# Trustworthiness
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

## Trustworthiness is

1. The extent to which one can have confidence in the study's findings

2. Parallel of reliability, validity, and objectivity in traditional "quantitative" research

## Trustworthiness Criteria

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|---|---|
| Credibility | Findings and interpretations are plausible to the "researched" (the participants)<br><br>Do findings accurately reflect reality as seen by participants? |
| Transferability | Applicability of findings based on comparability of contexts<br><br>Are conditions similar enough to make findings applicable? |
| Dependability | Account for factors of instability and change within the natural context<br><br>Document naturally occurring phenomena (stability and change) |
| Confirmability | Capacity to authenticate the internal coherence of data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations<br><br>Document "researcher as instrument" and potential sources of bias |

## Insuring Trustworthiness

| Action | Description | Insures |
|---|---|---|
| Prolonged engagement | Investing sufficient time to learn the culture, build trust with stakeholders, understand the scope of target phenomena, and test for misinformation/misinterpretation due to distortion by the researcher or informant | Credibility (internal validity) |
| Persistent observation | Continuing data collection process to permit identification and assessment of salient factors, and investigation in sufficient detail to separate relevant (typical) from irrelevant (atypical) | Credibility (internal validity) |
| Triangulation | Data collection and analysis interpretation based on multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories | Credibility (internal validity) |
| Peer debriefing | Engage in analytic discussions with neutral peer (e.g., colleague not involved in the project) | Credibility (internal validity) |
| Member checks | Test veracity of the data, analytic categories (e.g., codes), interpretations, and conclusions with stakeholders to ensure accurate representation of *emic* perspectives | Credibility (internal validity) |
| Thick description | Describe procedures, context, and participants in sufficient detail to permit judgment by others of the similarity to potential application sites; specify minimum elements necessary to "recreate" findings | Transferability (external validity) |
| Audit trail | Records that include raw data; documentation of process and products of data reduction, analysis, and synthesis; methodological process notes; reflexive notes; and instrument development/piloting techniques | Dependability Confirmability (reliability and objectivity) |
| Negative case analysis | Investigate "disconfirming" instance or outlier; continue investigation until all known cases are accounted for so that data reflects range of variation (vs. normative portrayal) | Credibility (internal validity) |

| Action | Description | Insures |
|---|---|---|
| Reflexive journal | Researcher's personal notes; documentation of researcher's thinking throughout the research process | Credibility (internal validity) Transferability (external validity) Dependability Confirmability (reliability and objectivity) |
| Referential adequacy | Archiving of a portion of the raw data for subsequent analysis and interpretation, for verification of initial findings and conclusions | Credibility (internal validity) |

References

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage.