

Manifesto for a gentle research methodology

Tread carefully and slowly.

Take time to build meaningful relationships with individuals, groups, places and materials. Be sensitive and responsive to their concerns, priorities and quirks.

Use the body as a research tool.

Find ways to move, work, eat, or rest together. Engage multiple senses, go along with everyday activities, and attune to subtle, non-verbal details.

Sit with self-doubt, awkwardness and regret.

Uncomfortable sensations and emotions are often weeded out when writing and representing research, but they can point to what is important.

Gentleness can be understood as a particular orientation towards participants, materials and oneself in the planning, praxis and representation of academic research. Influenced by participatory and ethnographic approaches, a gentle methodology is responsive, collaborative, and slowly paced. It pays attention to the bodies and bodily conduct of researcher and researched, and is concerned with small details, emotions, materials and reciprocal relations of care.

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Cultivate a shared approach.

Design, carry out, and disseminate research in collaboration with participants. Cooperate to identify methods that are context appropriate and mutually beneficial.

Allow space to pause.

Build in opportunities to step away, reflect, return and revisit.

Amplify the empathetic and reciprocal.

Notice and spotlight the mundane instances of sharing and practices of care which take shape in research encounters.

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