

Prepared for the
Insights Association



The Fine Line Between Exploitation and Empathy in Qualitative Research

A Talk by Cynthia D. Harris of 8:28 Consulting, LLC.

Welcome... And thank you for coming!

MORE ABOUT ME...



Cynthia Harris, MBA
Consumer Champion | Brand Partner | Peloton
Junkie | (Ex- P&G, McCormick)



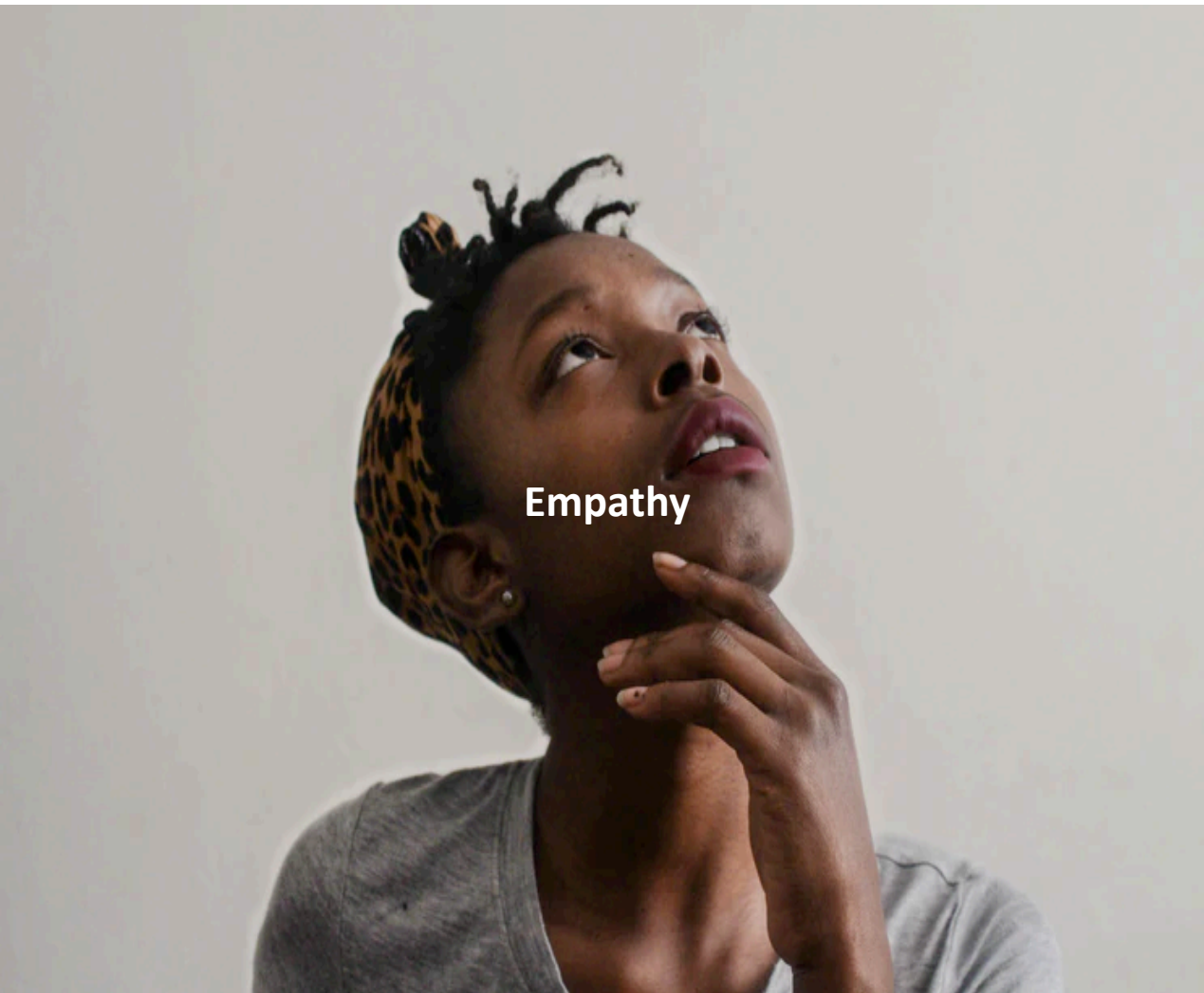
(Cheers, to an amazing two days!)



In our 20-minutes together, we are going to...

- **LEARN** the difference between empathy and exploitation
- **GAIN** a better understanding of the researcher's role in creating an empathetic research environment
- **BE EMPOWERED** with culturally appropriate ways to empathize during research engagements

Let's start with an activity...



Blackface-inspired Sweater Launch (Gucci)

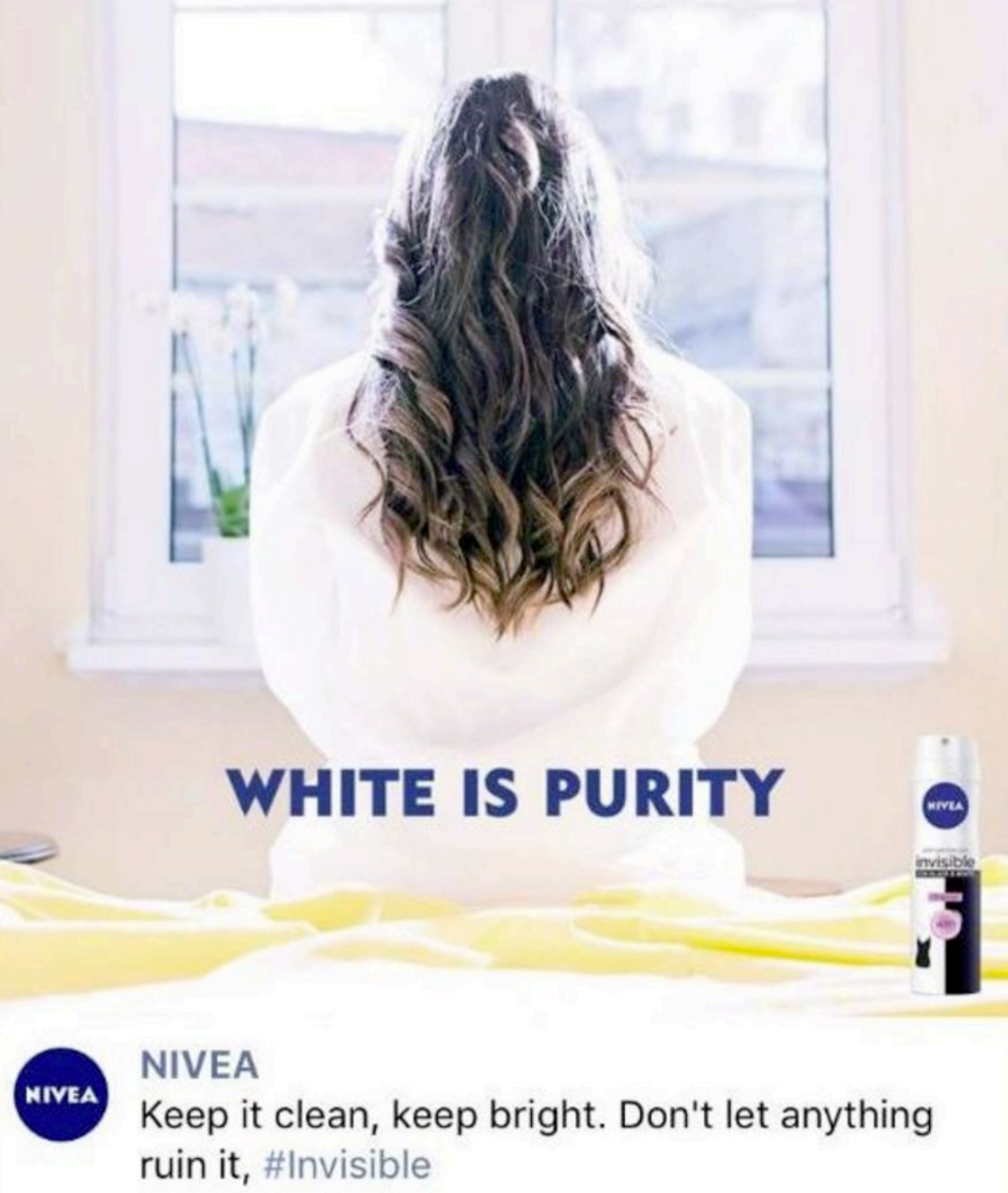


EMPATHY...?

OR

EXPLOITATION...?

White is Purity Campaign (Nivea)



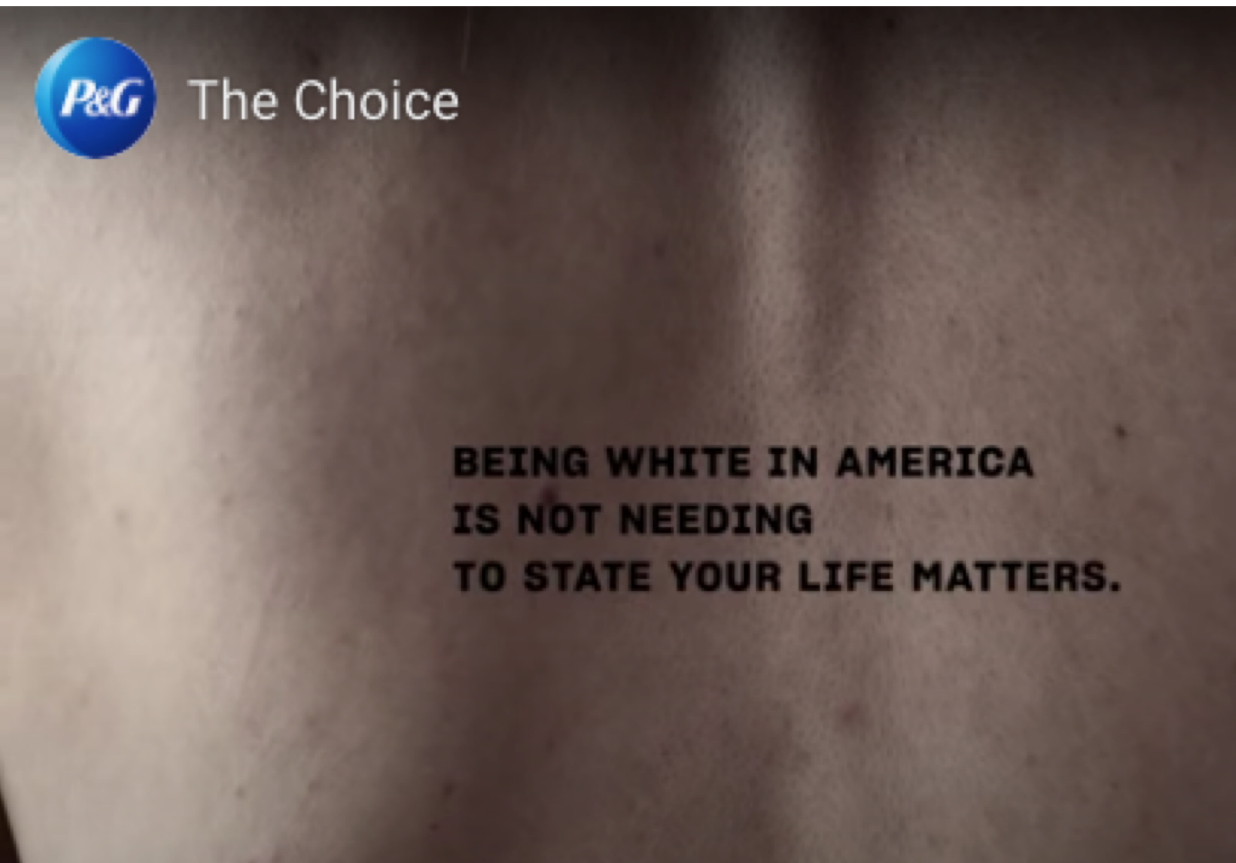
EMPATHY...?

OR

EXPLOITATION...?



The Choice Campaign (P&G)



EMPATHY...?

OR

EXPLOITATION...?

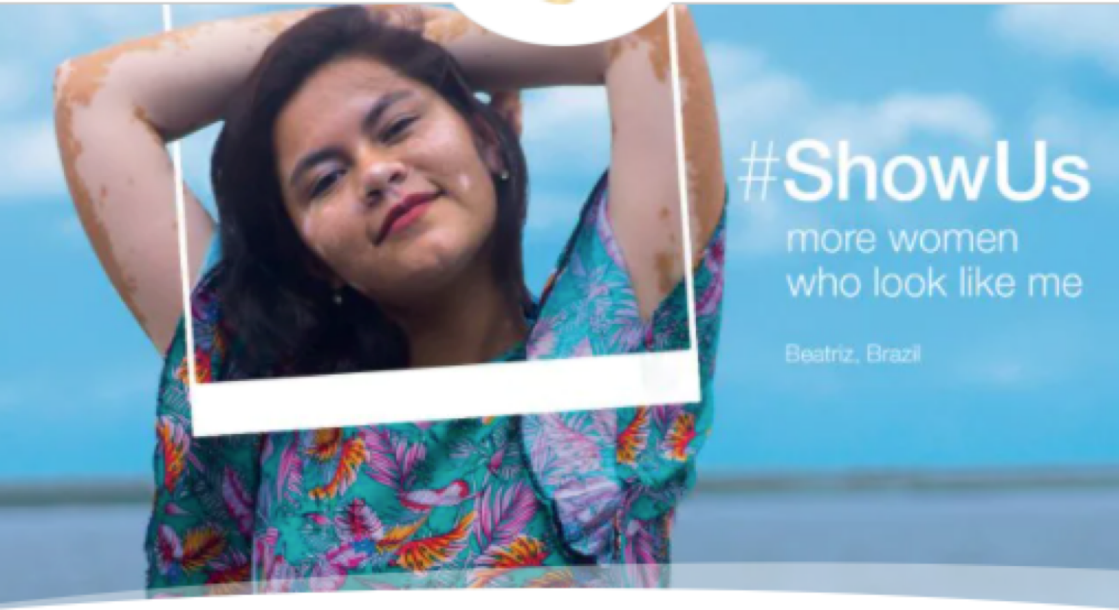
Live Bolder Spot feat. Kylie Jenner (Pepsi)



EMPATHY...?

OR

EXPLOITATION...?



Dove



Take care, be safe.

Project #ShowUs

Dove is partnering with women & non-binary individuals everywhere to create Project #ShowUs, a collection of 10,000+ images that offer a more inclusive vision of beauty for all media & advertisers to use.

#ShowUs Campaign (Dove)

EMPATHY...?

OR

EXPLOITATION...?



The point is not to bash these brands...

BUSINESS 02/07/2019 08:04 am ET

Gucci Apologizes For Black Balaclava Sweater That Resembles Blackface Caricatures

The Italian luxury brand removed the \$890 top from its website and stores after people compared it with racist caricatures.

By Jenna Amatulli

The New York Times

Pepsi Pulls Ad Accused of Trivializing Black Lives Matter

f WhatsApp Twitter Email Print 541



Nivea removes 'white is purity' deodorant advert branded 'racist'

🕒 4 April 2017

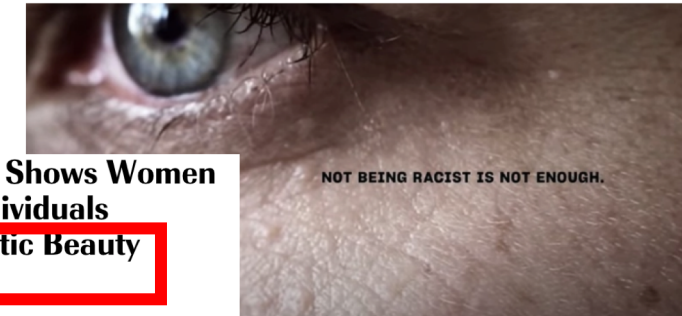


P&G debuts 'The Choice' in multimillion dollar ad push addressing racism in America

Published June 11, 2020

Peter Adams
Reporter

in f t e



Dove's New Project Shows Women and Non-Binary Individuals Shattering Unrealistic Beauty Standards

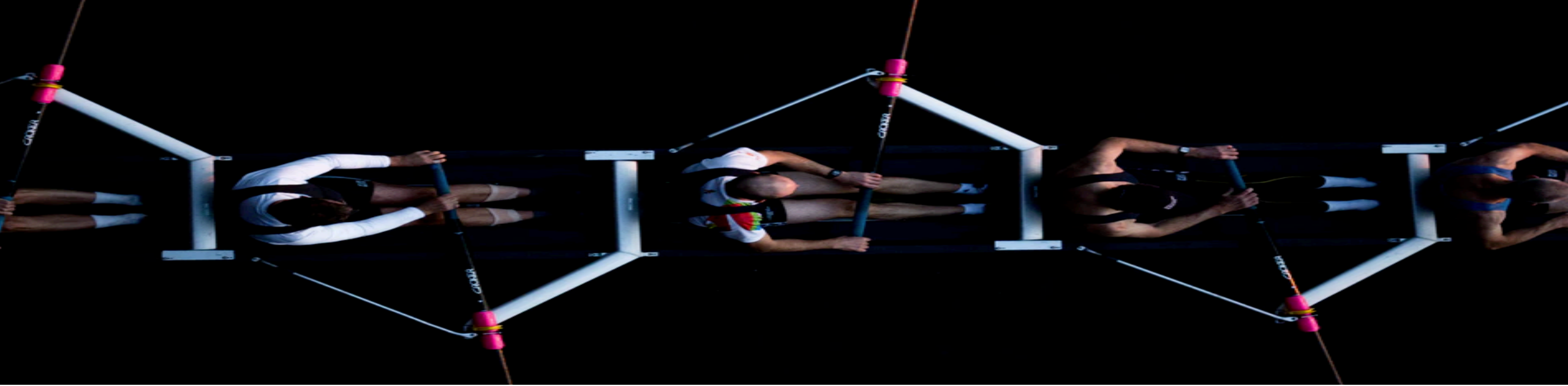
It's the largest photo bank in the world.

By Maya Allen Apr 6, 2019



...or to only praise these brands (though - I stan!)





...rather to explore the ways in which we, as researchers, can move our insights practices **towards empathy** and away from exploitation.

^
*Especially as it relates to
multicultural consumers*

Let's talk definitions...



Exploitation
taking undue advantage of
consumers by the brand
for its own benefit or
purpose.



Empathy
the deliberate and authentic
attempt to vicariously
experience the feelings,
thoughts, or attitudes of
another



Quick History on **Empathy...**

‘Einfühlung’

*a German term from aesthetics
meaning “**to project yourself into
what you observe**” (Titchener, 1909)*



We must move from **Empathy** as a buzzword to Empathy as a **central operating principle**.




Black consumers were almost **twice as likely** as the general population to say a brand's commitment to **diversity, equality and social justice** is important when choosing a product or service.



67% of Hispanic Consumers expect brands to step up their collective contribution to **society**.



Asian-Americans' buying power **far outpaced** all other demographic groups over the past 20 years - on track to reach **\$1.3 trillion** in 2022.



As our world increasingly becomes more diverse, especially in the US, it is critical that we root market research efforts in a **genuinely empathic approach...**



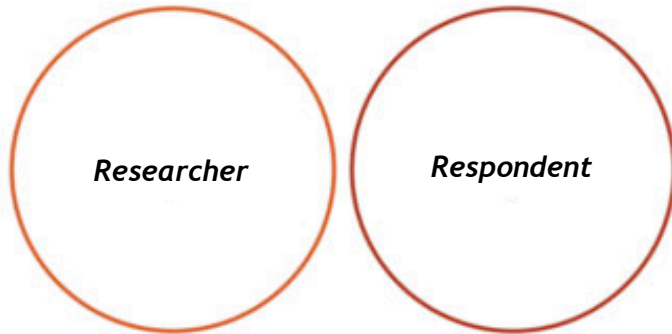
We can likely all agree...

...There is a fine line between
exploitation and *empathy* in
branding...



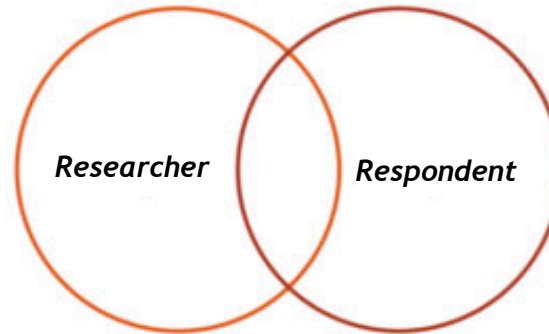
What does empathy look like in practice?

No Empathy



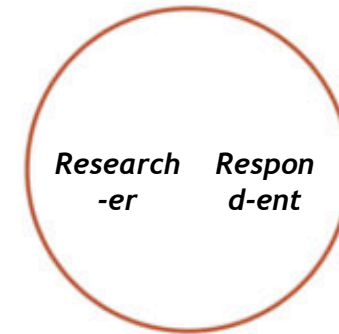
*Cognitive
Perspective Taking*

Empathizing



*Emotional Convergence
Empathetic Responding*

Too Much Empathy



*Empathetic Distress
Inauthenticity*


Examples from my experience...

No Empathy




SITUATION	Black women, diagnosed with a terminal illness, mixed income
WHAT HAPPENED	A stakeholder wanted to remove her from the study due to 'articulation challenges'
OUTCOME	Advocated for her inclusion due to her unique perspective

Empathizing



SITUATION	New Moms, Infant feeding behaviors
WHAT HAPPENED	Initial difficulty with show rates
OUTCOME	Allowed mom to pick a 'nap time' that worked for them; increased show rates exponentially

Too Much Empathy*



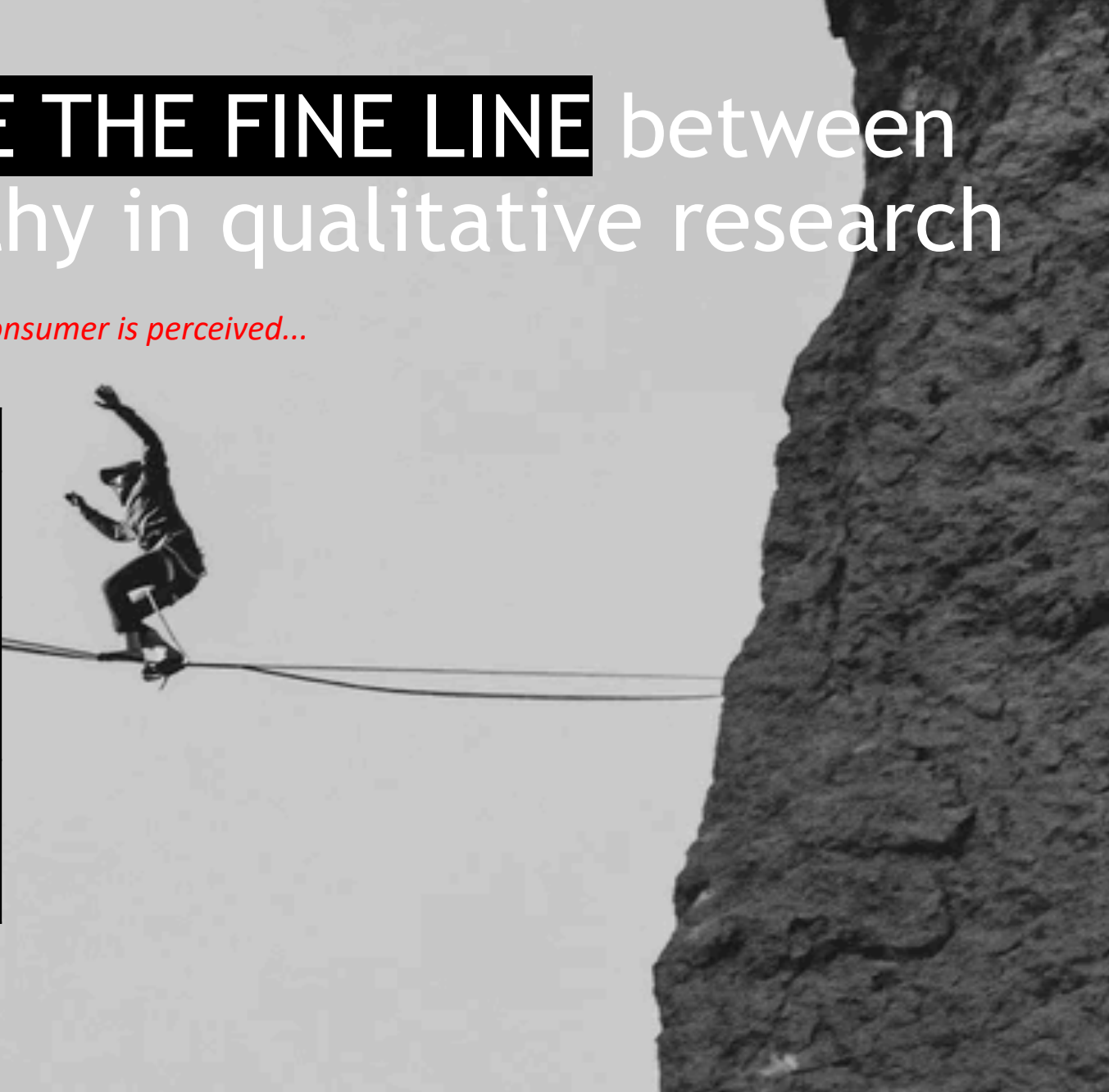
SITUATION	Use codes/ phrases that are misaligned with respondent's values and context
WHAT HAPPENED	Overcompensation which can open door for leading questions
OUTCOME	Authentically integrate cultural understanding without seeking to be the subject


* My involvement occurred after this example occurred

As Researchers, **WE ARE THE FINE LINE** between exploitation and empathy in qualitative research

Throughout the research process, we strongly influence how a consumer is perceived...

Is this consumer...		
Poor and Inarticulate?	OR	Navigating the shock of a terminal illness while also managing low income?
Ill-equipped to manage their finances?		Come from a family riddled with generational challenges related to money?
A terrible English-speaker and difficult to communicate with?		Someone recreating their identity as they acculturate to American norms?



A man with tattoos and a blue shirt is standing in a crowded airport at night, looking thoughtful with his hand on his chin. The background is blurred, showing other people and airport lights.

So what should
I do with this
knowledge,
Cynthia?



1

Incorporate a **multicultural mindset** at the onset of learning plan development

- Include multicultural consumers at the forefront
- Diverse team
- Creative recruiting





Adopt a **Courageous Spirit**

- Admit you do not know it all
- Speak up - advocate for diverse consumers
- Consider imagery and words used





Seek first to understand, then to be understood -Stephen Covey

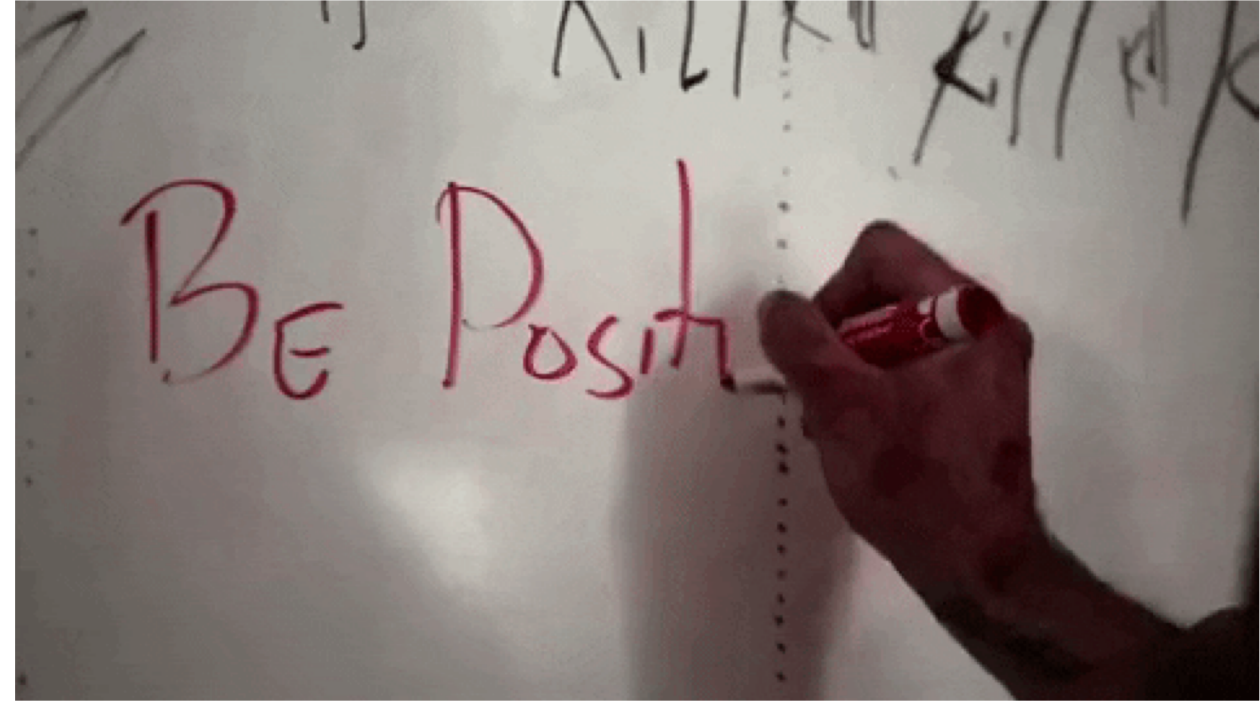
- Listen without interruption
- Holistic Listening - *ears, eyes and heart*
- Eternal curiosity
- Delay judgement



4

Assume **positive intent**

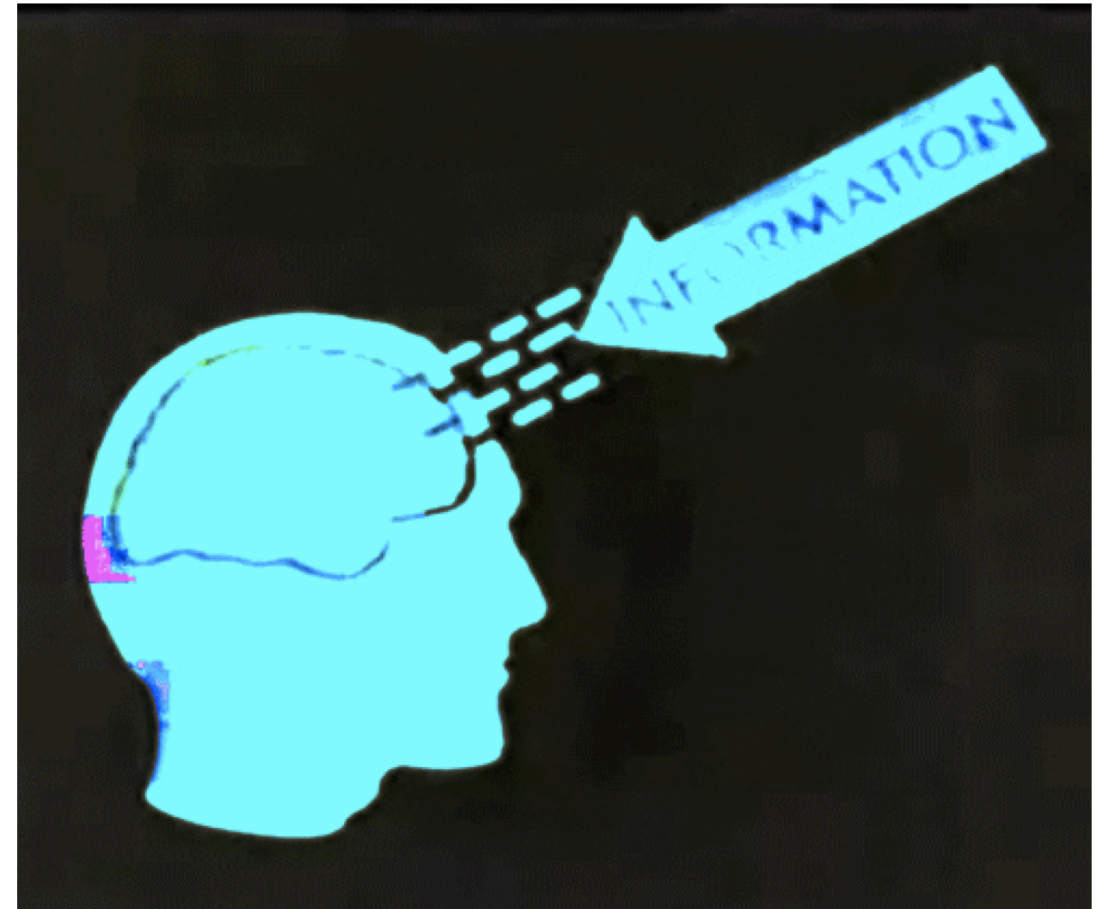
- Identify situational details
- Offer the benefit of the doubt (with consumers and colleagues)
- Get the bigger picture



5

Make it a priority to **educate yourself**

- Take advantage of resources in this space *(ask me for specific recommendations)*
- Find an ‘informal mentor’ to be a safe space
- Exercise your empathy muscle





Remember

YOU ARE THE FINE LINE
between exploitation
and empathy in
qualitative research



THANK YOU IDEA FORUM!



in

Link with me

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/cdharris/>



Email Me

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Let's connect! I'd love to keep the conversation going...



Empathy + Equity in Qual Research.

A panel talk with colleagues and friends.



Cynthia D. Harris, MBA
ceo, 8:28 Consulting



Roben Allong
Founder and CEO, Lightbeam
Communications



Rob Volpe
CEO, Ignite 360



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