

An Analysis

As discussed in [Chapter 2 - Assumptions](#), qualitative inquiry should be “disciplined inquiry.” To make sure qualitative inquiry *is* disciplined, several standards have been proposed by various authors. Although no single study is likely to adhere to all these standards, the more standards that *are* met or at least addressed, the more believable and influential the inquiry is going to be to people with whom the study is shared. Consumers of qualitative studies can use these standards to judge the quality of the inquiries they read.

Although standards have been suggested by several different authors, the ones presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Guba and Lincoln (1989) provide an excellent core of criteria for a beginning. They suggest four types of standards or criteria be used to ensure the *trustworthiness* of qualitative inquiries: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They also recommend several techniques for conducting studies so they meet these standards.

The rationale for trustworthiness as the central objective of these standards is centered on the desire most people have for truth. As was discussed in [Chapter 2 - Assumptions](#), qualitative inquirers agree that most claims people make are based on their constructions of reality. A major objective in sharing our findings from inquiry thus becomes the persuasion of others that our constructions of reality are of value and should be considered in *their* constructions. Whether or not these claims are “True” in any ultimate sense can only be tested over time through many different experiences in a variety of contexts (this is the ultimate kind of generalization). But for any given study, the objective is one of persuasiveness— providing evidence that is compelling enough that audiences are willing to listen and consider the claims made. In other words, the more the inquirer can do to make the inquiry trustworthy, the more likely it is that readers will be persuaded to read on.



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