

Histories, politics, and cultural considerations in qualitative research

[BOOK REVIEW]

Nakray, Keerty, Alston, Margaret & Whittenburg, Kerri (2016). **Social sciences research ethics for globalizing world: Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective**. Routledge. 332 pages. ISBN -13: 978-0-415-71622-2

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A book for emerging and veteran researchers working in diverse contexts; contributors in this volume go far beyond than to report research findings from qualitative study designs. They contextualize histories, politics, and cultural considerations and propose that these need to be respectfully interwoven together. This book, **Social sciences research ethics for globalizing world: Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspective** edited by Keerty Nakray, Margaret Alston & Kerri Whittenburg provides an essential tool for Research Ethics Committees, whose roles include to review, approve or reject research proposals and decide on whether the intended research will be completed in the “right”, rather than “wrong” way. Such decisions are based upon a system guided by universal ethical principles – principles that assume there is universal agreement about the right way to conduct research – that is obtaining informed consent, minimizing the risk of harm to participants, protecting their anonymity and confidentiality and avoiding using deceptive practices and giving participants the right to withdraw from your research.

This is a brilliant, evocative and timely book about an issue that serves to both define and create ethical

standards when conducting research in diverse settings. Feminist approaches are popular in qualitative research and yet there is a need for continued reflection of what these mean in varied contexts; Chapter 2 in this book gives examples of and recommendations that resonate with some in this special issue (Shefer, 2020). This is useful as South Africa and India share similarities in experience with gender, sexuality and health politics, especially in the area of HIV prevention through safer sex behavioural promotions. At the time of finalising this review, the global community was battling with the challenge of Covid-19 and the impact of this novel corona virus on stigma and gender relations post Covid-19 is yet to be realised. Some of the ethical quandaries discussed here, in particular in Chapters 7 and 8, continue to be in the agenda of scholars from the south and were discussed in a recent webinar hosted by the Historical Trauma and Transformation at the University of Stellenbosch (Historical Trauma and Transformation, 2020).

The universality of basic ethical principles has gained momentum in social research and humanities. The need to contextualise the application is brought to the fore in this book. This is a debate that continues and needs to continue and qualitative researchers are best placed for this. PINS has been at the helm of providing that platform for critical scholarship. It is envisaged that a book like this will open more debates, as it should, with agreements and disagreements influenced by researcher's idiosyncratic experiences from various parts of the global community.

It is true, and evident in this book that the North-South divide is as artificial as it is real and this is also captured by Bradbury (2014) in the positioning of the PINS scholarship within the global North's qualitative platforms. Moreover, beyond academy, this book provides a significant resource and will have impact in the works of critical organic scholars and political activists offering an underpinning social justice perspective for research. Methodological moves have been positioned as political moves, and as practical philosophy concerned with action or social justice. Grassroots organisations working in the contexts of rights movements have an important resource in this book, as major drivers in informing the development of ideas about producing knowledge in more democratic ways. In other words, this book contributes to advocating for alternative orientation to traditional research, with greater participation, empowerment, ethicality, or claims to truth. The contributors often focus on equalising the power dynamics between the researchers and the researched, including "de-privileging the researcher as the only" expertise (Byrne, Canavan, & Millar, 2009). Inclusive research is with, by or sometimes for the researched. In contrast to research on them; there is a focus on collaboration and respect for different knowers with the explicit purpose of social transformation.

The orientation of the contributors in the book is that of critical and de-colonial scholars' movement, pushing towards inclusive research and having come from the development of qualitative research and sociological perspectives. Qualitative research methodologies have highlighted and problematized the ethics of hierarchical relationships between researchers and participants. They have stressed the need to give participants a greater voice as holders of valid perspectives and insights into their experiences and social worlds.

A logical step for some; using those perspectives and people in the design and conduct of the research to further see the world through the eyes of those whom the research concerns. Sociological perspective has similarly raised the importance of "cooperative enquiry" (Kiernaon, 1999), that is research that addresses the priorities of the group in question and enables their deeper understanding.

In a way this book pursues a line of thinking: Where are the primary moves towards inclusive research – participatory and emancipatory research – happening today? In a way it provides answers by highlighting two complex movements that are building and have social justice at their core: inclusive research, concerned with socially just ways of knowing (Cook, 2012), and inclusive education, concerned with socially just ways of organising teaching and learning (Clough, 2000). Inclusive research acts critically on the relationship between those who research and those who are researched to make the research more collaborative and relevant. Inclusive education acts to bring in learners from the periphery, making everyday education more relevant to all learners. In the end, the contributors in their respective chapters in the book highlight reciprocity of inclusive research, as it matters to the people being researched, and how it benefits them and offers them "access and represents their views and experiences", and treats them with dignity and respect.

Furthermore, this book is particularly strong in situating the ethical conduct in conducting research as it posits a practice that is more respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful versus ethnocentric, unethical and exploitative research. This is an aspirational situation for all researchers; however the practical guidelines, competent and contextually relevant training is not readily available to students. Resultantly, researchers battle with challenges about how to respond to unexpected field experiences that were not covered in instructional material in their post graduate classes (Historical Trauma and Transformation, 2020). The conversations in Chapters 11, 16 and 17 are critical during this time when everybody is at risk of, and attempting to be safe from the corona virus whilst needing to continue scholarship to advance knowledge on the impact of the virus on the society. The ethics of care are going to be more important as vicarious and

secondary trauma will likely increase as a result of the pressures of the pandemic on family, friends, students and colleagues.

This careful articulation of a range of research methodologies, from different geopolitical spaces, whilst at the same time adhering to ethics, is a vital contribution, and is welcome and full of promise.

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