

# FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF NORMAN K. DENZIN

He Knew His Song Well

**Edited by** Shing-Ling S. Chen

STUDIES IN SYMBOLIC  
INTERACTION

**VOLUME 55**

FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF  
NORMAN K. DENZIN



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**FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR  
OF NORMAN K. DENZIN: HE  
KNEW HIS SONG WELL**

EDITED BY

**SHING-LING S. CHEN**  
*University of Northern Iowa, USA*



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, and Ohio University's Elizabeth Andersch Award for career contributions to the study of communication. His coauthored book, *Evocative Autoethnography: Writing Lives and Telling Stories*, received the H.L. "Bud" Goodall, Jr and Nick Trujillo "It's a Way of Life" Award for storytelling informed by scholarship. Professor Bochner served as President of the National Communication Association in 2016.

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work for the eradication of domination and elitism in all human relationships. Her book, *Building Diaspora: Filipino Cultural Formation on the Internet* (2005, Rutgers University Press), examines how Filipinos around the world negotiate and articulate understandings of Filipino culture, identity, and community in relation to various oppressions, such as colonization, racism, sexism, nationalism, Eurocentrism, and Orientalism. Similarly, many of her articles and book chapters critically assess the continued significance, manifestation, and functions of racism, classism, sexism, and other oppressions in the United States, the Philippines, and other countries, such as El Salvador. With respect to methods and methodology, she has published several articles and book chapters that focus on the potential for researchers to produce emancipatory research by cultivating a critical sociological imagination and using it to carefully consider every moment of “the research” act and research design. Currently, she is researching the simultaneous (re)construction of Filipinos, Americans, the Philippines, and the United States via a close analysis of transnational media, cultural tourism and the Filipino-Bol-anon diaspora’s responses to the effects of neoliberal economic policies on the small island of Bohol in the Philippines.

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## VOLUME EDITOR PREFACE

Norman K. Denzin, one of the most important scholars in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, commands an unusually high level of intelligence which accounts for the amazing breadth of his works, second to none. Denzin's topics of research are many, including self, voice, ethics, sociological imagination, interpretive inquiry, etc. Denzin is well versed in multiple, if not all, fields in qualitative inquiry – existentialism, phenomenology, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, semiotics, poetics, poststructuralism, postmodernism, performance studies, autoethnography, critical and creative forms of writing, justice studies, etc. His mastery of these fields, unattainable by anyone else, provides him a keen appreciation of the unique contributions that each of these fields contributes in qualitative inquiry. Denzin published prolifically in multiple fields of qualitative research in his 55 years of academic career, and fostered the fruitful growth of various fields in qualitative inquiry consequently. Denzin's impacts on multiple fields in qualitative inquiry are immense, as he provides not only the sheer visibility for various fields in inquiry with his works but also substantive scholarship for their advancement. In an academic world, where researchers were taught to dismiss other fields of works in order to legitimize their own fields of study, Denzin's inclusive view of fields in qualitative inquiry is inconceivable, and Denzin's accomplishments in various fields in qualitative inquiry are unimaginable.

In addition, based on his appreciation of various fields in qualitative inquiry, Denzin mentors generations of researchers in qualitative inquiry not only by advising their works but also by creating spaces for their works in conference presentations, and by making rooms for their research in scholarly publications. Denzin was the editor or coeditor of more than 20 book series and journal publications. In these book series and journals, Denzin ensured the developments of fields of qualitative inquiry and fostered the growth of generations of qualitative researchers. He made sure that good works are published and good researchers are established. Generations of qualitative researchers are where they are today because of Denzin's support and guidance.

Although based in the University of Illinois, in the United States, Denzin's impacts are not limited to the scholars in America. Denzin's impact on fields in qualitative inquiry extends to qualitative researchers worldwide. Again, through his own works, as well as conference and publication outlets, Denzin builds an international community of qualitative researchers. Denzin envisions an international community where qualitative researchers collaborate and support one another. International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, an annual conference founded since 2005, has been a sanctuary for qualitative researchers worldwide.

Thanks to Denzin's tireless efforts in ensuring the continuous growth of such an international community, fields in qualitative inquiry are thriving worldwide.

Denzin bestows great hope and missions on qualitative researchers to exercise their sociological imagination and to give voice to the less fortunate, in order to advance social justice and equality in humanity. With Denzin's immense impacts on various fields in qualitative inquiry, his outstanding works in mentoring generations of qualitative scholars, and his accomplishment in building an international community of qualitative researchers, Denzin has been attributed as "the Father of Qualitative Inquiries," a well-deserved distinction. Articles in this volume illustrate Denzin's fatherhood in qualitative inquiry.

Shing-Ling S. Chen  
Editor

PART I

FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF  
NORMAN K. DENZIN: HE KNEW HIS  
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## Chapter 1

# “WE ARE NOT ALONE”: AN INTRODUCTION TO NORMAN DENZIN’S “BOOK OF FRIENDS”

Michael D. Giardina

### ABSTRACT

*In the Introduction to this Festschrift honoring Norman K. Denzin, the author chronicles Denzin’s contributions to the academy over the last 55 years. In so doing, he provides personal reflections on numerous interactions with Denzin, particularly as it relates to mentorship and the forging of community within qualitative inquiry. Also included are brief overviews of all of the articles that comprise the Festschrift.*

**Keywords:** Norman Denzin; community building; mentorship; qualitative inquiry; interpretive methods; politics of research

I want to do this so I can feel at home in this crazy world I keep calling my own.

– Norman K. Denzin, 2002

### PROEM

The concept of the *Festschrift* has a noble history in academic culture. Horowitz (1991) explains in his book on the politics of scholarly publishing that the practice developed in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century as a means to honor “special achievers and achievements” in the academy (p. 235). In the post-World War II period, the practice gained widespread usage in the West – and in the United States especially – as older German scholars migrated and

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brought with them “the introduction of European models of academic celebration” (p. 235).

*Festschrift* is often translated as “celebratory writing.” Yet in considering this particular volume and its subject, I think its Latin equivalent, *liber amicorum* – or “book of friends” – resonates better with the emotional and evocative memories, stories, and impacts that Norman has had on both the contributors to this volume specifically and the field of qualitative research more generally.

In the age of audit culture, bibliometrics, and the quantified researcher self (see, e.g., Cheek, 2017; Spooner, 2018), one would be forgiven for chronicling the prodigious amount of scholarship that Norman has produced over the years: more than 30 books on topics as varied as alcoholism (see, e.g., Denzin, 1987, 1993), Hollywood cinema (see, e.g., Denzin, 1991, 2002), the American West (see, e.g., Denzin, 2008), and post-9/11 culture (see, e.g., Denzin, 2007); texts on research methods spanning the range from interpretive ethnography (Denzin, 1997) and symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1992) to the research act itself (Denzin, 1970); manifestos for qualitative inquiry in the present moment (Denzin, 2009, 2010); as well as too many journal articles to count. Had this been the sum total of his academic output, most observers would likely say he had a long, productive, and successful career. But then there are the landmark editions of the *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (with Yvonna S. Lincoln); the launching and editing of major journals (e.g., *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies*; *International Review of Qualitative Research*; *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*); numerous book series with Left Coast Press, AltiMira, and Routledge; and of course, the founding of the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in 2005. A search of Google Scholar even informs that his contributions have been cited roughly 170,000 times, placing him among the most-cited American social scientists of the twentieth century. And yet none of the above metrics could possibly capture the impact Norman has had. For while the above academic production is the stuff of legends, the personal and professional impact he has had on scholars – on the qualitative research community as a whole – is something that can never be quantified.

\*\*\*

I have been asked by Sarina Chen to write what will serve as the Introduction to this *Festschrift* honoring Norman K. Denzin. It is both an honor and a privilege to do so. It is also, I would quickly add, quite the terrifying task – for who am I to be the one to narrate this collection, to collate these collected writings from luminaries in their own right? More than that, it is a daunting task for this reason: given all that Norman has done for me as a person and a scholar, I simply don’t want this introduction to fall short – to let him down.

I first met Norman in the Fall of 1999 at the University of Illinois, where I was just beginning my Master’s degree in the Department of Kinesiology. His course, *Communication 414: Seminar in Advanced Interpretive Methods* (see also Pierce, this volume, and Flaherty, this volume, for their respective remembrances of this course), was recommended to me by Syndy Sydnor, who spoke highly of him and who told me that a number of students (and faculty) in the department had taken

his courses and/or had been influenced in some way by his work (e.g., David Andrews, Jim Denison, Toni Bruce, Pirkko Markula, Genevieve Rail, Bob Rinehart, Nancy Spencer, CL Cole, and Sydnor herself).<sup>1</sup> I knew the name – he had written a blurb for Rail (1998) book *Sport and Postmodern Times*, which I had just finished reading that summer, and in which a number of contributors had cited his work – but had no real sense beyond that who he was or the lofty position he held in academia (I was probably the only one in the seminar who wasn't already aware of it). I dutifully waded through the course material alongside the likes of Mary Weems (already a powerful, performative voice in command of the material), Margaret Young (who wrote deeply personal narratives about family), and Alejandro Padilla (who was politically astute, and who I recall hosted a wonderful, all-night *tamalada* that Christmas). They were all so much better at this stuff than I was (as I have discussed elsewhere, I was not ready for that course).

But then two years later, in the Fall of 2001, I registered to take the course again, this time as a first-year doctoral student who had gained a bit more grounding in British cultural studies and the interpretive traditions offered in his seminar.

And then, the day before the first course meeting of the Fall term, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Center and Pentagon happened. And so it was on September 12, 2001 – when the rest of the country was still in shock – a group of us gathered for the first meeting of Communication 414.

The mood was somber.

Pensive.

Confused.

The images of the previous day still filled the airwaves 24/7, already burned into our collective memories. Some of us had friends and relatives living in New York City and Washington, DC.

Our minds wandered.

But Norman seized the day, artfully drawing us back into the moment. As if flying without a net, he delivered an impassioned oration, encouraging us to sharpen our critical faculties, to turn them onto the oncoming maelstrom of contested narratives of freedom, patriotism, and democracy that were sure to envelop the country in the days, weeks, and months to follow.

*We were in awe.*

Always recognizing the potential *goodness* of humanity – of the power of each unique individual to affect change on scales large and small – he challenged us to both adopt and create a cultural studies methodology of the heart, a prophetic, feminist post-pragmatism that embraced an ethics of truth grounded in love, care, hope, and forgiveness: a morally based critical inquiry that was necessarily disruptive, explicitly pedagogical, and radically democratic. Its topics: fascism, the violent politics of global capitalist culture, the loss of freedom in daily life. His point: cultural critics require apparatuses of resistance and critique, methodologies and pedagogies of truth, ways of making real realities that envision and enact pedagogies of hope – pedagogies that would offer ways of holding fraudulent

political regimes accountable for their actions (see also [Denzin & Giardina, 2006](#)) [*What was that thing about history repeating itself? That's for another time...*].

As I chronicled in a (not very good) performance text, I once published (see [Giardina, 2005](#)) about post-9/11 American culture, and which Norman generously published in *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*:

In Norm's seminar yesterday –  
 for the first time since everything happened –  
 I think we all felt a real sense of community,  
 of belonging to something bigger than ourselves,  
 of being committed to a project of social,  
 cultural, and  
 political change...  
 of knowing we weren't  
 the only ones questioning what was going on –  
 going to happen –  
 in the aftermath.

(p. 92)

*Of knowing we weren't the only ones.* My eyes still linger on that line, all these years later. This idea of not being the only ones, or simply not being *alone*, in our personal or professional journeys is one that is touched on repeatedly throughout the articles in this volume. Whether as a supportive voice at a conference, as colleagues in the field, as mentor or sponsor to a student, and community-builder to the global community of qualitative researchers, Norman's presence has been front and center, as evidenced by the words of those who have contributed to this volume.

Norman was – and by the grace of God, still is – by our sides – has been by our sides for *decades*; he is the reason many of us were or are able to do the work we do; to get jobs, get tenure, write books, publish articles, take chances, find our voices, and exist in this awful, beautiful world. We all stand on the shoulders of a giant. This volume is our way of saying “Thank You,” and honoring the friend/scholar/mentor/teacher who has contributed so much to us, and to our community.

## THE ARTICLES

This Festschrift is organized around several thematic areas: (1) biography and scholarly works; (2) breadth of influence and community building; (3) impact on careers; (4) contributions to particular academic areas; and (5) mentorship.

John Johnson's article (“One day at a time: A four-act play performed by Norman K. Denzin”) begins our journey, as he presents an interpretive biography of Norman that traces some of the important turns and moments of his intellectual development and contributions to the field. One focus includes Norman's editorial role for the first 52 volumes of *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*

(1978–2020), and how his vision for an inclusive community of qualitative researchers and interpretive scholars emerged and changed over the years.

In his article "My apprenticeship on the prairie: Theory, method, and research in the naturalistic study of social interaction," Michael G. Flaherty reflects on what he learned from Norman while a doctoral student in sociology from 1977 until 1982. Specifically, he draws from Norman's writings from 1969 to 1984, and considers how Norman's theoretical frameworks were never divorced from empirical inquiry. He also chronicles Norman's contributions to the study of self, socialization, social interaction, emotions, and deviance.

In his article "Norman Denzin's empiricist bent, theory of the self, and focus on paradoxical agency," Michael A. Katovich directs special attention to Norman's "roots as an empiricist and theorist of the self." Through a deep reading of Norman's examination and analysis of alcoholics (see, e.g., [Denzin, 1987](#)), he highlights "the importance of talking about the self" and "providing a theory of the self while straddling the symbolic line between a postmodernist imagination and a modernist commitment to realism."

Harry Torrance ("Norman Denzin: Building a 'Bigger Tent'") then moves the discussion to questions of inclusive inquiry, the bringing together of disparate disciplines under one umbrella at a time (c. 2005) when qualitative research was under attack due to the gaining retrenchment of scientifically based research and gold-standard positivism. Torrance further points out the "bigger tent" and "paradigm proliferation" that Norman has endorsed, and the far-reaching possibilities that holds for the qualitative community.

The next section brings together Art Bocher, Laurel Richardson, Mitch Allen, Stacy Holman Jones, and Robert Rinehart, who reflect on the impact Norman has had across multiple fields of inquiry, and with an eye on building an international community of qualitative researchers.

In his article "A case of you, Norman," Art Bochner provides a personal history of Norman's profound influence on the development of interpretive qualitative inquiry over the last 30 years. Reading this history back through his own interactions with Norman and his work during this time, he begins his article with the 1991 SSSI Stone Symposium in San Francisco, touching on the divides between epistemic versus existential schools of inquiry, as well as the path toward the narrative social science turn that Bochner was proposing. Revisiting and retelling the emergence of a traveling SSSI road show promoting "an alternative qualitative sociology" filled with poetic representation, co-constructed narrative, performance ethnography, and the like leads to discussions of the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*, several other key developments in the field in the mid 1990s (such as Art's and Carolyn Ellis's work on their "Ethnographic Alternatives" book series and Norman's *Interpretive Ethnography* [1997] intervention), and later turns to the founding of the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry.

Laurel Richardson's chapter ("In praise of Norman Denzin") follows, wherein she presents an "origin story" for qualitative poststructuralism and arts-based research vis-à-vis Norman's unique contribution to those spaces. In particular, she revisits the events surrounding her presentation of "Louisa May," the "skipped line" and ethnographic drama (see [Richardson, 1993](#)). To that end, she

outlines five ways Norman has “created for a world where good and important work can get *published*.”

In Mitch Allen’s chapter (“It’s a wonderful qualitative life”: Norman Denzin and the building of a qualitative community”), he provides an overview of Norman’s contributions to “fostering a robust, international, multidisciplinary qualitative research community.” Focusing specifically on the creation of the first *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, the subsequent journals and book series, and finally the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, Allen draws from his unique location at SAGE, AltMira, and Left Coast Press to underscore the community-building work Norman has undertaken over the last four decades.

Stacy Holman Jones (“Norman Denzin: Making room for capacious inquiry”) poetically captures the breadth of Norman’s influence on individuals within the field, including the “brief but full of unbridled enthusiasm” of Norman’s email messages across the years. Her focus on how Norman has made room for and fostered generations of scholars and provided them encouraging spaces to be successful is at the core of her writing.

Robert Rinehart’s chapter (“Celebrating Norman K. Denzin”) closes this section, addressing Norman’s role as facilitator and mentor as grounded in his humanity – in his *joie de vivre*. Rinehart also highlights Norman’s participation in the first Contemporary Ethnography Across the Disciplines (CEAD) *hui* in New Zealand in 2010, and how his engagement with the delegates and participation in the event gave it legitimacy.<sup>2</sup>

In the next section, Carolyn Ellis, Aitor Gomez Gonzalez, and Sophie Tamas attend to Norman’s impact on their respective career developments. In “Coming out with Norman: Connecting our voices,” Carolyn Ellis takes us back to their first meeting at the 1987 SSSI Stone Symposium in Arizona and a subsequent publication in which Norman’s feedback “changed [her] life.” She then draws the reader into a 1990 conference presentation by revisiting audio recordings of the session, to questions of representation, lived experience, textuality – to lively debate, agreement, and disagreement – to academic relationships forged over the unfolding of decades.

Aitor Gomez Gonzalez (“Norman Denzin, or, a life dedicated to social transformation from the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry”) next highlights in his chapter the influence Norman has had on his academic career in the context of ICQI. Lyrically bringing together Norman with Bob Dylan, Gomez Gonzalez orients the call to social justice as being at the heart of Norman’s project.

The section closes with Sophie Tamas’s poem, “I seek you, ICQI,” of which no description I can present will do it justice. (Trust me).

The fourth section of this issue highlights Norman’s contributions to specific topical or disciplinary areas. To wit, Claudio Moreira, Bryant Keith Alexander, and Emily Noelle Sanchez Ignacio attend to Norman’s contributions to performance studies, autoethnography, and the sociological imagination.

In Claudio Moreira’s chapter (“A moral discourse: What Norman K. Denzin does, or, simply a love letter to my dear Boss”), he presents Norman as a builder