Vulnerable Research: Competencies for Trauma and Justice-Informed Ethnography

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Abstract
Ethnographers often work with individuals who are physically, psychologically, spiritually, and/or structurally vulnerable. The article introduces six competencies for ethnographers to be trained in and assessed on to ensure their research is trauma and justice-informed. The author builds from her own research experiences, current methodological approaches to qualitative inquiry, and an integration of sociology and psychology to detail these competencies and provide tools for training and assessment. The competencies include the following: (a) self-awareness; (b) participant-centered approach; (c) recognition of social location; (d) attention to trauma; (e) knowledge of professional limits; and (f) effective boundaries and self-care. The six competencies and Action-reflection course outlined in the article are designed to support researchers in attending to how their personal histories, embodied states, and power dynamics shape the research endeavor, as well as, learn skills for healthy boundary-keeping, risk assessment, and steps to minimize participant (re)traumatization. Although these competencies are essential for work with disempowered populations, they are beneficial for all qualitative researchers to ensure both personal and participant safety.

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Introduction

“I only want to talk to you,” my research participant told me bluntly. He was one of many persons in my ethnography with new soldiers in the United States army who came to me with questions and concerns about his life. I was quick to tell him that I was not a therapist and to provide him with information about where he could receive free and confidential mental health support, but he still was convinced that I was his best confidant. My experience with him and others brought to the surface questions about how to conduct trauma and justice-orientated ethnography with individuals who are physically, psychologically, spiritually, and/or structurally vulnerable.

In this article, I begin by conceptualizing vulnerability and providing an overview of epistemological and methodological approaches in qualitative inquiry directed towards working with disempowered populations. I then briefly describe my research project and the challenges that motivated this article. From there, I introduce six competencies for researchers to be trained in and assessed on to ensure their research is trauma and justice-informed. The competencies include the following: (a) self-awareness; (b) participant-centered approach; (c) recognition of social location; (d) attention to trauma; (e) knowledge of professional limits; and (f) effective boundaries and self-care. I then detail how these competencies can be developed and assessed in an Action-reflection course. The competencies and course are designed to support researchers in attending to how their personal histories, embodied states, and power dynamics shape the research endeavor, as well as, learn skills for healthy boundary-keeping, risk assessment, and steps to minimize participant (re)traumatization. They combine insights from sociology and psychology, weaving together two fields that often remain separate. Although these six competencies are essential for work with disempowered populations, they are beneficial for all qualitative researchers to ensure both personal and participant safety during research endeavors.

Conceptualizing Vulnerability

Ethnographers often work with individuals who are physically, psychologically, spiritually, and/or structurally vulnerable (Bashir 2018; Hoff 2016[1990];
Hölscher and Bozalek 2012; Keyel 2021[2020]; Liamputtong 2007; Melrose 2002; Shaw et al. 2020; Yarbrough 2020). Although there is disagreement on a precise definition of vulnerability, I build on definitions that conceptualize vulnerability as diminished autonomy, a lack of power, limited agency or capacity to function due to physiological, psychological, spiritual, and/or structural factors (Liamputtong 2007; Moore and Miller 1999; Silva 1995). Those who are physically vulnerable may have chronic or acute health ailments, or are at high risk for future physical harm (e.g., those with cancer, physical disabilities, injuries, drug/alcohol dependencies, or those in dangerous areas such as war zones). Psychological vulnerabilities occur for those who are experiencing emotional distress or high levels of stress, due to specific events (e.g., grief, loss, abuse, trauma) or underlying mental health challenges (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, schizophrenia). Individuals may be spiritually vulnerable when they are struggling to find a sense of meaning in life, working to reconcile existing beliefs with new realities, questioning their faith, or are isolated from their spiritual and religious communities. Structural vulnerabilities emerge for those who are marginalized in a community due to their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other identity characteristics, as well as, those who lack the resources for their basic needs (e.g., poverty, food insecurity, legal status, housing/employment instability). These vulnerabilities often overlap and intersect; for example, poor health may limit a person’s ability to work, and thus, impact their financial security. Although all humans are at-risk to some extent in the research process, participants with heightened or cumulative vulnerabilities across these four spheres present specific challenges and ethical responsibilities for ethnographers (Jacobson 2005; Liamputtong 2007; Rogers et al. 2015; Shaw et al. 2020; Watts 2008). For simplicity’s sake, when referring to those with heightened or cumulative vulnerabilities in this article, I will use the terms “vulnerable,” “disempowered,” “at-risk,” and “those with limited agency.”

In research with disempowered populations, some participants may come to see ethnographers as sources of stability and normalcy (and often authority), and as a result, turn to them for advice and guidance, and sometimes emotional, spiritual, or material support. Scholars working with these groups have found that participants often experience therapeutic benefits from engaging in the research project: the investigator is actively listening to their stories and showing deep interest in their lives (Eide and Kahn 2008; Liamputtong 2007). Participants have someone to talk to when otherwise their thoughts and emotions may have been ignored or suppressed, and the confidential nature of the interaction may allow them to open up more about sensitive topics that they normally would not disclose (Liamputtong 2007). Participants may come to eagerly await the visit of
qualitative researchers to speak openly and honestly about their lives and feel supported and affirmed (Eide and Kahn 2008; Jewkes et al. 2005).

Yet, qualitative researchers are typically not trained counselors and although the interaction may be therapeutic, they are not therapists. Complicated interpersonal relationships emerge as researchers walk the delicate line between maintaining healthy professional boundaries and being compassionate listeners and confidants. These dynamics are compounded when mental health problems are underdiagnosed and mental health services are not accessible to the participants, particularly those in resource-poor populations (Bashir 2018; Swartz 2011). Investigators are rarely trained in how to identify and manage distress, end difficult conversations, make appropriate referrals, and manage their own feelings—guilt, sadness, powerlessness, worry—that might come in response to the interaction (Bashir 2018; Dickson-Swift et al. 2008; Lee-Treweek and Linkogle 2000). The solution is not to simply exclude at-risk groups from the research agenda because, in the words of Janice Morse (2000), “they are often the most disenfranchised members of society and most in need of understanding” (545). Ethnographers’ commitment to work with those who have been historically-marginalized and/or exploited may lead to increased attention to discrimination and social and policy change; however, this work requires rigorous training and support to help researchers tread the delicate line between professionalism and care without causing more harm than good to the participants. It is the competencies and ethical awareness of qualitative researchers that mitigate harm in research encounters and are critical in yielding benefits from the project for the participants, investigator, and society (Corbin and Morse 2003; Dickson-Swift et al. 2008; Liamputtong 2007; O’Connor and O’Neill 2004).

Disciplinary Training for Vulnerable Research

There has been a significant evolution in disciplinary education for qualitative researchers over the last century, especially in the ways in which investigators are trained to work with disempowered populations. Although traditional “realist” ethnographies in the first half of the twentieth century presented researchers as value-neutral observers whose work was no different ethically or epistemologically than those in physical sciences studying geese, the influx of feminist and other forms of critical1 and postmodern research in the 1980s brought the sociocultural, emotional, and ethical elements of the qualitative research to centerstage (Erickson 2017; May and Pattillo-McCoy 2000; Ward Gailey 2015). Within the critical and postmodern paradigms, ethnographers were no longer seen as or encouraged to be objective and detached authorities whose own emotions, life histories, and identity
characteristics did not impact the research process. Postmodern approaches challenged the positivist assumption that an accurate representation of the “Other” or reality was possible given the influence of researchers’ subjectivities on how data is recorded, analyzed, and presented; instead, postmodern ethnographers practiced reflexivity to see the ways they are “part and parcel of the setting, context, and culture they are trying to understand and represent” (Altheide and Johnson 1994, 486; May and Pattillo-McCoy 2000, 84). Critical researchers expanded this epistemology into the ethical realm to urge researchers’ to examine their relationships to structures and dynamics of injustice, both within the ethnographic process and their larger social positioning (Charmaz et al. 2017; Haney 1996; Kincheloe et al. 2017). There was attention to the power dynamics inherent to the researcher/“subject” relationship, and the ways in which the representation of these “subjects” in published work often maintained power in traditional locations (Cannella and Lincoln 2017). Critical scholars rejected traditional understandings of ethics that were based on universal and standardized methodological guidelines in favor of “radical ethics,” which were actively negotiated through reflexivity and collaboration during the entire research endeavor (Cannella and Lincoln 2017, 172–73; Denzin and Giardina 2016; Denzin and Lincoln 2017b; Fluehr-Lobban 2015; Lincoln and Guba 1989).

Critical and postmodern qualitative inquiry have largely shaped the methodologies and epistemologies that have been used to train those who work with disempowered populations (Fontana 2001; Liamputtong 2007). Areas of focus include attention to the power dynamics in the research relationship, the role of emotions in the investigative process, (re)negotiating ethics throughout the project, and the use of innovative methodologies and representations that center on participants’ experiences (Bashir 2018; Fontana 2001; Liamputtong 2007; Shaw et al. 2020; Swartz 2011). Across the board there has been a call for extensive preparation for investigators that prepares them to not only avoid causing immediate emotional or physical harm to already at-risk participants, but also to avoid practices that may perpetuate the stigmatization of marginalized groups (Flaskerud and Winslow 1998; Liamputtong 2007; Paradis 2000; Pyett 2001).

Specific strategies and skills put forth for investigators working with vulnerable populations include establishing clear professional boundaries (Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Eide and Kahn 2008; Mounce 2018); engaging in open and often communication around informed consent and (limits of) confidentiality (France et al. 1999; Melrose 2002); holding debriefs with participants after interactions and providing referrals to culturally competent mental health services (Alty and Rodham 1998; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Paradis 2000); establishing protocols for calling and meeting with
participants that mitigate risks to physical safety (Dunlap et al. 1990; Hess 2006; Langford 2000; Lee 1995); and mobilizing reflexivity as a tool to assess power dynamics in the research relationship and the researchers’ own positionings in relations to systems of injustice (Clarke 2006; Haney 1996; Hölscher and Bozalek 2012; Mounce 2018). There has also been significant discussion about how the investigators themselves face physical and emotional risks in exposure to distressing stories and dangerous situations, and how they can maintain their well-being through supervision and self-care practices (Bashir 2018; Campbell 2002; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, 2008; Hubbard et al. 2001; Jamieson 2000; Lee 1995; Liamputtong 2007; Melrose 2002; Mounce 2018). Leading scholars have advocated for the development of standards and competencies in the subfield and urged departments and universities to develop formal support guidelines and programs to better support “vulnerable researchers” (Dickson-Swift et al. 2008; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Kitson et al. 1996; Klostermann et al. 2020; Liamputtong 2007, 90; Stoler 2002).

Remaining Challenges in Training

There now exists an abundance of material on practical ethnographic skills and methodological approaches that can be used in the training (and retraining) of ethnographers who plan to work with populations with limited agency (see, for example, Denzin and Lincoln 2017c; Liamputtong 2007). Yet, many educators remain concerned with how to support emerging researchers in translating and applying recommendations or insights from theory into practice (Dickson-Swift et al. 2006), as well as with supporting students in grappling with the complicated dynamics and interpersonal relationships that emerge once one enters into longer term or more immersive ethnographies. Within the context of neoliberalism, managerialism, and audit culture in universities there is a pressure to learn and conduct fieldwork more efficiently in order to meet university defined metrics and benchmarks of productivity and disincentives to explore innovative methodologies because they are often deemed as less “scientific” (and therefore less worthy of investment and funding) (Denzin and Lincoln 2017b; Morse 2020; Spooner 2017; Torre et al. 2017). These dynamics lead to conditions where ethnographers are regularly thrust out into the field with the hope that they will figure it out on their own as they navigate the trials and tribulations of fieldwork, relying on “vague” methodological orientations, their own character and “ethnographic game-ness” (Goffman 1967; Schmid 2021, 35; Van Maanen 2011). In studies with at-risk participants, researchers can be left, “feeling methodologically vulnerable, verging on the distressingly incapable, because of emotional and
anxiety challenges, and thus ill-equipped to deal with some of the issues that may arise in this context” (Melrose 2002, 338).

In light of contemporary context in which researchers are entering in the field and in an effort to build upon existing training innovations, I developed six competencies for qualitative researchers working with vulnerable populations and an Action-reflection course to teach and assess these competences. The competences engage with themes and questions that have been integral to qualitative methodology, particularly in postmodern and critical inquiry, for quite some time. They link existing methodological approaches to working with disempowered populations, sociology, and psychology to specific skills and practices that can be identified, developed, and assessed in the classroom. Beyond being a place for learning and reading about ethnography in a theoretical sense, the classroom may be a space for practicing, reflecting on, and assessing the application of styles of inquiry with peers. Although ethnographers may be able to independently hone their skills over time to competently work with at-risk groups, a course creates the space for collaboration, peer problem-solving, and exponential growth. Traveling through the trials and tribulations of ethnographic research alongside a group of peers and mentors creates a mutually sustaining and supportive community and provides the opportunity for real-time development, reflections, and methodological adaptation during the research period.

Reflections on Ethical and Interpersonal Dilemmas in the Field

In what follows, I elaborate on my experience conducting ethnographic research, which underscored the need for competency training. I became aware of the specific challenges that emerge in research with populations with cumulative vulnerabilities during my three-year ethnography on the experiences of cadet candidates at the United States Military Academy Preparatory School in West Point. My research investigated identity (re)formation in institutional settings where individuals have limited control over their bodies. I examined how the preparatory school worked to (re)socialize the cadet candidates into future officers, and how the cadet candidates, whose civilian identities were constrained by a regimented institutional context, refashioned personal self-definitions and routines. Although all incoming cadet candidates underwent the (re)socialization processes, my study examined how experiences varied along gender, racial, ethnic, class, sexuality, and religious lines.

My ethnographic strategy involved spending time with the cadet candidates and becoming “close to them while they [were] responding to what life does to them” and making life happen (Goffman 1989). I joined them in
everything from precalculus class, to marching eight miles with thirty-five pounds on our backs, to responding to casualties in battle drills. I listened to their daily stories and used my own observations and embodied experiences to ask questions during our interviews. Overtime, the cadet candidates in my squad, platoon, and company came to trust me and would often come to me for advice and guidance. They were undergoing their first year of socialization into the military on top of college-level courses, and as such, they were physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually taxed. Participants who were Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and women expressed being particularly strained as they navigated the largely white, male system of authority and standards. Many candidates were experiencing heightened and cumulative vulnerabilities across all four of the physical, psychological, spiritual and structural spheres. I was happy to listen when my participants came to talk to me, but when they brought up sensitive issues, particularly around depression, anxiety, or relationship issues, I would remind them that I was not a therapist and that they could utilize the military psychological services division or the chaplaincy corps. Yet, the majority of the time they were not interested in going to mental health services because they thought seeking out mental health care would negatively impact their career trajectories in the military even if the sessions were confidential.

When new soldiers came to me with their problems, I felt a dearth of training to deal with these situations. I was well-versed in the importance of reflexivity in the research process and held a commitment to a close attention to power dynamics both within my research relationships and the research site, but I felt at a loss about how to navigate the interpersonal relationships that were emerging in the field as participants gravitated towards me as a source of comfort in an otherwise extremely uncomfortable setting. I had entered into the field with a “feminist curiosity,” committed to questioning the dynamics between men and women and other dyads of the powerful and the powerless that are perceived as normal in the military setting, but I did not know how address the emotions of my participants who came to me expressing feelings of powerlessness at home or within the institution (Enloe 2015; Hunt and Rygiel 2006). I was sensitive to how my gender identity affected my research and aimed to use my own position as a woman in the space to derive new explanations of militarism from women’s and other historically marginalized groups’ perspectives, but I was uncertain if and how to comfort those who were coming to terms with the implications of their own gender, ethnic, racial, religious, class, and sexual identities in the setting. I was attentive to the power relations implied by my positionality: an unthreatening (cis-gendered woman, white, and friendly) civilian researcher with permission from military authorities to enter the unit, but was unprepared for how these
same characteristics would make me appear to many participants as a sisterly or motherly figure. I was also uncomfortable with how and when to use my positional privilege to advocate on behalf of my participants to the institutional authorities and when it was necessary to take additional steps to secure their well-being. I knew relationships were integral to the research process and had no difficulty building rapport, but was not adequately prepared to build healthy boundaries and avoid emotional enmeshment. Moreover, I was away from friends and loved ones completely immersed in an all-encompassing field site. Although I had read articles on emotions in the field, I was taken-aback by the impact of this isolation on my mental health and had no self-care techniques ready at my disposal. Other researchers have also noted feeling that despite their introduction to guidelines during methodological training, they were lacking practical preparation on how to navigate interpersonal relations and the emotional consequences of events in the field (Hedican 2006; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Schmid 2021). “Learning and applying a kit bag of research techniques” was an entirely different matter than engaging with the ethical and methodological challenges that emerge unexpectedly during the research period (Hedican 2006, 20–21). Although I had felt secure improvising in past ethnographic research experiences, I soon realized that working with a population with limited agency that was embedded in an all-encompassing institution required an additional set of specific skills.

After the fieldwork, I began two years of training for certification in clinical pastoral education and psychotherapy, not for the purpose of being a therapist to my research participants but rather to have skills to better navigate these situations with disempowered populations in the future. Indeed, David Owens (1996) recommended that qualitative researchers gain at least some understanding and basic training in counseling skills to be better equipped to professionally deal with participants’ emotions and requests for help, and perhaps most importantly, “ensure that well-intentioned but essentially amateur and ill-considered ‘counselling’ does not take place” (65). During my training, I saw the connection between the competencies in clinical pastoral education and the skills already advocated for in justice-informed qualitative inquiry, as well as, those I had tried to apply ad hoc in my own research. This experience led me to develop the six competencies for trauma and justice-informed ethnography and Action-reflection course design outlined below.

**Competencies for Trauma and Justice-Informed Ethnography**

As I will elaborate in this section, the six competencies for trauma and justice-informed ethnography include the following: (a) self-awareness; (b)
participant-centered approach; (c) recognition of social location; (d) attention to trauma; (e) knowledge of professional limits; and (f) effective boundaries and self-care.

**Competency One—Self-Awareness**

Before entering into a research situation, it is imperative that investigators uncover their own assumptions, biases, and thoughts about qualitative research, their research site, and the research population (Charmaz et al. 2017; Hölscher and Bozalek 2012; Kincheloe et al. 2017). The goal is to reveal the hidden dynamics that may be motivating investigators to undertake a particular line of research. Not only will understanding how a researcher relates to the research be beneficial for unveiling the assumptions and expectations placed upon the research participants, but it also allows for deep reflexivity for the investigator throughout the research process, which supports with generating ethical scholarship (Avisahi et al. 2012; Cherry et al. 2011; Clarke 2006; Ezzell 2013; Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Hamilton 2020; Rice et al. 2019; Wheatley 2005). Reflexivity allows the researcher to pay close attention to how power dynamics evolve and are in flux during ethnography and the moments that may undermine (and foster) attempts to produce more democratic knowledge (Haney 1996).

Self-Awareness training can also help the investigator pay attention to transference and countertransference. When investigators are in the field for intensive or long periods of time, it is common for relationships to develop between the investigator and participants. Transference refers to the process of the participant putting emotions on the investigator based on previous relationships in their lives (Gehart 2012). For disempowered individuals, the researcher may come to represent a stable authority figure, or someone who is there to hear their stories that have otherwise been repressed. For example, some of my squadmates started calling me mom, revealing that in their eyes my maturity and place within the institution system was one of caregiver and parent (and perhaps, authority). Countertransference is the mirror process: the investigator comes to put emotions on the participants based on prior experiences in their own lives (Gehart 2012). For me this occurred, when participants would give me a hard time if I had to leave for a few days to attend to other personal or professional matters. When I was deeply embedded in the field, I felt guilty for “abandoning” them or not contributing enough to the team, dynamics from my own childhood experiences. Transference and countertransference are normal dynamics in human relationships and are not in and of themselves harmful; however, when they go unattended to and unnoticed, investigators
run the risk of causing significant emotional harm to the participants and themselves (Gehart 2012; Gelman 2004).

Through self-awareness training, ethnographers will be able to gain an understanding of how they relate to their research site and participants on a deeper level. Once they know where they stand in relation to the community, it will be easier to identify the participants’ experiences and stories without the coloring of the investigators’ projections. It is impossible to fully remove any bias or projection, but the more investigators learn to pay attention to their inner emotions and thoughts, the better they will be able to separate them out from the participants themselves and avoid reproducing the “objectifying and imperialist gaze” associated with traditional Western qualitative methods (Kincheloe et al. 2017, 440; Kovach 2017; Monzó 2013; Monzo 2015).

**Competency Two—Participant-Centered Approach**

Developing self-awareness, sets the stage for what I call a participant-centered approach, which is modeled from Carl Roger’s concept of client-centered therapy (Rogers 1965). In client-centered therapy, the therapist allows the client to direct the conversation, trusting that they have the skills and knowledge to solve their own problems. Integral to the process is unconditional positive regard—regardless of what the client says or does, the therapist shows affirmation (Rogers 1965). These ideas can be translated into an approach to research: the investigator trusts that participants have the skills and ability to tell their own stories. This does not mean that an investigator cannot come to encounters with a research question or an interview guide; rather, it is an approach of openness and value towards the research participants as full individuals who own their stories (Aldridge 2014; Corbin and Morse 2003; Rice et al. 2019; Strier 2007; Swartz 2011; Yarbrough 2020).

In my own research, I used an interview guide that included themes that I hoped to touch on during interviews, but I always started the sessions by asking the cadet candidates to speak about whatever was on their minds. I allowed them to direct the pace and flow of the conversation, leading to interviews that would last between one and eight hours (split over several sessions during the year). Outside of interviews, participants would often tell me, “Taylor, write this down” or “Taylor, you have to put this in the book” when they encountered a particular dilemma or had something happen that they wanted to make sure I took into account. They would also direct me towards other cadet candidates they thought I needed to speak with in order to understand another dimension of the (re)socialization process. Just as they eagerly shared with me their own thoughts about the project, I shared with them my
initial ideas, theories, and findings for us to discuss and debate. They were my first critics and first audience to see if I had accurately captured their stories in my writing and choose their own pseudonyms for the book.

Within a participant-centered approach, the ethnographer works as a midwife, rather than the extractor, helping to birth the stories into the world. A participant-centered approach is often more collaborative and may invite those taking part into discussions about the larger theoretical themes or ask for their feedback on theories (Aldridge 2014; Strier 2007; Yarbrough 2020). It empowers partakers to be partners in the generation of knowledge that is based on their lives. In community-based ethnographies, an investigator may collaborate directly with the interlocutors, asking them which research questions are the most essential for the community to answer, and invite co-collaborators to be co-authors on publications (Schensul et al. 2015; Torre et al. 2017). Participant-centered research pays close attention to the power dynamics between the investigator and the observed and aims to recognize and minimize exploitation through the elevation and affirmation of the participant.

**Competency Three—Recognition of Social Location**

Qualitative research contains deeply embedded power dynamics (Belur 2014; Gailey 2011; Guevarra 2006; Hamilton 2020; Huckaby 2011; Koivunen 2010; Muhammad et al. 2015; Perera 2021[2020]; Vähäsantanen and Saarinen 2013). When working with vulnerable populations, these dynamics become particularly acute. Investigators often hold the power and authority in research situations: they are entering into the interactions with university endorsement, stable employment, disposable income, and significant social capital (at least from the perspective of most participants). Although the power dynamics between the investigator and those participating will vary depending on both of their social locations and identity characteristics, the research agenda and interactions are ultimately organized for the benefit of the investigator (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2005). The investigator usually holds the power to ask the questions, whereas the participant is the one who answers the questions. Investigators are taking the stories and molding them into future scholarship that will aid their personal careers, whereas the participant typically gains no long term benefit from the relationship.\(^\text{10}\)

It is critical that investigators attend to the dynamics of their own social location both in terms of the research interaction and their overall place within the social system (Charmaz et al. 2017; Hamilton 2020; O’Connor and O’Neill 2004; Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002; Rice et al. 2019; Strier 2007; Swartz 2011). These dynamics may be in flux throughout the ethnography as certain aspects of researchers’ intersectional identities become salient in
various situations and with different research participants (Haney 1996; May and Pattillo-McCoy 2000). In my case, this meant considering how my identity as a white, cisgendered, civilian woman coming from an Ivy League institution shaped my interactions with the cadet candidates. Nicknames, such as, “CC [cadet candidate] PhD,” “Princeton,” and “mom,” snarky comments like “must be nice that you can leave whenever you want” (even though I rarely left), and a “no offense, Taylor” after a participant spoke negatively about “white people” brought these dynamics to the surface. I may not have been a military or academic authority in the institution but my identity characteristics afforded me significant status and situational power in the relationships. I spoke to the candidates often about my sources of funding, confidentiality, and their interpretation of my place within the system. Although investigators may feel that they come from a disadvantaged social location within the tapestry of society or as compared to the participants, they often hold authorial positions within the research relationships they enter into, particularly when working with individuals who have limited agency.

Research that is justice-informed pays attention to the interactions between investigators and participants in order to ensure they are not reproducing exploitative patterns of behavior that exist in larger society (Charmaz et al. 2017; Hölscher and Bozalek 2012; O’Connor and O’Neill 2004; Rice et al. 2019; Strier 2007). For example, Maggie O’Neill (1996) posited that investigators who do not consider the moral ramifications of working with marginalized populations (in her case sex workers) may be perceived as pimps: “[c]oming into the field to take, then returning to the campus, institution, or suburb where they write up the data, publish and build careers—on the backs of those they took data from” (O’Neil 1996, 132). Researchers need to consider if and how the use of participants’ time may negatively impact other obligations or paid employment, the costs associated with participation (parking, transportation), and appropriate compensation for participants’ time and contribution to the project (Liamputtong 2007; O’Neil 1996; Paradis 2000). Beyond avoiding exploitative labor practices, investigators must ask themselves if they are making space for the voices of those who are often silenced or suppressed to be heard and amplified in their work, and whether research questions and publications are perpetuating stigmatization that will make the research population more at-risk in the future or, alternatively, leading to conditions for its empowerment (Liamputtong 2007; O’Neil 1996; Paradis 2000; Pyett 2001).

Competency Four—Attention to Trauma

When working with disempowered individuals, it is common that they may currently be experiencing trauma or have had past trauma. Trauma occurs
when individuals are under overwhelming amounts of stress that exceed their ability to cope with or integrate the emotions that are part of the experience (Schupp 2015[2004]). In response to trauma, the mind and body often suppress emotions. Trauma can result from a particular event or as response to prolonged exposure to racism or other forms of structural discrimination, and may be transmitted between generations (DeAngelis 2019). The imprints of trauma remain on individuals’ minds, brains, and bodies and have ongoing consequences for behavior and survival (van der Kolk 2014). Interactions in the research process that trigger a trauma response can occur in formal interview settings or just in everyday interactions between ethnographers and participants.

When ethnographers enter into the research relationship and begin to ask questions about current and past situations, they need to be attentive to whether they may be triggering a traumatic memory or event that may retraumatize the participant (Clarke 2006; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007; Dolan 1991, 2000; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Keyel 2021[2020]; Melrose 2002; O’Hanlon and Bertolino 2002; Sanjari et al. 2014; Schupp 2015[2004]). For example, when conversations about the military’s sexual harassment and assault prevention program would come up with my participants after institutional training or during interviews, I was extremely cautious in my responses and follow-up questions. I followed their lead in the conversations and watched carefully for signs of distress because I was aware that a few had experienced harassment or assault inside or outside of the military setting and there were likely others who had this experience who had not disclosed it to me. Trauma-informed research includes carefully thinking about the phrasing of questions, the order in which to ask questions, and attention to the participants’ verbal and nonverbal cues. It means holding participants’ emotional well-being above the extraction of information or generation of scholarship.

**Competency Five—Knowledge of Professional Limits**

Building from competencies one through four, it is critical that an investigator assesses their professional abilities and recognizes when a certain situation exceeds their role or skills. As highlighted earlier, researchers are not mental health professionals. When a participant is exhibiting signs of distress or dangerous behavior, it is essential that (a) the investigator is able to recognize those signs of stress, (b) consult with a supervisor, and (c) make a referral (Bahn and Weatherill 2013; Eide and Kahn 2008; Sanjari et al. 2014; Strier 2007; Vanderstaay 2005). It is helpful before the research interactions to prepare lists of culturally competent mental health organizations, information centers, and support groups to which participants may be referred if
necessary (Abboud and Liamputtong 2003; Cutcliffe and Ramcharan 2002). At the same time, researchers may need to consider how certain referrals might be perceived as a way to extend surveillance on those who are already institutionalized.

I regularly recommended to my participants that they seek additional support from on-post counseling services and the chaplaincy corps when they came to me with their problems. I emphasized that speaking with a military chaplain was completely confidential, as chaplains are the one unit in the military without mandatory disclosure. Although they were still hesitant to utilize these services for fear it could jeopardize admission to West Point, in the few cases where I was most concerned about candidates, they did end up receiving additional care (often because another candidate noticed they were in distress and reported them to the chain of command who forced them to get support). I was fortunate to never have a participant in acute crisis where I worried about harm to self or others. It is useful for senior researchers to also receive training on how to help junior ethnographers navigate these delicate situations and how to make proper referrals. Although investigators cannot force a research participant to go seek professional mental health support, they can make key decisions that allow them to avoid exacerbating the situation.

**Competency Six—Boundaries and Self-Care**

Ethnography can be extremely demanding on investigators physically and emotionally (Bashir 2018; Bergman Blix and Wettergren 2015; Campbell 2002; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, 2008; Fincham 2008; Hedican 2006; Keyel 2021[2020]; Kiyimba and O’Reilly 2016; Melrose 2002; Vanderstaay 2005). Investigators are often isolated from their professional and personal communities for long periods of time. Participant observers are behaving as part of communities in which they are not authentic members and spending significant time with individuals who by definition are research participants, not friends. Or they may be working in their own communities and navigating the difficult insider dynamics of conducting research on those who are their friends and acquaintances in their personal lives (Guevarra 2006; Nelson 2020; Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014; Taylor 2011). Ethnographers are often the keepers of sensitive and sometimes traumatic stories, and may witness firsthand traumatic or emotionally distressing events (Bahn and Weatherill 2013; Campbell 2002; Hedican 2006; Pieke 1995; Vanderstaay 2005). Moreover, their physical safety and health may be in jeopardy when they enter into the homes of strangers, frequent dangerous settings, or participate in high-risk activities (Bashir 2018; Koonings et al. 2019; Lee 1995;
Parker and O’Reilly 2013; Williams et al. 1992). In many ways, ethnographers themselves meet the criteria for those experiencing cumulative vulnerabilities. During my own research, I experienced isolation as I was far from loved ones for extended periods at a time and suffered from physical injuries due to training accidents. I also felt role confusion—even though I was dressing, speaking, and moving like a soldier for long periods of time, I was not a soldier and would not become one.

Clear boundaries are an essential piece of mitigating the physical and emotional risks associated with ethnography and maintaining a healthy research relationship between researchers and participants (Dickson-Swift et al. 2006). When research relationship boundaries are crossed, for instance because the ethnographer is lonely or the research participant is interested in a deeper relationship, such a breach can be harmful for the investigator, the participant, and the overall research endeavor. In order to keep the investigators and participants safe, it is critical that researchers are competent in creating and maintaining professional boundaries (Batty 2020; Dickson-Swift et al. 2006; Eide and Kahn 2008; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009; Owton and Allen-Collinson 2014; Tinney 2008; Watts 2008). These boundaries can include physical limits on where a researcher will meet with participants (i.e., keeping an office door cracked, or being aware of increased risk in certain private locations) and symbolic borders such as imagining an emotional wall erected to ensure the investigator is not taking on participants’ emotional states. Boundaries serve to clarify the professional relationship between the investigator and participant and to reduce risks of vicarious trauma after hearing disturbing stories (Bergman Blix and Wettergren 2015; Connolly and Reilly 2007; Johnson and Clarke 2003; Keyel 2021[2020]; Kiyimba and O’Reilly 2016; Nelson 2020; Shaw et al. 2020). Furthermore, maintaining boundaries between their personal and professional lives can help investigators avoid burnout and emotional enmeshment with participants. It is important that ethnographers cultivate community and social lives outside of the field site to fill their needs for friendship and support, and engage in personal self-care routines to keep them physically, emotionally, and spiritually nourished and rejuvenated (Bahn and Weatherill 2013; Batty 2020; Carroll 2012; Dickson-Swift et al. 2008; Fincham 2008; Nelson 2020). Supervisors and a community of peers to problem-solve and debrief alongside are also major sources of support (Dickson-Swift et al. 2008).

Teaching and Developing Competencies

Having identified six core competencies, I will now detail how an Action-reflection style learning course could support novice and seasoned
ethnographers in learning and developing these skills (Bolton 2010; Hilsman 2018; Loughran 2002; McBrien 2007; O’Leary et al. 2017; Reynolds 2011; Schön 1983). In the Action-reflection model, qualitative investigators share their personal life experiences as related to the research site and carefully unpack salient moments from their fieldwork with the group. The model is in line with experts’ call for increased supervision and peer groups to create formal support for researchers working with disempowered populations (Liamputtong 2007). Ideally, the course will begin around the same time as the participants enter into a new field site to allow for the “action” to occur alongside the “reflection,” as well as, give some time for collective problem-solving and (re)orientation in the first weeks of data collection. However, it is also possible for participants to continue in a field site where they have been immersed for quite some time or, if they do not yet have a field site, to conduct short informal research projects as one might do in an undergraduate ethnography class. Given that research locations may be geographically distant or isolated, the sessions may be conducted in person, online, or as a hybrid model.

The course includes three major elements: didactics, case studies, and interpersonal relations. Didactics are lectures and discussions on approaches to fieldwork and each competency in order to enrich the investigators’ conceptual frameworks of what trauma and justice-informed fieldwork looks like in theory. For more experienced ethnographers, some of this material may be review but it can be useful to revisit methodological theories after significant time in the field and allow for (re)training in light of methodological innovations, social changes, and developments in best practices for working with at-risk populations. Supervisors may invite investigators who are more seasoned to share with the class their own experiences with each theme to enrich the conversation and provide more context for novice ethnographers. As a supplement to didactics, supervisors may assign readings from qualitative methodology handbooks on practical skills for working with disempowered populations (e.g., access, rapport, interviews), as well as, larger questions of reflexivity, power dynamics in the field, and social justice oriented inquiry (for resources, see Denzin and Lincoln 2017c; Liamputtong 2007).

In case studies, investigators present to the class an encounter from the field as close to verbatim as possible—either an interview transcript or a thick description of a moment. The description should include the investigators’ internal dialogue and emotions during the interaction and any nonverbal body language. The case study encounter may be one when they were actively engaged in data collection (e.g., interviews, active participant observation) or a more “accidental ethnography” where they discovered something important about the field site, a participant, or themselves spontaneously (Fujii 2015;
Pieke 1995). The course emphasizes paying close attention to these accidental and in-between moments because they often reveal a great deal about the relationship between the investigator and the participants and may lead to novel insights about the research process and oneself as an ethnographer (Fujii 2015; Pieke 1995).

During case studies, investigators typically try to explicitly link verbal or nonverbal moments from the encounter to particular competencies in order to demonstrate their growth to the group. Colleagues and supervisors ask follow-up questions and then provide feedback on the case study, reflecting on the presented interaction in terms of the six competencies. Alternatively, case studies are a time to share moments when investigators felt that they slipped up or failed as ethnographers. An Action-reflection style embraces the sentiment that “failure does not have to be understood necessarily as the end of knowledge; it can also be considered as an experiential process integral to learning” (Martínez 2019, 2). Making mistakes provides the opportunity for reflection, self-assessment, and recalibration—indeed, failures or near-failures may be more important for learning than success (Jemielniak and Kostera 2010; Martínez 2019; Smith and Delamont 2019). During case studies, investigators might share what they think may have led to their mistake, their feelings about the event (frustration, disappointment, guilt, shame, questioning of professional identity), what they might do differently next time, and gain feedback and further insights from the rest of the class. Speaking about these negative moments and emotions with trusted peers and supervisors can help investigators integrate them directly into the ethnographic endeavor as a part of data collection and theory-building and allow the investigators to process the emotions in real-time so they do not negatively impact mental health (Cain 2012; Carroll 2012; Gilbert 2001; Hedican 2006; Hubbard et al. 2001; McQueeney and Lavelle 2017; Mounce 2018; Stodulka 2015; Watts 2008). Bringing failure centerstage also encourages ethnographers to slow down (rejecting the “accelerated academy” in audit culture), fine tune their skills, and build resilience and adaptability in the face of research obstacles and disappointments (Martínez 2019; Smith and Delamont 2019, 12).

The third component of the course is interpersonal relations time to allow peers to continue to push each other to reflect, take action, and reflect again. During interpersonal relations, investigators may further discuss themes that came up during didactics and case studies, or share additional stories, dilemmas, self-care strategies, and gain feedback from their peers. Peers may also challenge and critique one another’s approaches and encourage each other to dig deeper to discover underlying dynamics affecting the research process. It is a time for radical honesty as peers become committed to each other’s growth and development as trauma and justice-informed ethnographers.
Course supervisors act more as facilitators of inquiry than “truth providers” during this time and take a step back to encourage the students to learn from each other and the wisdom of the group (Kincheloe et al. 2017, 425). The diversity of experience within the class allows for peer mentorship and a more collaborative than hierarchical learning model. Supervisors may still meet periodically with investigators one-on-one to have detailed check-ins and debriefs about their specific fieldwork experiences and challenges.

Action-reflection training is an iterative process, and when possible, investigators may benefit from taking the course more than once in order to continue to process and develop their competencies and share their new insights with novice students. More experienced ethnographers take on leadership roles in the course, refining not only their own competencies as researchers but also gaining some experience as mentors. Supervisors may choose to allow investigators to enroll in basic or advanced levels of the course, if needed to adhere to the growth model of universities to show continuous progress. Departments may also choose to grant special certificates to ethnographers who successfully complete advanced levels. Placement in basic, advanced, or “certification” will depend on assessment of the six competencies.

Assessing Competencies

Assessment of competency proficiency can occur through the analysis of case studies, written assignments, and interviews with students. The following are example assessment questions and the specific content a supervisor might look for in response to demonstrate proficiency in certain competencies:

(1) What brought you to study this particular social group?
   1. Acknowledgment of the dynamics in their personal history that may have led them to study this particular group (Competency One).
   2. Demonstrates ability for reflexivity in the research process (Competency One).

(2) What is your style and orientation to ethnography?
   1. Shows groundedness in professional identity and approach to research (Competency One and Two).
   2. Demonstrates knowledge of the benefits and constraints of various epistemological and methodological approaches (Competencies One and Two).
   3. Verbalizes a participant-centered approach to research, with an attention to potential for exploitation in the relationship (Competencies Two and Three).
(3) When was a time when you worked with research participants who held different social locations than you? How did you navigate power dynamics in your relationships with them? If you have not had this experience, how would you identify your own and participants’ social location in future research endeavors and how do you imagine yourself navigating the power dynamics of the investigator-participant relationship?

1. Demonstrates knowledge of one’s own social location and power and how these might impact relationships with participants (Competency Three).
2. Shows awareness of participants’ social locations and how this may influence the research relationship (Competency Three).
3. Demonstrates knowledge of power dynamics (explicit and implicit) on interpersonal, community, and institutional levels and how those impact investigator-participant relationships (Competency Three).
4. Shows commitment to learning more about social inequality and diverse social groups to improve cultural humility (Competency Three).
5. Uses research as a tool for justice not for further oppression or exploitation (Competency Three).

(4) How are you working to ensure your participants’ emotional safety during research and interviews? How might you recognize if a participant is having an adverse emotional reaction to a line of questioning or encounter?

1. Acknowledges that research has the potential to trigger current and past trauma (Competency Four).
2. Demonstrates familiarity with steps an investigator can take to reduce potential for retraumatization in the interaction (Competency Four).
3. Demonstrates familiarity with verbal and nonverbal signals that a participant may be in crisis or entering a conversation that may be psychologically damaging (Competency Four).
4. Shows commitment to fostering an emotionally and physically safe environment during research (Competencies Four and Five).

(5) When is a time when you realized you needed to consult with a supervisor in a research situation or make a referral to a mental health professional? How did you determine your course of action given your limits? If you have not had this experience, please detail how you would know when it would be appropriate for consultation or referral.
1. Demonstrates knowledge of personal and professional limits as a researcher (Competency Five).
2. Verbalizes ability to reach out for consultation and make referrals to professional mental health services when necessary (Competency Five).
3. Shows ability to discern emotional distress and crisis behavior (Competency Four and Five).
4. Emphasizes that participant physical and emotional safety is paramount in the research endeavor (Competencies Four and Five).

(6) What is your relationship with your research participants?
1. Verbalizes importance of boundaries between an investigator and participant (Competency Six).
2. Acknowledges the risks associated with transference and countertransference (Competency One).
3. Details techniques used to maintain healthy boundaries between an investigator and participant (Competency Six).

(7) What are your self-care practices in the field that help maintain your own well-being and safety?
1. Acknowledges the importance of taking care of oneself physically, emotionally, and spiritually when undergoing long-term or intensive fieldwork (Competency Six).
2. Acknowledges that research can negatively impact the psychological health of the researcher (Competency Six).
3. Verbalizes self-care practices that limit potential for vicarious-trauma and burn out (Competency Six).
4. Acknowledges that research can have risks for the investigator’s physical safety and health (Competency Six).
5. Verbalizes practices that mitigate risk for injury or harm and promote physical safety in the field (Competency Six).

If supervisors would like to rate proficiency level, they could use the following scale: 1 = Novice (inexperienced and unable to demonstrate skills integral to the competency); 2 = Advancing Novice (limited experience but able to demonstrate skills with modeling and assistance); 3 = Intermediate (demonstrates skills with a basic level self-awareness and knowledge but still requires modeling and assistance); 4 = Advancing Intermediate (demonstrates skills with a moderate level of self-awareness and knowledge and no longer requires modeling and assistance); 5 = Competent (proficiently, consistently, and autonomously demonstrates skills with advanced self-awareness and knowledge); and 6 = Advanced (demonstrates intuition and adaptability in applying the skills in diverse and challenging settings and takes on leadership roles in
helping others develop their self-awareness and knowledge). Supervisors may also ask the investigators to rate themselves on the six competencies and then compare self and supervisory assessments during one-on-one supervisory sessions as an opportunity for generative conversations about areas for growth. Of course, interpersonal skills cannot be perfectly quantified but a ratings scale can provide helpful benchmarks for competency development and illuminate where there is room for improvement.

Conclusions

Ethnography contains risks for research participants and investigators. When research participants are experiencing heightened and cumulative vulnerabilities—physically, psychologically, spiritually, and/or structurally—these risks are exacerbated. Although the evolution of ethnographic education over the past century has ushered in a focus on reflexivity and power-dynamics in the research process, ethnographers do not always enter the field with the proficiency to conduct trauma and justice-informed research that minimizes harm to both the participants and the investigator. This article weaves together insights from sociology and psychology in order to build specific competencies and a training model to support researchers working with disempowered groups.

The six competencies and Action-reflection course outlined in this article are designed to give ethnographers specific skills and strategies to pay close attention to how their personal histories, embodied states, and power dynamics shape the research endeavor. These ideas also foster the learning of skills for healthy boundary-keeping, risk assessment, and steps to minimize participant (re)traumatization. The development of the competencies (“reflection”) occurs concurrently with fieldwork (“action”), allowing for accelerated development and methodological adaptations in real-time. More than just reading and teaching about methodology in theory, the course asks investigators to practice, reflect on, and assess social justice styles of inquiry in their research encounters and as a group of peers. It invites investigators to discuss (and even celebrate) mistakes and failures and to see them as springboards for growth and reflection. Although the competencies and course are designed specifically for ethnographers working with at-risk populations, both are fruitful for any investigator looking to promote personal and participant safety during the research endeavor.

The competencies and approach to methodological education outlined in this article are radical in the context of neoliberalism, managerialism, and audit culture because they emphasize a slow and deliberate scholarship, in which one might have to change course-midway, rather than a race through the research to publish (Mountz et al. 2015; Spooner 2017). The “gold standard” of positivist and “one-size-fits-all” research is inverted into inquiry that
celebrates reflexivity and innovation, and values engaged and collaborative ethics above the extraction of knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln 2017a, 2017b, 1557; Erickson 2017; Wright 2006, 800). Investigators are encouraged to “contest these features of neoliberalism while learning how to be responsible methodologists and citizens, daring to tell the truth, and learning how to be social justice–minded inquirers who dare to resist” (Denzin and Lincoln 2017b, 1528; Kuntz 2015). Paradoxically, because the course includes explicit language of competencies and metrics for scoring, it likely will be allowed to exist—and perhaps even flourish—in the contemporary university because it mirrors language from disciplines deemed to be more “scientific” (i.e., medicine) and may be perceived to be more “auditable.”

Yet, any assumptions that these competencies are simply skills that ethnographers can check-off on a form to declare that they are proficient and thus, the work is done, are mistaken. Being a trauma and justice-informed researcher is an iterative process that continues throughout one’s career across multiple field sites as one learns more about oneself, the world, and how to best care for other human beings. One may be advanced or even a supervisor, but periodic (re)training is a way to meet contemporary standards and learn new insights into best practices for working with vulnerable populations. The journey to generate radically ethical scholarship is lifelong; however, the six competencies and training model detailed in this article give investigators a specific place to start to hone and refine their skills (and themselves). From there, they may choose to take the course again, venture off on their own, or perhaps even circle back one day to become supervisors in their own Action-reflection courses, advocating for more just and responsible qualitative research for the next generation of scholars.

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Notes
1. The roots and current manifestations of critical inquiry are found within (post) feminist theory, queer theories, disability studies, indigenous methodologies, critical race and ethnic theories, participatory action research, postcolonial critique, and other research that “attempts to create conditions for empowerment and social justice” (Alexander 2017; Denzin and Giardina 2016; Denzin and Lincoln 2017b; DeVault 2017; Donnor and LadsonBillings 2017; Kincheloe et al. 2017, 421; Kovach 2017; Olesen 2017; Torre et al. 2017; Ward Gailey 2015).
2. Neoliberalism is a socio-economic theory based on free market and competition-based governing regimes (Macfarlane 2019; Saunders 2007). The academy has reproduced and reflected the global neoliberal ethic through repositioning scholars as employees with students as their customers and the commodification of the educational “product” (Lucas 2006; Saunders 2007, 4; Spooner 2017).
3. As the university was ingrained with neoliberal values, it transitioned from a leadership model of self-governing peers to a hierarchical business model, which includes managerial oversight, (“managerialism”) (Brenneis et al. 2005; Spooner 2017, 1546).
4. Scholars are “audited” as their scholarship is measured against specific metrics and productivity benchmarks, including number of peer-reviewed articles, journal impact factor, and grant size (Spooner 2017). These constraints narrow possibilities for research design and publication, increase the speed at which scholarship must take place, and decentralize ethics (Gelmon et al. 2013; Lee et al. 2013; Martin 2016; Moutz et al. 2015; Spooner 2017).
5. The preparatory school is only a one-year program but my ethnographic fieldwork extended over three years in order to widen the pool of possible participants to protect anonymity, as well as, allow me to compare experiences between
cohorts. My first year was full time, my second year was part time, and the third year I took advantage of the “punctured revisited” to come into the field with fresh eyes and notice how the setting fluctuated over time (Burawoy 2003).

6. Each year, the United States Military Academy in West Point’s admissions committee selects approximately 240 applicants who show high potential but are not yet qualified for direct admission to the Academy, and offers them a place at the United States Military Academy Preparatory School in order to develop academically, physically, and militarily.

7. I conducted over one hundred interviews with the new soldiers and over thirty with military and civilian staff members.

8. They were physically at-risk due to physical requirements of basic training and military life—many my participants experienced severe injuries, several of which required hospitalization and surgery. They were psychologically exposed to intentionally high levels of stress and isolated from their home communities and support networks. For the majority of my participants, it was their first time away from their home religious communities. Additionally, they had to reconcile their spiritual beliefs with the potential obligation to take a life in combat. Women, religious minorities, queer, and BIPOC soldiers and those from lower-class backgrounds faced structural constraints and/or marginalization living within an environment was historically (and in some ways still is) controlled by white, Protestant, heterosexual, upper-middle class men.

9. This approach is distinct from Robert LeVine’s (2018[1982]) participant-centered ethnography, which is characterized as “anthropological attempts to develop experience near ways of describing and analyzing human behavior” (Levy and Hollan 2015[1998], 296).

10. These dynamics are shifted in community/participant action research and some applied work, particularly in studies where the participants become full collaborators and co-authors; however, it is still important to consider the power differentials in the relationship and how the benefits and risks of the project may vary between the investigator and participants (Schensul et al. 2015; Torre et al. 2017).

11. The course design presented in this article is deeply indebted to what I have learned from the Action-reflection model of Clinical Pastoral Education (see Hilsman 2018 for details on the structure and pedagogical underpinnings of Clinical Pastoral Education).

12. This scale is modeled on the Canadian Association of Spiritual Care’s Alberta Competency Assessment Scale, which is an adapted Dreyfus Scale (1980) developed by Zinia Pritchard, Phillip Behman, Margaret Clark, and Kathy Marshall-Spate (2018).

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