

Book Review / Recension d'ouvrage

Demarginalizing Voices: Commitment, Emotion, and Action in Qualitative Research

Edited by Jennifer M. Kilty, Maritza Felices-Luna, and Sheryl C. Fabian
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As qualitative research methods continue to widen in social science, there remains a legacy that needs to be continually addressed by post/positivist paradigms and means to construct knowledge. Even within qualitative research, methodologies that confront power relationships through less traditional approaches to research and knowledge production have unique challenges and considerations. Kilty, Felices-Luna, and Fabian have assembled voices from critical social researchers engaging in qualitative work with vulnerable populations to share not only their methods undertaken but also the resistance and challenges faced along the way. Voices were gathered from Canadian researchers across the country in various social science disciplines, including criminology, sociology, nursing, and justice; however, critical social researchers outside of these disciplines will find similar struggles as well as those who engage in research with vulnerable populations.

Demarginalizing Voices: Commitment, Emotion, and Action in Qualitative Research is divided into three parts that include diverse approaches in research, ethical dilemmas, and the emotional identity as a researcher. Part 1 explores obstacles experienced by critical social researchers and the consequences taken on by both the researcher and the participants in the research. Between controversial topics such as the right to die

and provoking institutional forms of exclusion of vulnerable populations like Aboriginal women or homeless people, researchers may find themselves working against barriers imposed by their institutions and/or ethics review boards. Researchers engaged (or those starting their research careers) in critical qualitative research methods with vulnerable populations or sensitive topics will appreciate the candid dialogue from each author's open and honest narrative of their experiences. Contributors candidly describe overcoming barriers both through the research process and those experienced by vulnerable populations.

Part 2 centres the conversation on ethics and institutions and questions if ethics review boards contribute or hinder ethics in research and if academic administrations and other structured institutions promote research with vulnerable groups or set up obstacles. Critical social researchers may find themselves in a "quagmire" between ethics requirements and the vulnerable population when they are required to abide by the ethics review boards and meeting the demands of institutional challenges. Contributors go on to discuss that even while they as researchers undergo such scrutiny, those monitoring their research have little or no accountability. This constructed hierarchy seems to serve the needs of the institutions and reinforces the barriers critical social researchers are trying to break down while championing the rights of vulnerable people. This ambiguous dialogue places each in separate corners with their backs up against the wall, working to preserve their definitions of best interest. Where the researcher must engage in a reflexive conversation, advocating for the vulnerable, the institution, administration, and ethics review boards focus on standardized measures to evade liability. Contributors lay out their pathways and points of intersection in the dialogue that not only confront barriers but also offer insights into navigating this dialogue that keeps the intent of the research and the rights of vulnerable groups at the centre.

Part 3 explores the role of emotions and identity as well as the dialectic between research and data ownership. Vulnerable groups such as Indian Residential School survivors find their voice lost amid the layers of systemic standpoints of who decides what is true. Despite claims of abhorrent abuse, the claim may be ignored because it does not fall within the rules that govern and decide what makes for a valid claim. Not only are the victims continually victimized and silenced, researchers may also find their role in the process as advocate and activist one of emotional upheaval; and they may question their identity and role. Putting the significance back into the "human(e)" in research,

contributors share personal journeys and struggles to balance their work as researchers with elevating the voice of vulnerable groups while maintaining self-care along the way.

All those interested or engaging in critical social research and those working with vulnerable populations will identify with the conversations in this book. As well, researchers will appreciate the openness contributors have with sharing their stories and willingness to engage in reflexive conversations. Throughout the book, references to a resistance against positivism and systemic barriers encourage researchers to raise “their voices” (p. 189) and challenge the drive to homogenize social research and mirror positivist methodologies. Shifting the presumption of how participants are viewed in the research process from one of doing research *on* participants to one of doing research *with* participants and having a “genuine dialogue” will lead to resisting knowledge generation from data sets that lack participation and mutual trust. To not only better understand the experience of vulnerable groups but “to draw an archaeology of alienation” (Foucault & Khalfa, 2006, p. 80), critical social researchers need to have support from both ethics review boards and their institutions. However, often this work involves destructing barriers these groups have established and continue to propagate. Kilty, Felices-Luna, and Fabian’s work demonstrates that these barriers can be overcome and their stress on the importance of positioning oneself as an activist invokes a collective contribution to critical social research that should induce and sustain change that benefits marginalized voices.

References

Foucault, M., & Khalfa, J. (2006). *History of Madness*. London: Routledge.