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Book Review

The Critical Methodologies Collective (ed.) (2022) *The Politics and Ethics of Representation in Qualitative Research: Addressing Moments of Discomfort.* Oxon: Routledge.

The Politics and Ethics of Representation in Qualitative Research is a timely and refreshingly unconventional text. It will have wide interdisciplinary appeal, but it is likely to be of particular interest to critical scholars that seek to resist injustice and challenge methodological orthodoxies in their work. The editors – *The Critical Methodologies Collective* – are an international group of feminist researchers who have been meeting and co-learning for almost a decade. Reflecting on their own experiences of ethical discomfort, arising at different stages of their doctoral studies, this text names and unpacks a number of representational issues that may feel familiar to qualitative researchers, but have also been left widely unacknowledged or unspoken.

Notably, this is a book that transcends procedural ethics and creates room for a much deeper series of reflections about interpersonal commitments, responsibilities and practices in qualitative research. By acknowledging moments of discomfort as sites of knowledge production and putting the concept of 'accountability' to work, this text deals with important questions like: What modes of representation are ethically accountable to those involved in research? How might we imagine and realise more affective and reciprocal ethical practices? What does it mean to practice solidarity in research and how can we remain politically accountable to communities of resistance?

The Politics and Ethics of Representation in Qualitative Research stands out in both content and form. Careful consideration has gone into the aesthetics of this text. For instance, each chapter is structured by a series of visual abstractions (created by *Sarah Katarina Hirani*) that prompt moments of reflection and pause. The authors also experiment with some brave and unique writing techniques. Chapter 1, presented by Tove Lundberg, is written as a conversation between different facets of herself (a social researcher and a clinical psychologist). This account details the challenge and complexity of

navigating terminology in a study that addresses the experiences of people classified as having 'disorders of sexual development' or being 'intersex'.

In Chapter 2, Johanna Sixtensson examines informed consent within and beyond research. Notably, this chapter explores (i) the shifting and performative nature of consent, (ii) the pressure to offer consent that young people can face and (iii) the agency participants might demonstrate (directly or indirectly) through various forms of refusal work. Agency is an equally important theme in Chapter 3 where Emma Söderman's account of a community theatre project – the No Border Musical – examines complexities of representation in activist research alongside the radical possibility of community theatre. In this case, the contestation of invisibility felt by undocumented migrants in Sweden.

Chapter 4 examines 'waiting' in ethnographic research. Reflecting on her time studying the experiences of migrant workers in Delhi, Pankhuri Agarwal offers an expert reframing of waiting, as a central feature of ethnography. Waiting is positioned and justified here as a practice that holds opportunities for reciprocity and learning. The politics of researcher and researched are never far from this chapter though, as Pankhuri acknowledges, it is ultimately researchers that benefit from waiting, while participants have no choice but to wait.

Chapter 5 troubles the simplicity of research terms like 'studying up', 'down' or 'sideways'. Reflecting on her research with university students in Sulaimani (Iraqi Kurdistan), Katrine Scott explores the complexity that 'studying sideways' fails to capture. Reflecting candidly on her efforts to 'match' with participants' expressions of self, Scott also contributes an awareness of how our own representational practices can open up and close down opportunities for dialogue and learning.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the ethics of representation in the analysis and presentation of research. In Chapter 6, Vanna Nordling explores the challenge of representing acts of resistance in a Swedish study of social work. At some point in their careers, it is likely that many qualitative researchers will encounter the tension of representing behaviours/practices that could harm respondents. This chapter offers useful reflections to that end, alongside sharing what is lost and gained (analytically) by opting for a 'disembodied representation' that shows less not more of the individual. Chapter 7 (written by Marta Kolankiewicz) extends this theme brilliantly, focusing on the logic and implications of different anonymization techniques. Researchers, at any level, tasked with anonymization and the selection of pseudonyms will benefit from reading this chapter.

The last substantive chapter (Chapter 8) reflects upon caring encounters in ethnographic research. Care is a theme that runs throughout the text, but in this chapter, Eda Hatice Farsakogule and Pouran Djampour focus particularly on sharing as an enabler and expression of care. Reflecting on (i) experiences of personal difficulty during their own doctoral studies; (ii) their reluctance to share this with participants; and (iii) being invited, by participants, to 'come closer' and reveal more of themselves, this chapter emphasises the value of unlearning orthodoxies of distance and justifying 'reciprocities of care' between researchers and participants. This is a chapter that speaks loudly and honestly to the interpersonal realities of much ethnographic work, where human bonds exceed neat dichotomies (researcher/participant) and challenge the assumption that it is researchers who should expect to give but not receive care.

It is difficult within such a brief review to account for the full range of contributions offered by *The Politics and Ethics of Representation in Qualitative Research*. This expertly written text engages a number of significant themes. Each chapter is layered and engages with a wider range of ethical and methodological debates than its organising subject implies. For this reason, I can envisage this being a text that I will refer back to regularly and recommend to students and colleagues. Beyond this, a major accomplishment (in my view) is that *The Politics and Ethics of Representation in Qualitative Research* is *generative* because it opens up a reflexive dialogue with the reader that resembles the careful and intellectually disruptive qualities attributed to *The Critical Methodologies Collective* itself.

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