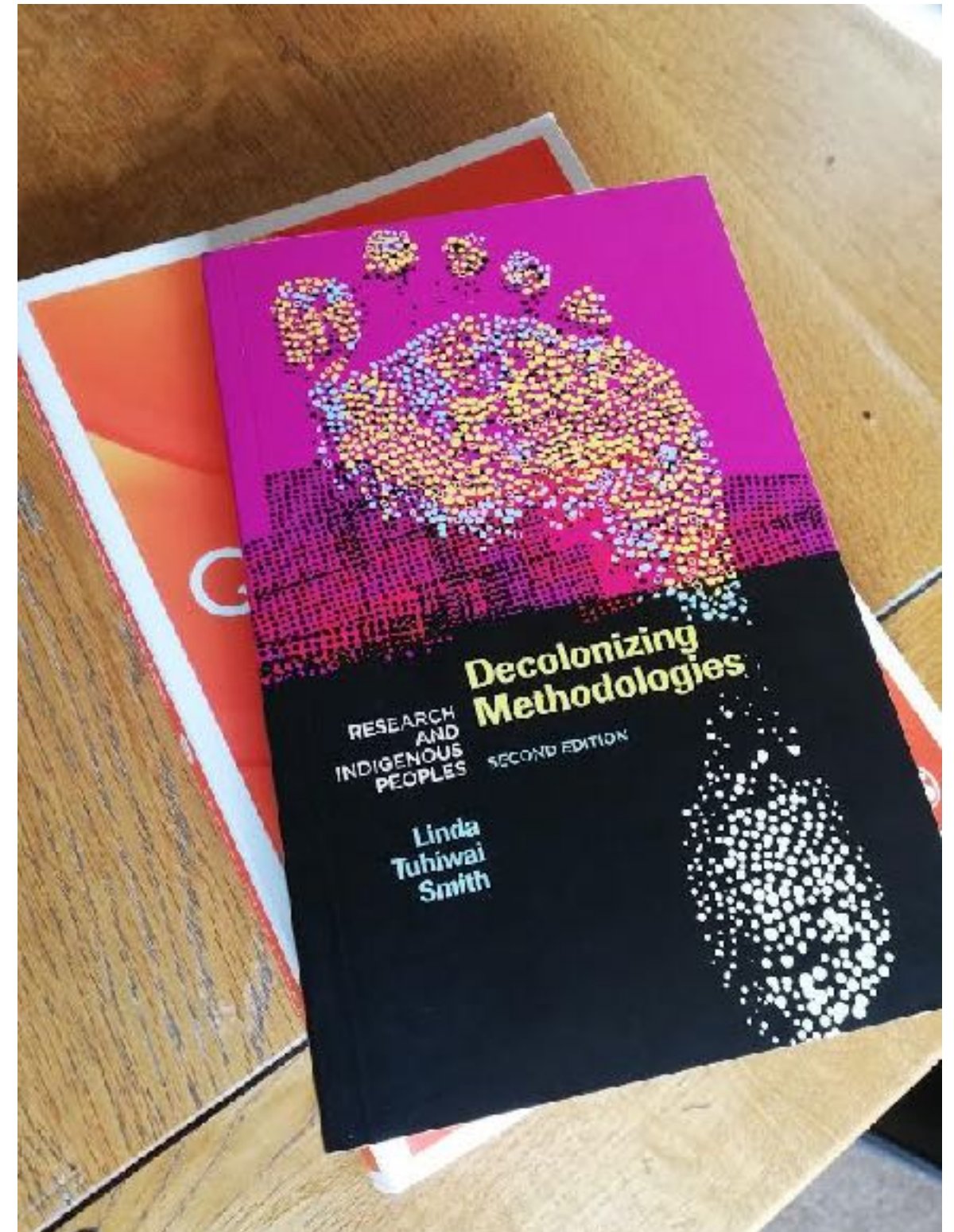
For example...

- **Topic:** Spirit Mediumship and the Paranormal.
- **Objectives:** To contribute to scholarly debates on the nature of spirit mediumship and the paranormal through an ethnographic case study.
- **Question:** Why do people believe in spirits?
- **Questions:** How is the body used in spirit mediumship demonstrations? What does it feel like to go into trance? What are the models of self that emerge from this practice?...



Considerations

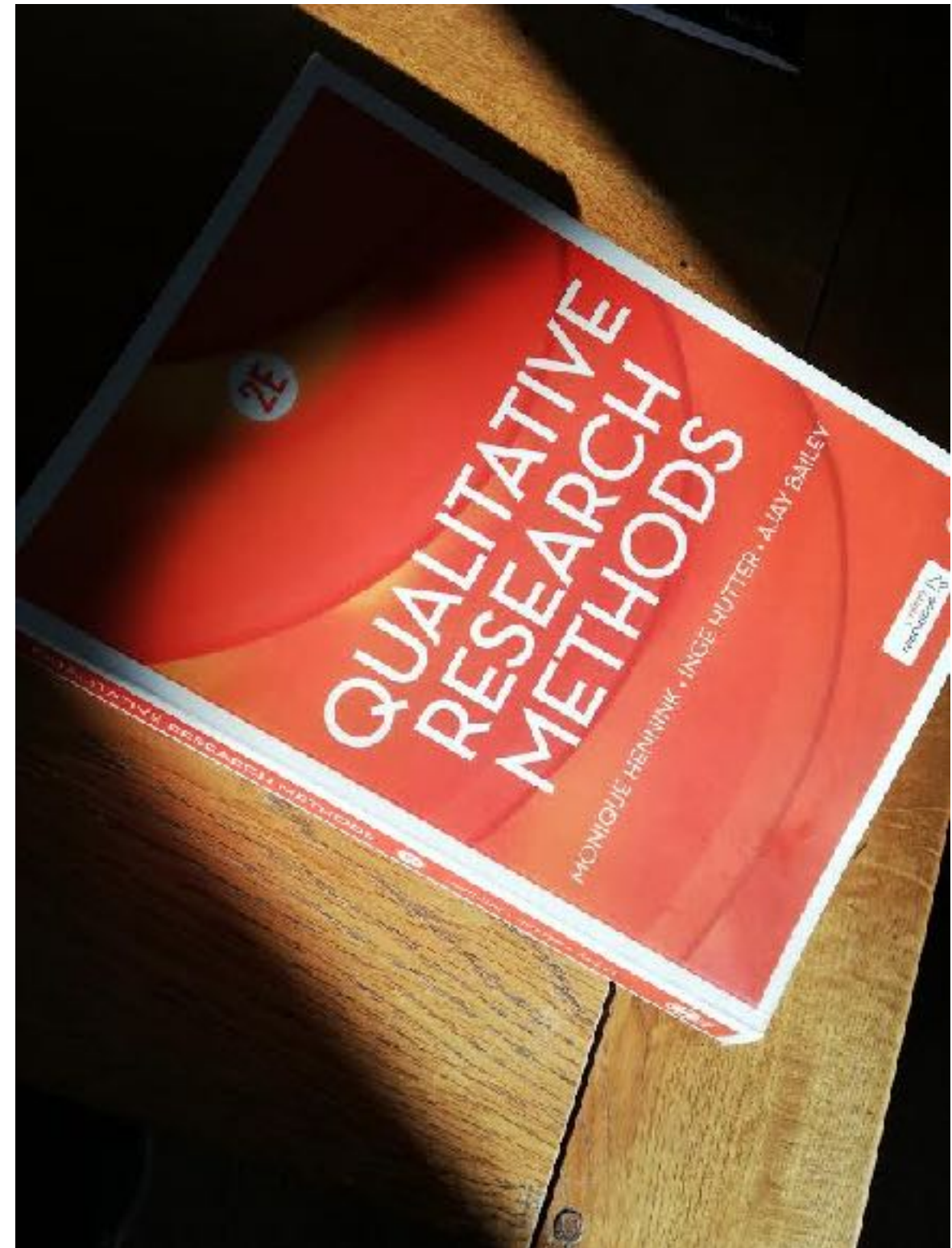
- Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggests that there are certain questions that need to be asked about any research project, especially in a cross-cultural context:
 - Who defined the research problem?
 - For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so?
 - What knowledge will the community gain from this study?
 - What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?
 - What are some of the likely positive outcomes from this study?
 - What are some possible negative outcomes?
 - How can the negative outcomes be eliminated?
 - To whom is the researcher accountable?
 - What processes are in place to support the research, the researched and the researcher? (pp. 175-176).
- These are good questions to ask in order to bring ethical considerations for your research project into focus.



Getting started...

- Making a start on a new writing project can be very daunting.
- Hennink, Hutter & Bailey suggest:

“...before you begin to write, gather all the writings you have done already in the project...an original study proposal, an early literature review...notes...memos or a field diary...”
- “...analytic notes, summaries... concepts...early explanatory frameworks...” (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020, p. 293).
- You have already started writing even before you have begun!



Thinking about writing...

- Linda Tuhiwai Smith:

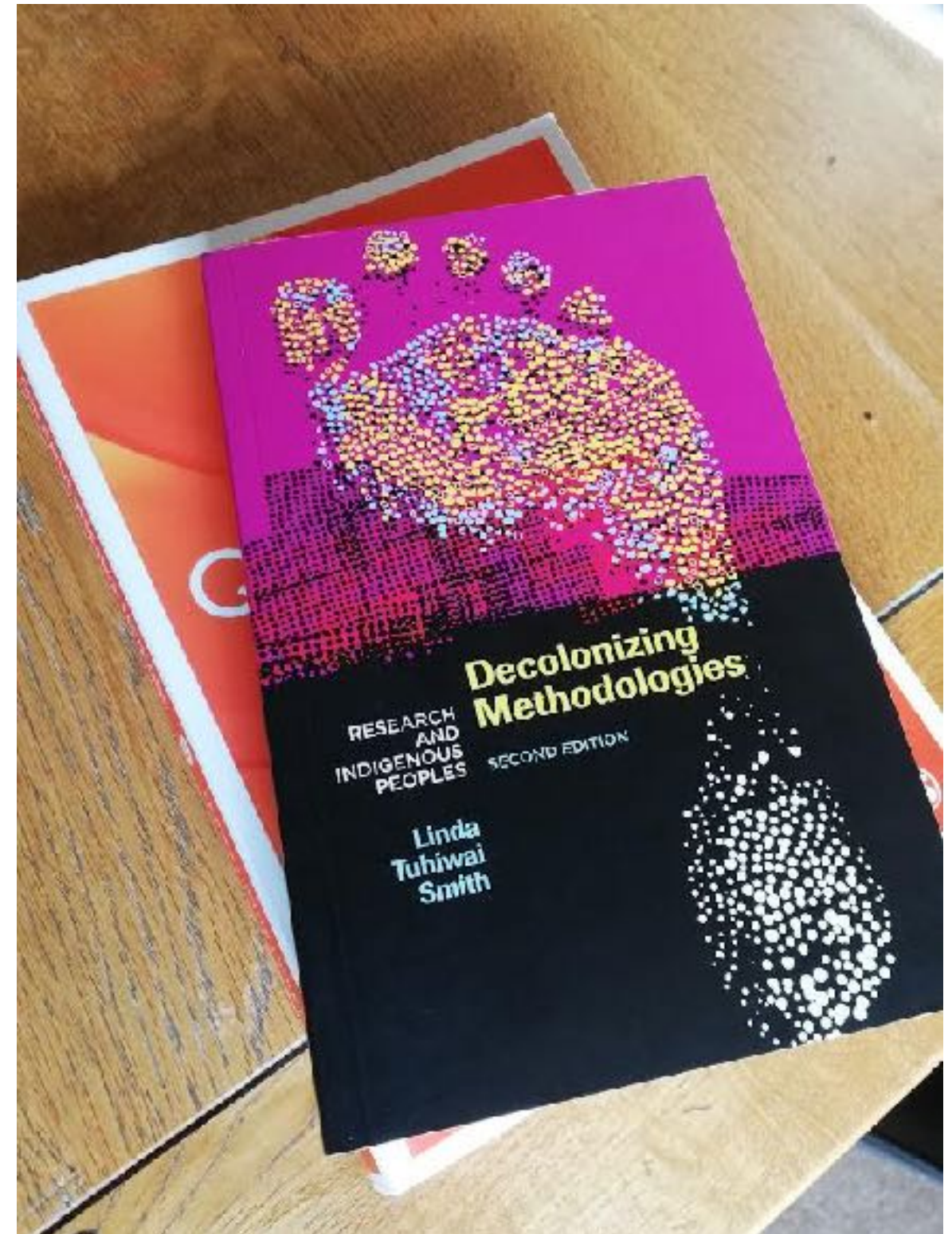
“...academic writing is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge...” (2012, p. 37).

- **Yes** - put down headings, and start to arrange material into different sections, to build up your narrative.

- **But**, if we don't think critically about how we go about doing this, it can lead to problems, e.g. it can:

“[privilege] sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant...”

- Do we have to rely on the old guard of theorists? For example, do we perpetuate or move into new territory?
- “If we write without thinking critically about our writing, it can be dangerous...we reinforce and maintain a style of discourse which is never innocent...” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 37).
- This emphasises the importance of reflexivity, as we have discussed throughout the module.
- What are we writing for? Who are we writing for?...



Informants?

- It is important to establish key-informants who can help you answer your research questions.
- The way we think about them is important.
- Janice Morse (1991) makes the following observations:
- Different terms delineate different relationships between the researcher and the researched.

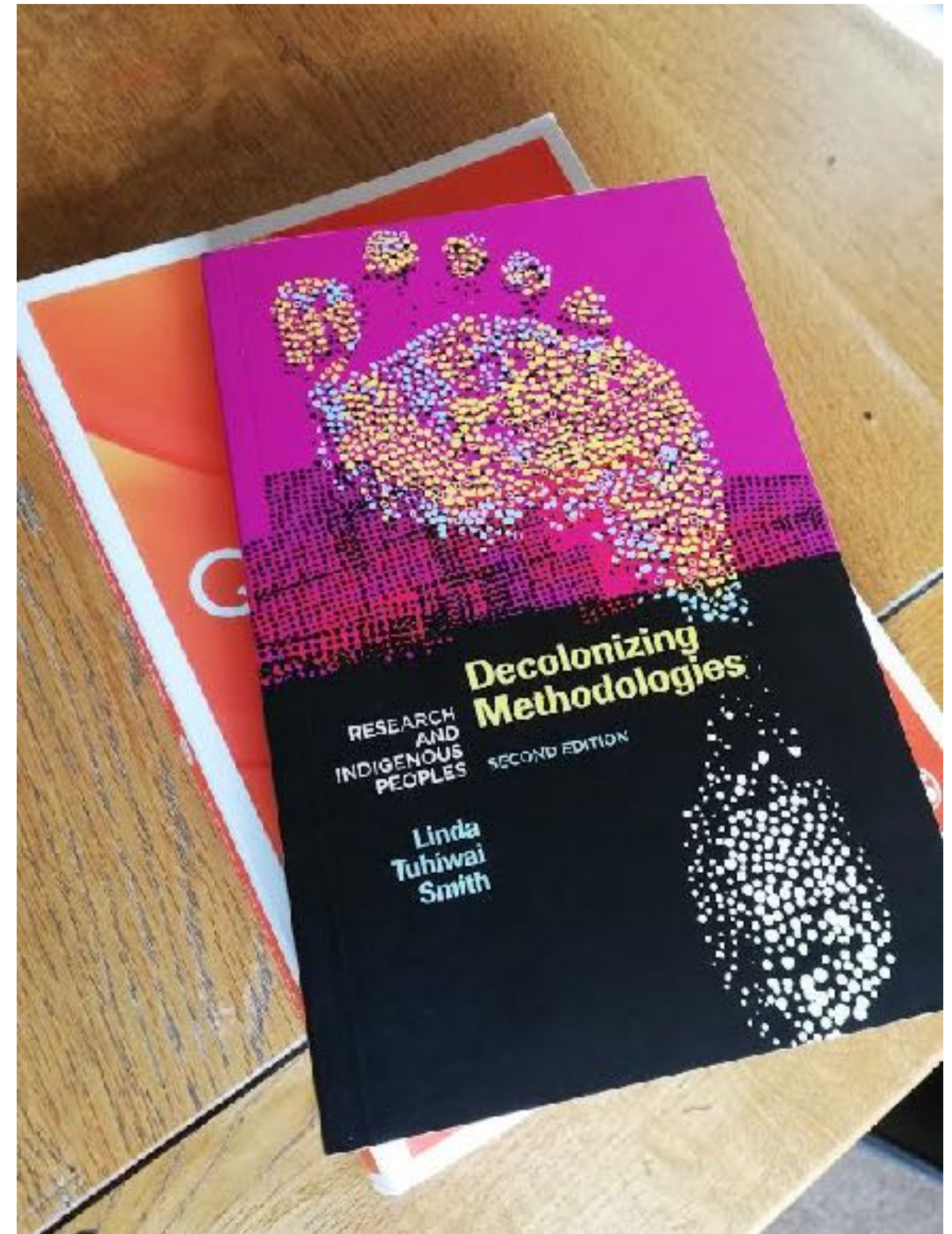


Informants?

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- The way we think about them is important.
- Janice Morse (1991) makes the following observations:
- Different terms delineate different relationships between the researcher and the researched.
- **Subjects** - used in experimental/ quasi-experimental design - “pawns” subject to interventions.
- **Respondents** - used in sociological questionnaires - tell the researcher what the researcher asks.
- **Informants** - from anthropology, the investigator is naive and needs to learn the ways of the group.
- **Participants** - actively involved in the research, commonly used in qualitative research.

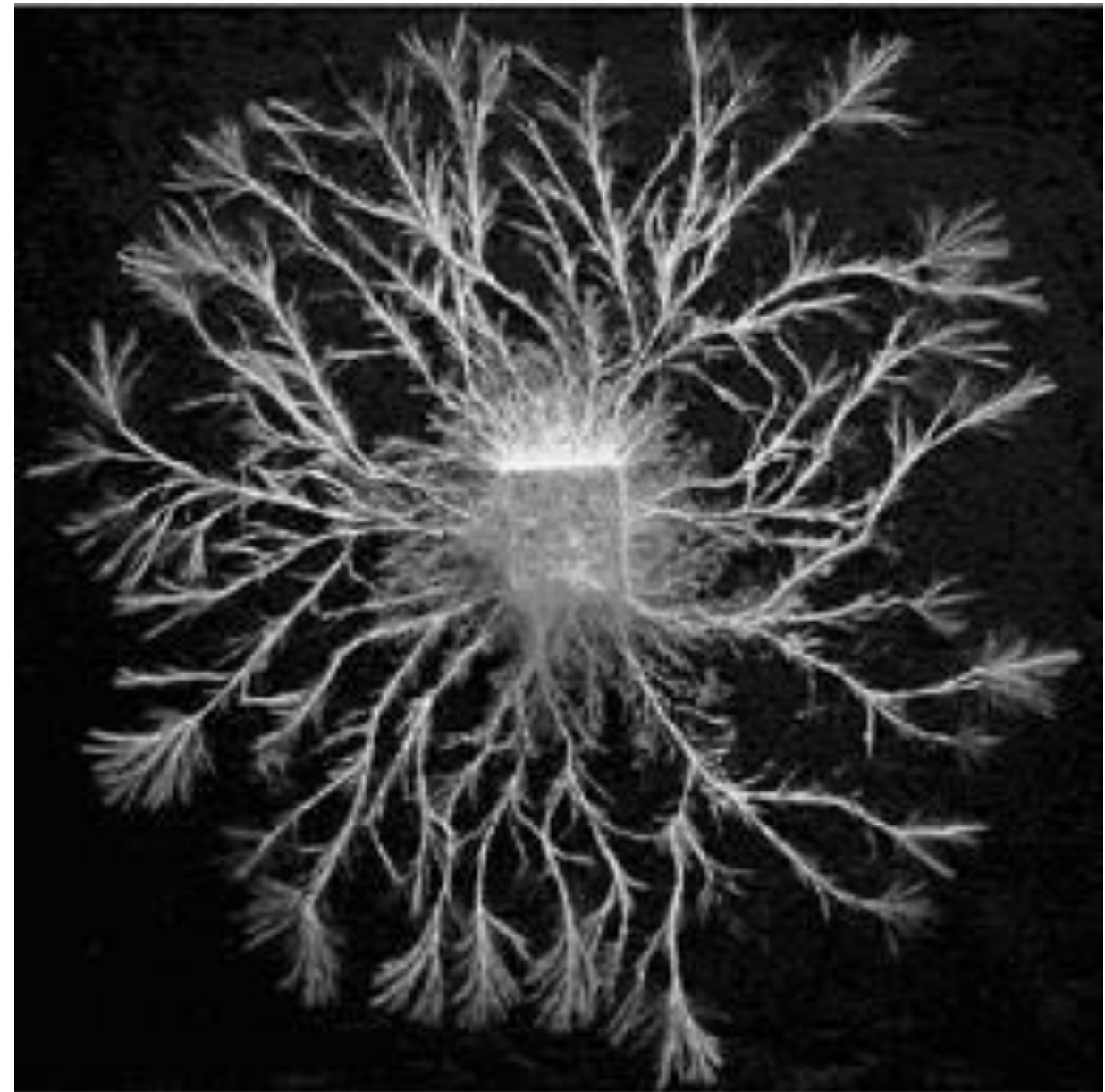
Representation and Respect

- Linda Tuhiwai Smith in the context of research with indigenous communities, but relevant to all forms of qualitative research:
- “...there are four things that make many books dangerous to indigenous readers: (1) they do not reinforce our values, actions, customs, culture and identity; (2) when they tell us only about others they are saying that we do not exist; (3) they may be writing about us but are writing things which are untrue; (4) they are writing about us but saying negative and insensitive things which tell us that we are not good” (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012, p. 36).
- The writing of research should not be about objectifying the ‘other’ but should be a project of respectful representation.
- Research can be a co-created project.

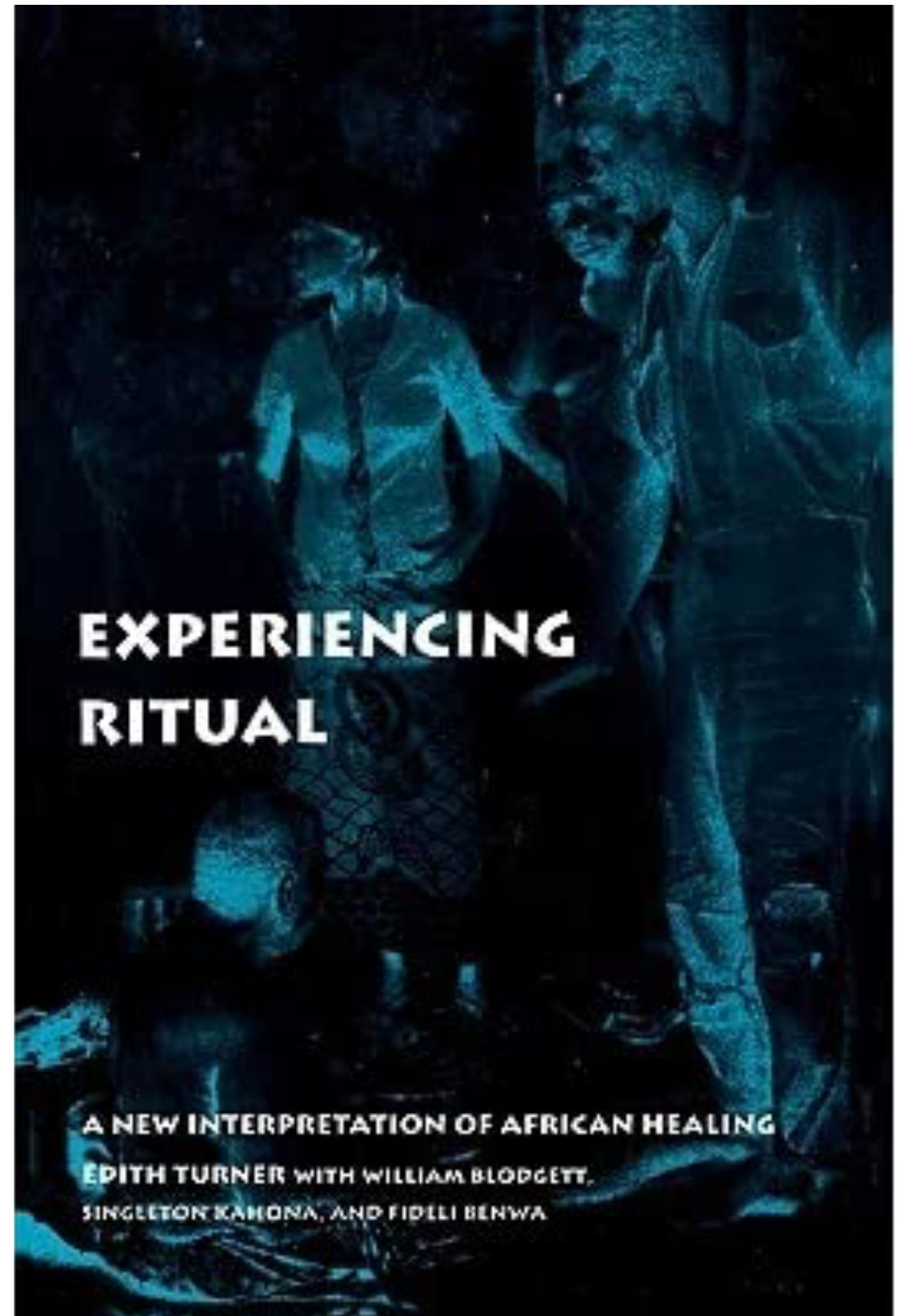


Research as Co-Created

- Lavallie & Sasakamoose suggest a research approach called “reflexive reflection”:
- “RR engages participants or community members as co-researchers in the research process to further improve relationship trust, draw on group strengths and resources, and incorporate shared knowledge and action...” (LaVallie & Sasakamoose, 2021, pp. 211-212).
- “The process of data contemplation discussed here suggests using the terms “reflection” or “contemplating” instead of “analyzing” to honour the multiple relationships created by Indigenous methodologies. The researcher reflects on the data by privileging the localized Indigenous ways of knowing in order to examine the researcher’s positionality and then co-create knowledge with the participants” LaVallie & Sasakamoose, 2021, p. 212).
- New knowledge arises through the establishment of a relationship between the researcher and their research community.



- “This is a different kind of anthropology, the story of a visible spirit form among the Ndembu of Zambia, and it has a different point to make...I felt there must be a more humanistic way to explain human behavior and events that the methods we were supposed to be learning in the world of anthropology...” (Turner, 1992, p. xi).
- “I am particularly grateful to William (Bill) Blodgett, whose unstinting help made the enterprise possible, and to his father William Blodgett III...also to Singleton Kahona and Fideli Benwa and their ancestors who were the true owners of the Ihamba ritual and to whom this book is dedicated...” (Turner, 1992, p. xiii).



Basic Tips

- Writing doesn't have to be 'stream of consciousness,' or written from beginning to end in a single sitting.
- Use headings and subheadings to structure your essay.
- Avoid very short paragraphs (which read like lists), and very long paragraphs (which are daunting for the reader).
- Proof-read before submission.
- Read out-loud to spot sentences that are confusing, and minor spelling, punctuation and grammar issues.

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