Guidelines and values for transformative research

Transformative inquiry....

1. aims at *social action* more than “pure” knowledge:
   - building community, promoting dialogue, reducing social distance, challenging
   “comforting myths,” empowering individuals and communities to solve problems, giving
   voice to marginalized people, promoting justice.

2. acknowledges that much knowledge is *subjective, constructed, and interrelational*:
   - our results are inevitably influenced by our biographies;
   - meaning is constructed, in part, through the interaction of subject and researcher;
   - both subject and researcher influence and are influenced by this process.

3. recognizes the *complex and limited* nature of our findings:
   - our “truths” are often ambiguous, paradoxical, partial, contextual (not easily
   generalizable), susceptible to multiple interpretations.

4. takes seriously the *power dynamics* inherent in all such inquiries.

5. respects subjects by promoting values such as these:
   - collaboration, participation, empowerment
   - accountability
   - confidentiality
   - acknowledgment of obligations to subjects
   - transparency of goals, methods, motives
   - benefits to subjects, including return of knowledge gained
   - opportunities for subjects to present themselves, in their own voice

6. defines the researcher’s role as *facilitator, collaborator, learner* more than neutral expert.

7. values *process* as much as product.

8. acknowledges *others’ realities* and is open to being affected personally by this interaction.

9. is attuned to the potential *harms and unintended consequences* for subjects and others.

10. aims at an appropriate *balance of subjectivity and objectivity*, avoiding co-optation by
    funders, clients, colleagues or subjects.

11. utilizes visual as well as verbal, non-linear as well as linear, methods of elicitation
    and presentation.

From Howard Zehr, “Us and Them: A Photographer Looks at Police Pictures:
377-385.*