Article

Dialogical Principles for Qualitative Inquiry: A Nonfoundational Path

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Abstract

Leaving the thesis proposal defense room, the PhD business student had an important assignment to accomplish before being authorized to set a date for defending her thesis: to better justify the validity of her qualitative inquiry framed by a critical interpretive standpoint. Knowing that the generation, analysis, and interpretation of empirical materials are processes always conducted within some understanding of what constitutes legitimate inquiry and valid knowledge, she drew inspiration from ethnographical, confessional, critical, and post-modern work to propose a set of dialogical principles for conducting and evaluating a nonfoundational type of research inquiry. This manuscript revisits this venture a number of years later, reflecting on what has changed and what is still missing. We argue that there is a space and an occasion in the research methods literature for proposing dialogical principles for nonfoundational research, principles that are particularly relevant for qualitative researchers struggling in business schools worldwide.

Keywords: critical interpretive research, nonfoundational research, qualitative research, research principles, research criteria, research validity

The motivation—or perhaps we should say "the need"—for writing this work grew out of the moment a number of years ago when a three-hour session of the thesis proposal defense of a PhD candidate (the first author) ended. After presenting a nonorthodox perspective vis-à-vis the prevailing view in North American business schools, the PhD candidate left the room with an important assignment to complete before being authorized to set a date for defending the thesis: to better justify the "validity" of her work. The faculty members of the thesis committee had serious concerns over two points: First, the ontological/epistemological stance of the proposed theoretical perspective—positioned within critical interpretivism—was unusual to them and provoked some skeptical reactions. The PhD candidate had presented a conceptual framework combining structuration theory and critical discourse analysis and claimed her positioning as both interpretive and critical. The committee members seemed more familiar with the interpretivism/constructivism and critical schools that are used separately, not claimed together; second, the committee members had questions about what set of criteria could legitimate the validity of such a research approach, where the interaction with empirical material did not follow "securing" procedures—those leading to internal validity and reliability for instance—of data coding and interpretation validation.

As a result, during the months following the thesis proposal defense, the PhD candidate interrupted the fieldwork before achieving its completion and undertook what she was not expected to be tasked with: a new literature review looking for criteria for judging the validity of her work, and a deep reflective discussion about this issue with, at that time, a postdoctoral fellow (now the second author of this article). The purpose of this article is to present the results of this struggle, revisited a number of years after the successful completion of the PhD program. We believe that in 2014, although the opportunities for presenting nonmainstream approaches are more numerous and the conditions are more favorable than in the past, students and researchers adopting nonmainstream philosophical and methodological perspectives still face a number of barriers to being recognized as "good" enough to be published or to obtain funding. As asked by Pratt (2008), if we are not clear about what good our qualitative research is, then how can we convince others—a reviewer, an editor, a supervisor—that what we offer is worthy of acceptance?

In particular, we put forward the dialog proposed by Amis and Silk (2008) who expand on three different orientations that shape the work of qualitative researchers: foundationalism, quasi-foundationalism, and nonfoundationalism. The authors are quite clear when positioning criteria that often legitimate the two first orientations: foundationalism and quasi-foundationalism. We do think that the third orientation, nonfoundationalism, the one that is of most interest to us, is presented by the authors in an emergent, provisional manner, and sometimes even too "permissive," using Seale's (1999) words. In this article, not only do we enrich portrayals of research that adhere to nonfoundationalism, arguing for a critical interpretive outlook as part of nonfoundationalism, but also we propose five dialogical principles that might help researchers that recognize themselves within this orientation.

We make two main contributions. The first is to reiterate the value of research that, in addition to adopting an interpretive stance, seeks to develop a critical appreciation of social phenomena. To illustrate this position, we drew on arguments put forward by a number of management and organizational researchers who have explicitly argued for a critical interpretive viewpoint, and we present those arguments with a view toward an engaging conversation. The second contribution is to participate in the unresolved debate over the quality or rigor of research inquiries framed in traditions other than positivism or neopositivism. After positioning our critical interpretive qualitative inquiry within a nonfoundationalist standpoint, we revisited existing standards for assessing quality of empirical research, culminating in our presentation of five dialogical principles inspired by ethnographical, confessional, critical, and post-modern work. By dialogical principles we do not mean a set of fixed standards, as any notion of principles should be seen as

enabling conditions that should only be applied contextually. By dialogical, we mean principles that respect contextually situated visions of validity and that are substantiated through a conversation between researcher and readers.

Being Critical Interpretive

The generation, analysis, and interpretation of empirical materials are processes based on some underlying assumptions about what the nature of the reality being examined is, what constitutes "valid" research, and which research methods are appropriate to a particular research endeavor (Myers, 1997). These sets of beliefs and values have been called paradigms of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kuhn, 1962), theoretical traditions (Patton, 2002; Prasad & Prasad, 2002), or simply research orientations (Tesch, 1990). A significant amount of material, including classifications and discussions of these research traditions, has been published over many decades. In their seminal and much controversial work, Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose four major sociological paradigms in organizational theory: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest four alternative inquiry paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory. In 2000, these same authors updated their classification with a fifth paradigm of participatory research, which was based on the work of Heron and Reason (1997). Despite his sharp remarks against prescriptive grids, Deetz (1996) nonetheless proposed his linguistic-oriented grid, including normative, interpretive, critical, and dialogic discursive perspectives. Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, and Locke (2008) discuss three different traditions in management research: positivist, relativist, and social-constructionist. Nuanced designations have also emerged, such as feminism, post-modernism, and critical post-modernism (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, & Locke, 2008; Rynes & Gephardt, 2004; Willis, 2007;), showing that the struggle among research groups for identity protection and legitimacy has changed its labels but not its nature. Although this paradigm debate has already provoked a sense of fatigue in many of us, or is simply "not a very interesting way of thinking about research program differences" (Deetz, 1996, p. 194), classifications according to distinct philosophical assumptions remain useful in helping researchers to position themselves clearly and to argue for the value of their work. An updated summary of the paradigm debate is provided by Cunliffe (2010).

In this search for legitimatization of positioning and identity, Prasad and Prasad (2002) made a remark that is crucial to our endeavor, namely, that one of the legacies of those grid-based classifications is a presumed separation between interpretivism and critique. Encouraged by passionate theoretical discussions within management and organization studies, we reiterate in this article the value of a critical interpretive positioning. This is the case of Walsham's (1993) leading and influential book about interpretivism in Information Systems research. The author has insisted on describing his research as integrating elements of both interpretive and critical traditions and, thus, constituting one that does not fit neatly into either of these categories. Indeed, he argued that constitutive process theories such as those he espouses (notably structuration and actor-network) are "an attempt to dissolve the boundaries between such traditions, in emphasizing not only the importance of subjective meaning for the individual actor, but also the social structures which condition and enable such meanings and are constituted by them" (Walsham, 1993, p. 246)., Supporting the value of a critical interpretive perspective, Doolin (1998) advanced a similar position and argued that interpretive researchers need to consciously adopt a critical and reflective stance in relation to the role that technology plays in maintaining social orders and social relations within organizations. Although several other researchers are supportive of this connection, such as LeGreco and Tracy (2009) and Prasad and Prasad (2002), might one question be whether attempts to integrate critical and interpretive traditions are founded on a firm understanding of their intrinsic relationship?

The interpretive research tradition is far from homogenous, encompassing at least two different broad lines of philosophical thinking: one that focuses on the use of language and various methods for understanding the meaning of language—such as speech act theory, conversation, and discourse analysis—and another that focuses on subjective consciousness, that is, general conditions of being human and expressing meaning, a line of thinking more closely associated with phenomenology and hermeneutics. The development of the interpretive tradition is often traced back to ideas from Weber, which has subsequently been put forward by phenomenologists such as Berger and Luckmann (1966), Bourdieu (1990), and Giddens (1984). Numerous approaches have been inventoried to illustrate the variegated roots of interpretive research, including social constructivism, ethnomethodology, interpretive ethnography, symbolic interactionism, and forms of critical theory. Despite this great variety of approaches, "what unifies them is their phenomenological base, which stipulates that person and world are inextricably related through lived experience of the world" (Sandberg, 2005, p. 43).

In contrast to the interpretive tradition, critical researchers assume that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people. The emergence of a critical theory is often situated as a powerful critique to positivist epistemology, therefore combining epistemological subjectivism with ontological realism (Duberley & Johnson, 2009) and its different variants, including critical and historical realism. These scholars look for explanations to social phenomena by focusing on power issues; their main task seen as one of social critique, whereby the restrictive and alienating conditions of the status quo are brought to light. Critical research focuses on the oppositions, conflicts, and contradictions in contemporary society and seeks to be emancipatory, that is, to help eliminate the causes of alienation and domination. Its basic concern is to analyze social conditions and use of power in order to change established social traditions and institutions (Scherer, 2009). The intellectual roots of critical theory are often associated with the Institute for Social Research—the Frankfurt School—and particularly to the work of Habermas. Early critical theory has been characterized as radical social theory, a sophisticated form of cultural criticism combining Freudian and Marxist ideas, and a utopian style of philosophical speculation deeply rooted in Jewish and German idealism (Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2001). Other authors recognize two distinct schools of critical theory: (a) the Frankfurt School of Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Fromm and (b) the contemporary critical theory of Habermas. Scherer (2009) mentions the emergence of a third generation of Frankfurt school whose members would be more concerned with the role of subjectivity. Although some researchers see the differences between approaches as "subtle" (Steffy & Grimes, 1986), the issue is complex. Behind the label "critical" we find numerous distinctions and even different ontologies (Duberley & Johnson, 2009). This brings us back to the far from uncontroversial issue of what it means to adopt a critical interpretive orientation. May we be critically interpretive by arguing that both approaches might be applied as intrinsically related? May we claim to be critical interpretive not as a matter of rhetoric or convenience, but respecting their distinctive conceptual foundations? May we use the term "critical" without linking it to either Habermas or the Frankfurt School?

Fairclough (1995), one of the prominent designers of critical discourse analysis, uses the term critical theory in a "generic sense for any theory concerned with critique of ideology and the effects of domination, and not specifically for the critical theory of the Frankfurt School" (p. 20). Similarly, Doolin (1998) maintains that espousing a critical view does not necessarily mean relying on the critical theory of Habermas or of the Frankfurt School: being critical may simply imply probing taken-for-granted assumptions inherent in the status quo by being critically reflective, while utilizing whatever theoretical framework is chosen (e.g., Foucault, Bourdieu, Giddens, Latour, and Callon). The main point here is not to argue for manifestly avoiding a Habermasian or Frankfurtian focus, but to open the possibility of interpretivists to be also considered critical while taking different lines of analysis. Although interpretivism is often

characterized as disinterested in any kind of radical questioning or facilitation of social change, Prasad and Prasad (2002) argue that such a separation is meaningless and that the lines between interpretation and critique are increasingly blurry: "The act of drawing interpretive thinking to its full potential practically demands some form of fundamental questioning that is not very far from an overtly critical orientation" (p. 7).

In brief, interpretive approaches aim to produce fine-grained explorations of the way a particular social reality has been constructed. Critical approaches aim to focus more explicitly on the dynamics of power, knowledge, and ideology that surround social practices. Far from being incompatible, the boundary between interpretive and critical might become a matter of nuance: many interpretive inquiries are sensitive to power, while critical studies include a concern for the processes of social construction that underlie the phenomena of interest (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Hermeneutics is also a crossroad between critical and interpretive research because critical research emphasizes communicative orientation, it implies interest in human understanding, which, in turn, implies hermeneutics, which is the heart of interpretivism (Klein, 1999). Thus, researchers can be interpretive and critical without any inherent inconsistency. Most of the researchers previously mentioned would even suggest that it is often hard to avoid being critical when conducting interpretive research. Being critically interpretive might simply mean that, in addition to understanding a given phenomenon from different interpretations arising from social interactions, researchers will avoid unreflective accounts by connecting these interpretations to broader considerations of social power and control.

The connection between interpretation and critical interpretation is nicely illustrated by Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) understanding of the different levels of reflection during critical management empirical work (Table 1). Empirical research starts from the level of empirical material collection, where researchers make observations, talk to people, and create their own portraits of the empirical phenomena. Preliminary interpretations are developed, whose scope is often relatively limited or somewhat unclear to the researchers themselves. This material is then subjected to further interpretation of a more systematic kind, guided by ideas that can be related to theoretical frameworks or to other frames of reference residing in the researchers' minds. Ideally, researchers allow the empirical material to inspire, develop, and reshape theoretical ideas. In fact, it is often the case that theoretical views allow consideration of different meanings in empirical material. In addition, the researcher's repertoire of interpretations also delimits a range of possibilities of producing certain insights (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). The interpretation level that follows the interaction with empirical material is a step toward critical interpretation. Critical thinking stems from interpretive reflection. Similar reasoning can be applied to understand reflexivity, where the researcher's reflection on his or her own text production and language use is expressed.

Table 1

Four Levels of Interpretation (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000)

Aspect/ Level	Focus
Interaction with empirical material	Accounts in interviews, observations of situations and other empirical materials
Interpretation	Underlying meanings
Critical interpretation	Ideology, power, social reproduction
Reflection on text production and language use	Own text, claims to authority, selectivity of the voices represented in the text

Exemplars of critical interpretive perspectives are numerous. In the management consulting area, for instance, Bloomfield and Best (1992), Fincham (1999), Jones (2003), and Sturdy, Schwarz, and Spicer (2006) explore client-consultant issues from an interpretive standpoint that mobilizes symbolic and power elements. In the Information Systems area, we outline the work of scholars who have extended Giddens' ideas by including an explicit information and communication technology (ICT) dimension in social analysis. Some examples are (a) Walsham (1993), Walsham and Sahay (1999), and Jones, Orlikowski, and Munir (2004); (b) a Foucauldian group of studies that draws on power and knowledge, like Introna (1997) and Zuboff (1988); (c) a group that uses Bourdieu, like Kvasny (2005, 2006) and Richardson and Howcroft (2006); and (d) researchers that applied actor-network theory from a critical lens, like Doolin and Lowe (2002). We also outline the critical discourse analysis (CDA) stream as a firm illustration of a critical interpretive perspective. CDA is a powerful methodology and perspective for studying social phenomena that involves ways of treating discourse as data (methodological elements) and ways of thinking about discourse (conceptual elements), which is quite distinct from other qualitative approaches (Hardy, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000). CDA has a long history in sociolinguistics (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter 2000), and has already attracted much interest on the part of organization studies (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick 2001; Leitch & Palmer, 2010). CDA provides a compromise between interpretive and critical claims and espouses an underlying constructivist epistemology in order to explore the discursive production of aspects of social interactions; therefore, discourse analysis is fundamentally interpretive. In addition, because its techniques uncover multiple meanings and representations, and highlight multiple voices and perspectives, critical discourse analysis becomes very helpful in connecting the discourses of different actors to broader considerations of their social context (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). A number of well-documented research studies, such as critical ethnography (Thomas, 1993), discourse tracing and applied-relational research (LeGreco and Tracy, 2009), and much work developed by critical management studies' scholars like Alvesson, Wilmott, and Knights (Scherer, 2009), may be identified as critical interpretive as well.

Criteriology Back and Forth

In the history of qualitative inquiry, at least from a management perspective, many researchers have adopted criteria rooted in the positivistic paradigm—internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity—to carry out and justify their work, thus emphasizing the various techniques they have developed to minimize bias and subjectivity (Laperrière, 1997; Yin, 1994). Cho and Trent (2006) characterize those techniques as transactional, as they are seen as a medium to insure an accurate reflection of reality. Discussing the politics of quality in qualitative organizational research, Amis and Silk (2008) consider those adopting more traditional criteria, associated with the ability of research to uncover an objective reality, as foundationalists. Eisenhardt (1989), Van Maanen (1988), and Yin (1994) have produced exemplary illustrations of foundationalist qualitative work, which still dominate the rules for publishing in most well ranked journals. Pratt (2008) compiled criteria-in-use based on the perspectives of authors and evaluators (reviewers or editors) who have published in top-tier North American journals, and the results show that the criteria applied most often by those journals are those more appropriate for positivists and deductive research; therefore, they fall within a foundationalist mindset.

Although prevailing, foundationalist was not the only set of criteria guiding and judging the value of qualitative work. During the 1980s, researchers advocated a new set of criteria more appropriate to the uniqueness of the qualitative paradigm. In this vein, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability, the assessment of which would indicate how credible or accurate the interpretation and presentation of the findings are. Amis and Silk (2008) define these approaches as quasi-foundationalist, because they advocate a subtle and non-naive neo-realism that searches for an

approximation of reality. Postpositivists and critical realists can be considered quasi-foundationalists, because spite their realist ontology, they take into account the influence that social processes and personal characteristics might exert on any production of knowledge. Reed (2009) identifies three distinctive forms of realism: (a) scientific, (b) theoretical, (c) and critical realism. The latter—critical realism—generates and integrates conceptions of social ontology, causality, explanation, and critique that would challenge the "ontological determinism" of orthodox positivism/functionalism and the "ontological conflationism" of heterodox constructivism/interpretivism. An increasing portion of management research being published in the last decade falls within a quasi-foundationalist rationale, like many process-based work published by organization studies outlets. These studies share a desire to combine recognition of the problems inherent in the foundational approach—bias, context, and multiple voices—with a "perceived need to retain rigorous, standardized criteria by which high-quality qualitative research can be produced and externally verified" (Amis and Silk, 2008, p. 464).

An illustration of a recent but already well-established research stream that could also be recognized as quasi-foundationalist is the so called "strategy-as-practice." Although the label of strategy-as-practice emerged as a clear critique to hegemonic North American inspired strategy research and proposed an innovative way to see strategy as social practice (Jarzbkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2003), the label accommodates a range of different perspectives and agendas. Most of the strategy-as-practice work, according to a sharp critical revision proposed by Carter, Clegg, and Kornberger (2008), remain within the tradition of mainstream, functional research. From an epistemological point of view, they follow with a view of practice as being "closer" to reality and delivering a "more accurate" description of the real word, therefore, copping with a realist ontology.

Although espousing different epistemologies (Miyata & Kai, 2009), foundationalist and quasi-foundationalist represent together the dominant orientations of published qualitative work in organization and management research outlets. They reflect the "normal science paradigm" and they represent well-established criteria of "good research" held by the majority of faculty members at most business schools, particularly in North America. These views are reinforced among doctoral students and new faculty members, just as they are codified across editorial boards, "providing common broad-based perceptions of what counts as useful knowledge in the major journals" (Amis & Silk, 2008, p. 460). A close examination of the two sets of criteria guiding foundationalist and quasi-foundationalist orientations (Table 2) makes clear the absence of a place for researchers that espouse neither a realist, neo-realist, or critical realist ontology, but a relativist, nominalist one. This hegemony is legitimized through several mechanisms, one of which is the production of academic journal lists or rankings, which "conveys an impression of impartiality and objectivity," but indeed they compromise with "particular values enshrined" in their own favored metrics (Wilmott, 2011, p. 430), thereby killing diversity and innovation.

Table 2

Two Existing Sets of Criteria for Assessing Qualitative Research based on Foundational and Quasi-foundational Assumptions

Criteria of scientific rigor (Yin, 1994) (Foundational)	Criteria of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (Quasi-foundational)
Internal Validity: The degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question	**Credibility:** The "truth" of the findings, as viewed through the eyes of those being observed or interviewed and within the context in which the research is carried out

Criteria of scientific rigor (Yin, 1994) (Foundational)	Criteria of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (Quasi-foundational)
External Validity: The degree to which findings can be generalized to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred	**Transferability:** The extent to which findings can be transferred to other settings (similar contexts)
Reliability: The extent to which findings can be replicated or reproduced by another investigator	**Dependability:** The extent to which the research would produce similar or consistent findings if carried out as described
Objectivity: The extent to which findings are free from bias	**Confirmability:** Researchers need to provide evidence that corroborates the findings

Criteria of trustworthiness were initially well received by some interpretive researchers, as when, in the introduction to the relevant *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) clearly posit the four criteria as those espoused by constructivists. Nevertheless, those four criteria have been considered by many as slightly modified positivist criteria that better correspond to the emerging philosophical position known as postpositivism (Devers, 1999). Many of those researchers argue that those criteria are essentially "neo-" positivist in nature, a sort of "realism reclothed" (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1998). This implies that, although the trustworthiness criteria reflect a rejection of objectivity and an acceptance of neutrality, they are still perceived as equivalent to traditional criteria and do not meet the expectations of "nonrealist" researchers. Thus, Cho and Trent (2006) treat quasi-foundationalist criteria the same way that foundationalists do: as looking for a transactional validity, one that ensures a certain level of accuracy.

Nevertheless, the belief in multiple constructed realities, a position that lies at the heart of the constructivist paradigm, is not consistent with the idea that judging the trustworthiness of an account is possible, because "relativism does not sit well with attempts to establish "truth", even if the term is placed in inverted commas" (Seale, 1999, p. 468). What set of criteria might a relativist researcher adopt to justify the quality of her work? Amis and Silk (2008) focus on a third research orientation, nonfoundationalism, representing those moving away from notions of realism, who contend that there is no theory-free knowledge, that there is no ultimate reference from which we can establish a neutral and objective viewpoint, and that no observation can be free from a theoretical context (Correa, 2013). Herein lies what we recognized as a space for a contribution to literature on qualitative research that does not hold a realist ontology.

Amis and Silk (2008) are quite clear when presenting criteria for researchers who identify themselves with foundationalism or quasi-foundationalism, as previously shown in Table 2. The situation becomes more complex when nonfoundationalism comes into play. As the authors confess, how we assess such nonfoundationalist approaches has yet to be widely debated. In a similar manner, Sandberg (2005) argues that what is lacking is an "elaboration of a nonfoundationalism platform and theories of truth and their ground for truth claims on which interpretive truth criteria can be developed" (p. 47). Very quickly we perceived that such an elaboration is far from simple in nature. More than nonfoundational, a number of scholars have adopted a posture that is "antifoundational," arguing that their task is to go beyond the idea that there are special or abstract sets of criteria for judging the quality of research (Lincoln, 1995). There are those for whom it is not desirable to have any defined set of criteria. The quality of the research would become "part of the essence of the research design: it becomes *internalized* within the underlying research philosophy and orientation rather than being something to be "tested" at the completion (foundationalism) or during (quasi-foundationalism) the research" (Amis & Silk, 2008, p.466). In other words, criteria are relational and should be situationally negotiated.

This debate recalls the moment when, as doctoral students, we were standing in front of a faculty committee, being pressured to defend the "validity" of our work. We were not sure about our power to negotiate internalized parameters of quality in those moments. Similarly, for those young researchers seeking to publish or to secure grants or tenure, a legitimate set of proven criteria—that is, criteria proposed and applied by a number of established researchers—should facilitate their initial battles before occupying political or academic positions that could empower their choices.

Because criteria are seen by most nonfoundationalists as something relational, internalized, and negotiated, we got the impression while revisiting a number of papers that there are actually as many sets of nonfoundationalist criteria as there are nonfoundationalist researchers or even more, as there are many individual pieces of nonfoundationalist work (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Lincoln, 1995; Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010). Table 3 illustrates examples of criteria that have been proposed by authors that seem to adhere to nonfoundationalism. We do not think that this plurality is wrong or bad; it reflects a tradition that departs from established standards for assessing quality or validity, assuming all the subjectivity and relationality inherent in any process of judgment. Nevertheless, returning to our issue of researchers seeking to argue for the value of their nonfoundationalist work when facing doctoral committees, editorial boards, and funding agencies, we ask how they could proceed regarding their search for legitimacy? What set of criteria might they adopt? We recognize at least three possible lines of action.

Table 3

Criteria for Assessing Nonfoundational Qualitative Research

- Criteria of authenticity: fairness, ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity, etc. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989)

- Criteria for the product of alternative paradigm: resonance (fit), rhetorical (unity, overall organization, clarity, etc.), applicability (Lincoln & Guba, 1990)

- Emerging criteria: positionality, communitarian, voice, reciprocity, and sacredness, etc. (Lincoln, 1995)

- Pragmatic validity (Kvale, 1995)

- Crystallization conception (Richardson, 1997)

- Criteria for interpretive practices: the right to know, making one's moral position public, nonmaleficience, and accuracy, etc. (Denzin, 2000)

- Feminist poststructural forms of validation: ironic, paralogical, rhizomatic, and voluptuous (Lather, 2001)

- Criteria of reciprocity (Harrison et al., 2001)

- Action research-based criteria: overtness, visibility, and riskiness (Huxham & Vangen, 2003)

- Truth-based criteria: communicative, pragmatic, and transgressive validity (Sandberg, 2005)

- Responsibility-based criteria: reductionist validity and epistemological validity (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010)

The first line of action is to select one among the numerous existing negotiated, situational criteria, such as those illustrated by Table 3 above, or even negotiate and create a new one. The

challenge of the latter option is that many researchers—and in particular PhD students and junior, non-tenured faculty—may not be in a position to defend such controversial positioning. In addition, if the selected criteria are not referred to elsewhere—often they are used and published singularly—their legitimacy could be put into question.

The second line of action is to adhere to a more general, "universal" set of principles; those that do not rely on philosophical debates. We show two examples of universal criteria (Table 4).

The first is Savall, Zardet, Bonnet, and Peron (2008), who carried out empirical research based on reviewer reports of qualitative papers, revealing significant divergence among reviewers concerning the criteria and the critical points mobilized. From 474 reports, emanating from 56 different reviewers over a long period of time, very few points of convergence were found among the reviewers, and even fewer points of strong convergence for the same reviewer over time. Among the explanations put forward, the authors outline the absence of well-defined evaluation grids in the reviewers' minds. Still, the 10 quality criteria that emerged from the iterative, bottom-up content analysis process, equivalent in value, illustrate what is actually considered as criteria for quality in qualitative research. More ambitiously, Tracy (2010) argues for a parsimonious set of universal criteria for qualitative quality that still attends to the complexity of the qualitative landscape. Although aware of the danger of being criticized by both sides—positivists and nonpositivists—Tracy argues for the strength of her approach by stating that her eight "big-tent" criteria do not represent a return to a single standard of positivism but rather emerge from her own "proclivities toward interpretive, critical and post-structural research…coupled with an inductive analysis of qualitative best practices literature" (Tracy, 2010, p. 839).

Table 4

Two Examples of "Universal" Criteria for Assessing Qualitative Research

The 10 generic quality criteria (Savall et al., 2008) from accepted (published) qualitative research		The eight "big-tent" criteria of quality (Tracy, 2010) from best practices literature	
• Rigor	• Explication	• Worthy topic	• Resonance
• Formulation	• Positioning	• Rich rigor	• Credibility
• Coherency	• Contribution	• Sincerity	• Ethical
• Originality	• Rationale	• Significant contribution	• Meaningful coherence
• Relevance	• Delimitation		

Although useful from a "benchmarking" perspective, those universal criteria have weaknesses inherent in their very purpose. By being too general, they simplify the complexity of the underlying assumptions and could be challenged from the perspective of each particular stream of thinking. If we take as an illustration the word "rigor," proposed by both authors in Table 4, the relative openness of this word that has so many different meanings to different researchers suggests how ambiguous and risky it is to adopt a "universal" definition. Both sets of criteria would face the strong criticism advocated by Schwandt (1996): there is no room in qualitative research for criteria that aspire to universal claims.

The third line of action represents a compromise between the two first paths: neither too singular nor too general. A compromise between postmodern protection against totalitarianism and some guiding principles for assessing the quality of nonfoundational work is possible and suitable. In order to be coherent with our claim that a critical interpretive orientation encompasses a broad range of researchers who espouse a relativist ontology and also stands up under critical review,

we took the four levels of interpretation proposed by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000)—interaction with empirical material, interpretation, critical interpretation, and reflection on text production and language use—as our starting point to assemble a dialogical set of principles. We found in ethnographical, confessional, critical, and post-modern authors sources of insightful inspiration for providing ways to validate the quality of each of these levels. We are not talking about blind adherence to rigid sets of criteria that would "confine" researchers. Within the boundaries of a given research tradition or orientation, for example, critical interpretivism, we propose a number of dialogical principles that will serve as a recognizable reference for many researchers using nonfoundationalism as their guide.

We call those principles dialogical for four of reasons: (a) they bridge critical and interpretive premises in a sound manner, as did Alvesson and Skoldberg's (2000) four levels of interpretation; (b) they found inspiration and are in line with relevant traditions such as ethnographical, confessional, critical, and post-modern research; (c) they represent a compromise between formulations that are too universal and too particular because they respect a vision of validity where knowledge is a context-situated construction; and (d) they are substantiated through a dialogue between researcher and readers.

Dialogical Principles for Nonfoundational Research

Readers produce meanings from empirical material in light of their own background and experiences. The researchers' writing practices should demonstrate consistency with their audience's expectations regarding methods and findings. The results we produce as qualitative researchers are rhetorical, as are those created by quantitative significance; both involve active reader participation (Gephart, 1999). The key difference is that this active and rhetorical relationship between researchers and their audience is purposively assumed by constructivist researchers; understanding comes from the meaning of contextually grounded experiences from the viewpoint of the actors. Thus, writing research texts is about convincing and persuading audiences, and about building authorial authority.

In short, being persuasive is presented as paramount for interpretive and critical interpretive researchers. Departing from this assumption, and trying to answer the question "how does ethnographic work convince?", Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) positioned the persuasiveness of ethnographic texts as central, and proposed three evaluation criteria: (a) authenticity, (b) plausibility, and (c) criticality. According to these authors, the first two criteria, authenticity and plausibility, are essential to any work of an ethnographic nature. Although the methodological strategies deployed by critical interpretive researchers are not always of an ethnographic nature, we do agree that a proximity to the field, an emphasis on immersion and interaction—and the need for a detailed understanding of human meanings in context based on intensive field research—might well be shared by most of them. The third criterion, criticality, characterizes the critical dimension of interpretive work.

As Table 5 shows, we found a sound correspondence between these three criteria of Golden-Biddle and Locke (1993) and the first three levels of interpretation proposed by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000). To meet the fourth level of interpretation—reflection on text production and language use—we consulted a number of authors. Reflexivity characterizes work such as confessional research and several variants of critical, poststructural, and postmodern studies. Reflexivity expresses a certain awareness of the ambiguity of language and the limits of its capacity to convey knowledge of a purely empirical reality, as well as an awareness of rhetorical ways of dealing with this issue (Hardy, Phillips, & Clegg, 2001). Taking the confessional work of Schultze (2000) as an illustration, she proposes two criteria to assess research, which provide a confessional, self-reflexive, and self-revealing account of the researcher's experience. Finally, because of the emphasis that constructivist inquirers and readers place on qualitative research as

both "science and art" (Patton, 2002, p. 548), we have added a fifth tentative criterion—artfulness—which critical interpretive researchers can aim for to mobilize audiences through vivid, creative, and unconventional pieces of work (Czarniawaska, 1999). In line with Weick (1989), "good theory is a plausible theory, and a theory is judged to be more plausible and of a higher quality if it is interesting rather than obvious…a source of unexpected connections, high in narrative rationality, aesthetically pleasing" (p. 517).

Table 5

Assembling Dialogical Principles

Aspects of interpretation	Dialogical principle	Sources of inspiration
Interaction with empirical material	Authenticity Was the researcher there?	Criteria from ethnographical research (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993)
Building sound interpretation	Plausibility Does the history make sense?	

Engaging with a critical interpretation	Criticality
	    Does the text activate readers to re-examine assumptions that underlie their work?
	    Does the text include the possibility of criticizing the existing social conditions and the distribution of power?
		Criteria from critical research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Hardi et al., 2001; Scherer, 2009)

Reflecting on text production and language use	Reflexivity
	    Does the author reveal his or her personal role and his or her selection of the voices or actors represented in the text?
	
	    Does the text reveal personal details about the researcher (self-revealing writing), interlacing "actual" and confessional content?
		Criteria from confessional research (Schultze 2000)

Being creative and evocative through the features of the text (added, optional)	Artfulness Does the author mobilize creativity, art, culture to express, craft his or her ideas?	Criteria from post-modern research (Czarniawaska, 1999)

An interesting finding was that our dialogical principles share some common lines with Cho and Trent's (2006) inclusive discourse on validity. These authors claim that transactional validity—the use of techniques and methods that seek to increase the validity of the text or account itself—might be enriched by transformational validity: something that can be achieved by the use of certain techniques, but also by the resultant actions prompted by the research endeavor. Within our set of dialogical principles, we combine a transactional approach (authenticity and plausibility) with a transformational approach (criticality, reflexivity, and artfulness) in a complementary and coherent way.

We present these five guiding principles as comprehensive enough to satisfy most critical interpretive researchers and, at the same time, non-paralleling variants of realism. We also think they evaluate both the process and the product of the research endeavor. To complete this article,

we describe each of these principles.

Expression Authenticity

Authenticity means being genuine to the field experience as a result of having "been there." Meeting this criterion assures that researchers particularize everyday life and that they are faithful to the experience in writing up the account (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993). Meeting this criterion also provides researchers, who are doing less conventional research such as autoethnography (Holt, 2003) or ethnonursing, (MacFarland, Mixer, & Webhe-Alamah, 2012) with more suitable alternatives to judge the quality of their work. Consequently, researchers should provide sufficient detail from their immersion in the field or their interaction with actors deeply immersed in the field. A sufficient amount of material/data/texts must have been collected to provide evidence of the researcher's involvement with the fieldwork. As pointed out by Pratt (2009), more than giving their interpretation, authors should show raw data, but not too much data with too little interpretation. A convincing balance is needed between being transparent about how deeply the researcher has engaged with a phenomenon, for example, describing data sources and analysis, and how connected these data are to interpretations and findings (connection between data and theory) (Bansal & Corley, 2011).

From a relativist ontological stance, there are no facts but different perspectives on reality, and each researcher is always a storyteller whose accounts of social reality are valid within a given frame which, it is hoped, is shared with his or her audience. As a result, even if it is vital to establish some credibility with the reader by describing some detail of how they have arrived at their findings, there are no guarantees against personal biases, in both the writers and their readers. Indeed, any writer or reader (qualitative or quantitative, interpretive or positivist) will always be subject to bias as a result of previous experience and their repertory of knowledge, values, and beliefs. To avoid the risk of recreating a type of realism reclothed, instead of reaffirming research values of a very different ontology, we could compare authenticity not to reliability or validity, but to "validation," to emphasize how a "judgment of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research is a continuous process occurring within a community of researchers" (Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2010, p. 73).

Constructing Plausibility

Whereas authenticity is concerned with the conduct of fieldwork, plausibility addresses the write-up phase. Plausibility is defined as the ability of the text to connect to the reader's worldview (Walsham & Sahay, 1999). It addresses the rhetorical strategies used to compose a text that positions the work as relevant to the concerns of the intended audience (Schultze, 2000), engaging the audience in an intellectual conversation (Bansal & Corley, 2011). Plausibility might be achieved in a number of ways. The research's results need to make sense, which means they must deal with shared concerns, and establish connections to the personal and disciplinary backgrounds and experiences of their readers. They need to offer a distinctive research contribution to a disciplinary area and they have to be concerned with the usefulness of knowledge production for practitioners; that is, by the ability to create actionable knowledge.

Contributing originally to theory and practice is essential. The value of any empirical research depends on the extent to which the author tells us something new and relevant. From a critical perspective, however, we would ask: new and relevant for whom? What is new for one person might not be new for another. More polemically, what is relevant strongly depends on each individual's assumptions, purposes, and expectations.

Raising Criticality

Criticality refers to the ability of the text to entice readers into reconsidering taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993). It implies the ability to propose an understanding of ourselves and others in a new and better way, including novel ways of thinking (Schultze, 2000). Criticality might be achieved by challenging readers to pause and think about a specific situation, or by provoking them to answer relevant questions. The dimension of criticality positions researchers to challenge conventional thought and to reframe the way organizational phenomena are perceived and studied. As Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000) point out, good research from a critical perspective is one that enables a qualitatively new understanding of relevant fragments of social reality, furnishing new alternatives to social action. Critical interpretive studies should necessarily activate such a criterion in order to be able to outline and question prevailing views, to contradict conventional wisdom and multiple viewpoints, which are often in conflict. More attention should be paid not only to multiple narratives that give voice to and allow the construction of multiple worlds, but also to the role of the researcher and of his or her understanding, insights, experiences, and interpretations (linked with reflexivity). Multiple narratives will not give us any single representation, but they may offer us more interesting ways to think about the organization (Garcia & Quek, 1997).

It is important to recall here our definition of the critical interpretive standpoint: to open an opportunity to interpretivists to espouse a critical view. To espouse a critical view does not mean to rely on the critical theory of Habermas or on the Frankfurt School; they are not a necessary condition to use the term critical, but they are not excluded as a source of influence. Interpretive researchers, however, might be critical while mobilizing whatever theoretical framework is chosen (e.g., Foucault, Bourdieu, Giddens, Latour, etc.). Accordingly, depending on the source of influence, the criticality criteria could express the attachment of the researcher to different values: (a) open participation (e.g., Bourdieu); (b) emancipation (e.g., Foucault); (c) the possibility of knowledgeable agents doing otherwise; (d) re-structuring (e.g., Giddens); and (e) coalition, and negotiation, and translation (e.g., Latour), and so forth.

Experimenting With Reflexivity

As outlined by Hardy et al. (2001), work on reflexivity is well developed in areas like the sociology of science but has attracted less attention in organization and management theory. Reflexivity is in fact a complex concept whose meaning has been nuanced variously by different scholars. At a more individual researcher level, reflexivity was defined by Clegg and Hardy (1996) as "ways of seeing which act back on and reflect existing ways of seeing" (p. 4), and by Morrow (1994) as involving "metatheoretical reflection that is a form of inquiry in its own right" (p. 228). Reflexivity involves reflecting on the way research is carried out and understanding how the process of doing research shapes its outcomes. This brings attention to the responsibility of researchers to declare their biases. Hardy et al. (2001) point out that, from an interpretive standpoint, this does not mean removing such biases, but rendering them visible through personal disclosure, so that readers can take them into account. In other words, research is seen as one representation among many possible representations, and researchers present their representations for interpretation by the reader (Hardy et al., 2001). A reflexive approach to the interpretation of data helps to understand how research outcomes can be claimed as representative of the phenomenon from which they were generated (Huxham & Vangen, 2003).

For the research community, reflexivity implies for Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) that serious attention is paid to considering how different kinds of linguistic, social, political, and theoretical elements are blended together in the process of knowledge development, when empirical material is constructed, interpreted, and written. These authors also stress that much good qualitative

research is unreflexive, both in the process of conducting research and in the process of creating the final textual product, often paying much more attention to tasks such as gathering and analyzing data than to different elements of reflexivity.. In a similar manner, Hardy et al. (2001) argue, "We cannot confine our attention to the relationship between researchers and the research subject, but must also examine the relationship between researchers and the research network of which they are part" (p. 533). Schultze (2000) defined the reflexive dimension of her work in terms of two elements: (a) self-revealing writing and (b) interlacing of actual ethnographic material and confessional content. A self-revealing text demands a personalized author, the use of personal pronouns to consistently highlight the point of view being represented, and the construction of the researcher as a reasonable yet fallible individual with whom the audience can identify (Schultze, 2000). Regarding the second feature, confessional writing interlaces the actual ethnographic content with the confessional material, meaning that any statement about the "foreign culture" is also a statement about the ethnographer's and the reader's culture.

Indeed, the two aforementioned conceptualizations of reflexivity mainly concern a way for the researcher to assure the rigor of a particular qualitative research endeavor, that is, conceptualization, data generation, data analysis and interpretation, and writing. But a third extended meaning of this concept is to see reflexivity as a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation of the interpersonal aspects of research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Kvale (1995), Lather (2001), and Richardson (1997) propose transgressive approaches to validity that emphasizes a higher degree of self-reflexivity, aiming to put into question the relationship between the researcher and the researched, which raises the issue of power and the degree to which the research empowers and emancipates research subjects (Cho and Trent, 2006). Reflexivity so understood makes explicit the value-laden nature of social, cultural, and political meanings produced by qualitative research, and are therefore directly connected to ethics. As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) note:

> Being reflexive about research practice means a number of things: first, an acknowledgment of micro-ethics, that is, of the ethical dimensions of ordinary, everyday research practice; second, sensitivity to what we call the 'ethically important moments' in research practice, in all their particularities; and third, having or being able to develop a means of addressing and responding to ethical concerns if and when they arise in the research (which might well include a way of preempting potential ethical problems before they take hold). (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 276)

Standing Up for Artfulness

Artfulness concerns the artistic sensibility of qualitative inquirers: the creative manner in which the researcher writes his or her story in order to touch readers, to provoke them, to interest them, to mobilize them (Czarniawaska, 1999; Glesne, 1999; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle 2001). "Artistic expressions of qualitative analysis strive to provide an experience with the findings where 'truth' and 'reality' is understood to have a feeling dimension that is every bit as important as the cognitive dimension" (Patton, 2002, p. 548). Interesting qualitative studies are elaborated with craft, or using Lincoln and Guba's (1990) work, craftsmanship, careful writing, writing with power and elegance, writing creatively, exhibiting playfulness or irony that would break new ground. Recent calls for qualitative articles from major academic journals have encouraged creativity (Bansal & Corley, 2011). This emphasis on *beautifulness* has, therefore, ontological and epistemological roots. Science has usually been associated with facts, objectivity, and a neutral, precise, and non-metaphorical language (Glesne, 1999). Critical and interpretive approaches consider, however, that reality is a social construction, and that language is not only a tool for description and communication, but also a constituent of social reality. Knowledge is thus co-created through language. Despite this emphasis, there is no guarantee of a good reception for

the writings. One can expect that plausible and aesthetic pieces of work are well received, but as Czarniawaska (1999) points out: "Something 'works' because it touches me, because it is beautiful, because it is a powerful metaphor, but one can also hear engineers (as well as others) say of machines, 'look how beautifully it works!'" (p. 27). Because knowledge is contextual in nature, one can try to produce "edifying discourses" through different kinds of writing that are considered legitimate, and potentially pleasant to read at a given place and time.

Epilogue

The thesis was successfully defended with an extra chapter (the genesis of this article) detailing, presenting, supporting, and arguing that the four first criteria—authenticity, plausibility, criticality, and reflexivity—were legitimate standards to secure the quality of a critical interpretive work. One year later, an improved version of the refereed manuscript was submitted to the Academy of Management Conference. It was not accepted to be presented in a paper session, but was accepted as a poster, and we believe that one of the reasons it was not accepted as a paper presentation was the strongly negative assessment of one of the reviewers:

> The authors are fortunate that I disagree with them 100%. In reviewing a paper, I don't care whether the paper happens to be interesting to me, but rather that the quality is good…This is fortunate because I don't find this sort of paper interesting. I also felt that in legitimizing the kind of criteria proposed in the paper, the authors do a tremendous disservice to the field. I can't wait for this fad to blow over. (Reviewer 2/3)

As junior researchers, we were left a bit shocked by this assessment of our work, and anticipated numerous struggles in order to get our qualitative work published. This also delayed our motivation to rework the manuscript for submission. Working in North American business schools, we are now in a slightly more comfortable position; we have tenure and a few grants for pursuing our research program. Still, the battle to gain acceptance of our work is not over. As outlined by Amis and Silk (2008), the dominant logic of positivism remains so firmly entrenched within the North American context that "any ontological or epistemological position that may run counter to such a position is usually viewed with suspicion and, unfortunately, marginalized" (p. 460). Qualitative researchers are in the minority in North America for several reasons, including the lack of doctoral training programs providing opportunities for the development of qualitative research understanding and skills (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), but the barriers are even greater when, in addition to adopting qualitative research as a methodology, we adhere to nonfoundationalism as an epistemological and ontological orientation.

The understanding of this sharp and somehow violent reaction to our nonfoundational perspective goes through the understanding of the history of qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) organize this history into eight phases or moments. The first is the *traditional period*, which is from 1900 until 1945. In this period, it is very important to grasp the importance that criteria like validity and reliability begin to have in the definition of high quality qualitative research, a definition that, in fact, mirrored quantitative research standards. As outlined by Lewis (2009), the second phase, the *modernist* (1945-1970), "moved qualitative research even closer to quantitative research" (p. 3) and represented the golden age of a rigorous, systematic, and robust scientific qualitative inquiry. In that context, a search for reliability was a search for consistency, which meant that a reliable research study was one where its findings could be replicated by another research study. In addition, a search for validity assures the truthfulness of the research findings. A number of checks and balances were developed to enhance the reliability and the validity of the qualitative endeavor (Lewis, 2009), and these practices are still very prominent today.

After the 1970s, five new phases succeeded each other, and with them new visions of what is good qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) nicely describe how complex and plural the

field called qualitative becomes, with a variety of theories (that ranged from symbolic interactionism to constructivism, positivism and postpositivism, phenomenology, critical theory, neo-Marxist theory, semiotics, and feminism, etc.), a variety of models and formats, and new ways of collecting and analyzing empirical material. By the mid-1980s, such a plethora of new genres ended by provoking what the authors term a *crises of representation*, involving a "serious rethinking of such terms as validity, generalizability, and reliability" (p. 19). Revisiting this history helps new scholars make sense of "evaluation criteria" that are definitively full of tensions, as the comment of reviewer 2/3 illustrates.

By choosing nonfoundationalist ways of making sense of organizational phenomena, researchers set out on a fascinating path, but have to assume certain significant risks and cope with many difficulties. Despite its growing popularity in recent years, nonfoundationalist inquiry is still building its legitimacy. As researchers, we will always deal with uncertainty about our choices and interpretations, which are not created, shared, or applied in a social vacuum, but are involved with communication, interpersonal relations, identity construction, and convincing others (and ourselves) that our propositions are sound (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). In positioning critical interpretivism as one nonfoundational way of defining a research orientation, we hope to help not only doctoral students and junior researchers struggling in polarized contexts like that of North America (mainstream versus marginal positions, not truly pluralist) to find a way to legitimate their work, but also other qualitative researchers worldwide.

The fact that a critical interpretive perspective is essentially constructivist and emergent does not mean that qualitative judgments cannot be selected and applied. Writing about ways to develop and judge any type of intensive research helps refine and develop our thinking about what conducting and evaluating intensive research leads to, and also serves as a device for sharing ideas with others about these matters. Most important, discussing a set of principles for conducting and evaluating critical interpretive research represents a key component in building a research tradition of which we are part: "Established approaches to doing and judging research are our collective prejudices, neither to be slavishly accepted not willfully rejected, but which should be placed continuously at risk" (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1998, p. 535). All these thoughts about research, quality of research, dialogical principles, and building a research tradition, albeit inter-subjective, draw on the transformational wisdom within the research tradition of which we are part.

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Appendix

Illustration of Ways to Follow the Guiding Principles

Guiding principles	Ways to …(*)
Authenticity	
Has the author been there (in the field) or had enough interactions with participants to compensate for the lack of direct immersion?	• Particularizing everyday life from researchers' direct immersion or from the interaction with participants and archival documents. • Providing enough details of everyday life as lived by members of the field, demonstrating familiarity with the vernacular of the field, and describing what members think about their lives in the field, and so forth. • Delineating the relationship in the field. • Describing how close the researchers were, whom they talked to and observed, and the nature of their relationship and their influence on others.
Has the author been genuine to the field experience?	• Depicting the disciplined pursuit and analysis of data. • Describing how the researcher collected, analyzed data, and presented "raw data" such as field notes, documents, and transcribed interviews, and how the researcher conducted post-hoc respondent validation.
Plausibility	
Does the story make sense to me?	• Normalizing unorthodox methodologies. • Adhering to academic article genres, using conventional sections like method, results, discussion and references. • Drafting the reader. • Using "we" to include the authors and the reader. • Legitimating the atypical. • Making reference to familiar categories and experiences and showing the scope of the application of the findings (Walsham and Sahay 1999). • Aligning the findings with common, everyday experiences. • Smoothing the contestable. • Justifying contestable assertions.
Does it offer something distinctive for theory?	• Differentiating findings—a singular contribution. • Showing "missing" areas in the past and outlining the difference between present and past work. • Providing the development of a novel theoretical approach. • Building dramatic anticipation and creating expectation.
Does it offer *actionable* knowledge for practice?	• Offering reflection that can open new avenues for change. • Showing how work experiences and events arise and are created or sustained by power relationships.

Guiding principles	**Ways to …(*)**
Criticality	
Does the text motivate the readers to re-examine assumptions underlying their own work?	• Carving out room to reflect. • Including "spots" in the text where readers stop and reflect about a specific situation. • Stimulating the recognition and examination of differences. • Actively provoking the reader to answer questions. • Challenging other academics to think about their assumptions and work practices through cultural juxtaposition. • Imaging new possibilities. • Using metaphors, stimulating criticality in the reader. • Including the possibility of criticizing the existing social conditions and the distribution of power.
Reflexivity	
Does the author reveal his or her personal role and personal biases and assumptions?	• Self-revealing writing. • Describing researcher's personal role. • Using personal pronouns, revealing personal details about the researcher, and disclosing details like mistakes made. • Interlacing "actual" and confessional content. • Using autobiographical material interlaced with "actual" ethnographic material, but limiting such material to information that has relevance to the subject of the research. • Qualifying personal "biases." • Describing researcher's selection of the voices and actors represented in the text.
Artfulness	
Is the text powerful enough to "take me out of myself"?	• Using imaginative and evocative tropes and resources like metaphors, irony, and so forth. • Adopting a literary genre; building poetry, drama, or autobiography.

(*) *Note*. Sources: Golden-Biddle & Locke (1993); Walsham & Sahay (1999); Czarniawska (1999); Schultze (2000); Alvesson & Skoldberg (2000); Hardy et al., (2001).