DEMARGINALIZING

Commitment, Emotion, and Action in Qualitative Research

VOICES

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Introduction

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Contemporary social science research continues to be shaped by aware-ness of the ethically questionable and deceptive medical and psychological research that characterized the postwar world. Several examples come to mind, including, of course, Nazi experimentation, Milgram's classic obedience study, the Stanford Prison experiment, and Laud Humphreys's tearoom trade study.[1] At the same time that universities began to develop research ethics review boards as a way to avoid ethical quagmires in research practice, the new wel-fare era was also being marked by significant social and political shifts that emerged as a result of a number of progressive social movements, including the movements for women's and civil rights, environmental/green concerns, labour rights, and human rights and social justice. Meshing well with new ethical concerns for participant-informed consent and well-being, the radical politics behind these movements helped to shape a more flexible and dy-namic research environment, one in which scholars could consider the inter-secting roles and influences of their own voices as well as those of their research subjects or participants on both research methods and findings. Consequently, since the 1960s, researchers in the humanities and social sci-ences have consistently brought to the fore concerns about how we conduct research and the underlying suppositions (usually unconscious) and conse-quences (usually unintended) of the knowledge produced by it. These re-searchers continue to identify areas that remain un- or under-researched and often problematize the normative discourses and measures used to conduct and evaluate research so as to suggest ways to improve interpretations and explanations of social phenomena.

Marxist researchers, for instance, pushed us to examine class distinctions (Garland 1990) and participate in the transformation of the living and working conditions of the populations being studied. Early feminism critiqued the lack of gender analysis in most social research (Harding 1987; Smith 1987, 1990) and identified the need to fight for equality. Critical race, black, and Latina feminism criticized early feminism for its failure to account for racial disparity among women as well as between men and women (Hill Collins 2000) and therefore highlighted the need to take positionality into account. Postcolonial researchers opened our eyes to the ownership of research and data (Smith 1999) and to the ethnocentrism of Western science and Western research(ers), and community-based participatory action research has encouraged us to rectify the issues of data ownership and social exclusion by including the communities and groups we study throughout the evolution and analysis of our work (Kirby and McKenna 1989; Kirby, Greaves, and Reid 2006; Ristock and Pennell 1996; Smith 1999).

These critiques made researchers cognizant of the intrinsic power dynamics in research; the inherent political nature of research; and the need for an ethical commitment to the individual participants and the larger population being studied. As a result, researchers began to revise some of their research practices. They aimed to become more reflexive, for example, because they believed that reflexivity would produce "better" and more nuanced knowledge. Some researchers have encouraged the use of qualitative methodologies influenced by critical epistemological paradigms (distinct from qualitative data gathering or analysis techniques) to this effect. Others endorse what some term *committed scholarship* (Bellot, Sylvestre, and St-Jacques, this volume) and the researcher's responsibility to directly and positively affect the lives of the population being studied (also see Dell, Fillmore, and Kilty, this volume).

Although there was some academic and broader institutional acceptance of critical qualitative and ethnographic methods throughout the 1960s and 1970s, methodological developments since then indicate a resurgence of the institutionalization of positivist language, methods, and approaches to conducting research, all of which have been increasingly used by the state, granting councils, ethics review boards, and the academy to determine the types of work recognized as legitimate or valuable (Martel 2004; Martel, Hogeveen, and Woolford 2006; Menzies and Chunn 1999; Chunn and Menzies 2006). To be clear, positivist research – characterized by a realist ontology; a dualist and objectivist epistemology in which findings are considered to be true; and an experimental, manipulative verification of hypothesis methodology drawing chiefly from quantitative methods (Lincoln and Guba 2003, Table 6.1, 256) – has always maintained a privileged space in academia. Lincoln and

Guba (2003) refer to it as the "received view." As a result, conducting critical scholarship, especially qualitative and ethnographic work that draws on innovative or "alternative" methods and practices, requires that researchers tackle a number of diverse challenges to their work, some of which include obtaining grants and access (to sites, material, and people), responding to unfitting ethics demands, and finding suitable publication avenues (Arrigo 1999; Martel 2004; Martel, Hogeveen, and Woolford 2006). These challenges speak to the ways in which the academy, the state, and the public shape the context in which research is conducted, produced, understood, and (de)valued.

Debates about legitimacy and value in research tend to centre on determining what constitutes the legitimate objects, theories, and methods of the discipline. Given the received view's perception that research can and should be objective, neutral, unbiased, and apolitical (Lincoln and Guba 2003), critical social researchers – who work from constructivist, critical, participatory, feminist, postmodern, or postcolonial paradigms – often find themselves confronted by an academic community and a social science audience that dismisses and even scorns critical research for being political and researchers for their activism and subjective biases. Even the growing trend to reflexively examine and document these influences on the research process and findings has not satisfactorily addressed such characterizations (Harvey 1990; Menzies and Chunn 1999; Chunn and Menzies 2006). This critique works both ways, however, as critical social researchers frequently problematize research agendas that claim to be value-neutral. For example, some critical criminologists challenge administrative criminology, which is typically positivist in language and method, for legitimizing conventional crime control measures that can have negative material consequences on the rights, liberties, and freedoms of those who are the object of that knowledge (Hudson 2011). In this light, the discipline of criminology may be seen as an appendage of the state, serving its interests and producing and legitimizing mechanisms of social control. In other words, critical social researchers prioritize efforts to question the state's normalizing projects (Foucault 1975; Harvey 1990; Hudson 2011).

Many scholars suggest thinking beyond established methodological techniques to develop new ways of producing scientific knowledge. One way to do this involves efforts to "experience" method, which is one of the primary objectives of this book. Our notion of experiencing methods means that the chapters, albeit to varying degrees, are written from a personal or reflexive position. The contributing authors aim to showcase different experiences they have had in conducting critical social research and how those experiences have shaped future research endeavours and their understanding of different aspects of research methodology. Whether working with quantitative or

qualitative methodologies, researchers who adopt constructivist, critical, feminist, postmodern, participatory, or postcolonial paradigms often see research and the production of knowledge differently from those doing research from positivist or postpositivist paradigms.[2] Yet these scholars are far from homogeneous. All of the contributors in this book are criminologists, sociolegal scholars, sociologists of deviance, or nurses who conduct research on sensitive issues and on marginalized populations using innovative methodological and theoretical perspectives and strategies. The book plays host to the works of new and established scholars from anglophone and francophone Canadian universities in six different provinces who conduct research nationally and internationally. Bringing together such a diverse group of researchers has generated a number of important discussions.

We asked the authors to reflect on the varied and multilevel issues and challenges they face when they embark on research paths seldom taken, adopt unconventional objects and subjects of study, or conceptualize conventional ones in alternative ways. In other words, we asked the contributors to consider what they do, why they do it, and how they conduct their research when they examine marginalized voices or populations and use less traditional methodological tools or perspectives. We also asked contributors to explore what it means to conduct ethical research and to reflect on their experiences with ethics review boards. In addition, we invited them to outline their responses to the ethical quandaries they faced in the field or in the reporting of their research. The authors contextualize the resistance and hurdles they experienced throughout their research journeys, including when those in authority positions attempted to influence, limit, obstruct, and place boundaries on their research.

The purpose of this book is not to rehash the disputes between quantitative and qualitative methodology or between alternative and traditional methodologies, although these debates are part of the context in which the contributors are working and thus shape their perspectives to varying degrees. Rather, the motive for this book is to generate dialogue among critical social researchers who are doing qualitative work and to provide space for discussions that are often sidelined in methodological debates. In part, contributors illustrate with concrete substantive examples that there is no one or right way to do research, and thus they demonstrate the importance of innovation in qualitative research. Our hope is that by describing how they developed innovative methodological approaches, drawn from original and creative theoretical perspectives, and by reflecting upon their research experiences, contributors to this volume will generate an engaging and healthy discussion of a number of issues relevant to doing research on sensitive topics and/or with marginalized groups.

Structure and Content

The volume is divided into three parts. The first, "Alternative Pathways: Opting for the Road Seldom Taken," showcases the use of the diverse methodologies that the contributors have mobilized in their work (e.g., non-participant observation, community-based and participatory action research, dance as an embodied research method, and the importance of feminism in research). Collectively, these chapters examine some of the challenges of conducting critical qualitative social research and speak to the impact they can have on the researcher and the populations being studied. Chapter 1 presents Russel Ogden's original research on self-chosen death and nonparticipant observation. He reflects on his career-long experiences and challenges in studying this controversial topic and provides a kind of autoethnographic account of this research journey, particularly the challenges presented by law enforcement agencies and university administrations, even after having obtained approval from the institutional research ethics review board.

Ogden's chapter is followed by two chapters that endorse community-based and participatory action research. Chapter 2, by Colleen Dell, Catherine Fillmore, and Jennifer Kilty, describes the process of engaging in successful and collaborative research using the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession as a mechanism to create more egalitarian research relationships in which participants act as collaborators and share access and ownership of the data. It is also an example of how this type of research may produce helpful tools, beyond traditional academic research publication venues, that positively affect the lives of participants. Chapter 3, by Céline Bellot, Marie-Ève Sylvestre, and Bernard St-Jacques, showcases how participatory action research can be used as a means to create change at the policy level and simultaneously facilitate and recognize spaces of resistance that directly affect participants' lives. Grounding their research in community needs, Bellot, Sylvestre, and St-Jacques not only produce committed scholarship; they also demonstrate how the transformative agenda and possibilities of critical social research can work to combat the institutional forms of censorship that silence and render invisible marginalized groups such as the homeless. Both the work of Dell, Fillmore, and Kilty and the work of Bellot, Sylvestre, and St-Jacques open the door for a critical discussion on how scholars can endeavour to put research into praxis through community-based mobilization and alternative forms of knowledge exchange and research dissemination.

Chapter 4, by Sylvie Frigon and Laura Shantz, presents dance as a new way of exploring the carceral by looking at the body, space, and movement as sources of knowledge and resistance. Their use of poststructural discussions of the body as a criminological trope situates their use of dance as a way to

examine the criminalized body and, through their own bodies, engage with their corporeal experiences of incarceration. In Chapter 5, Dorothy Chunn and Robert Menzies discuss some of the key epistemological debates within feminism and point to the importance of feminist and profeminist research in the production of critical and alternative methodologies aimed at hearing "voices from below." They argue that reflexivity is a central component of feminist and other critical social research because it forces us to consider our own sociopolitical and moral identities, which invariably affect the generation of our research interests and questions and thus the methods we use, as well as the production of knowledge. In Chapter 6, which closes the section, Jennifer Kilty presents voice, politics, praxis, and positionality as the principles of feminist and other critical research. She reflects on her personal experiences in trying to produce feminist research within the carceral environment, which allows her to effectively question and challenge the existing barriers to accessing this research site and marginalized populations through institutional blockage precisely because critical research is viewed as a potential risk or "threat" to the institution. There is little formal documentation and thus limited academic discussion of the effects of barring critical social researchers from conducting ethnographic-inspired research in the prison setting – especially in the Canadian context. Kilty's chapter acts as a starting point from which to begin this avenue of debate and discussion.

The second part of the book, "Ethical Quagmires: Regulating Qualitative Research," focuses on ethics and the role of institutions and administrations in the practice of research. Contributors provide personal and reflexive accounts of their experiences negotiating and navigating ethical questions that arise in the field. These chapters invite the reader to consider whether ethics in research can actually be obtained through predetermined and bureaucratic mechanisms and whether ethical research is facilitated or limited by institutions – including universities and institutional research sites such as correctional and forensic hospital settings – and their administrations, including research ethics review boards. In Chapter 7, Amélie Perron, Dave Holmes, and Jean Daniel Jacob examine the political nature of doing research in correctional and forensic settings. They discuss the challenges of conducting research that maintains a commitment to social justice in a prison and point to a number of ethical issues, including institutional barriers and power relations that shape the production of critical social research in these sites. As in Kilty's chapter, the authors note that critical scholars can be constructed as disruptive and threatening to institutional order, especially when the research challenges institutional norms and practices. Arguably, despite these negative characterizations, in certain circumstances, researchers are obligated to "make waves" and

advocate for participants and other vulnerable populations in order to remain ethical.

In Chapter 8, Will van den Hoonaard depicts qualitative research as being colonized by positivism through what he terms *vertical ethics,* which include institutional research ethics review boards in particular. He describes how qualitative researchers participate in and subsequently partially endorse the process of ethics colonization by adopting the cultural signals and the symbols of positivism. In Chapter 9, Maritza Felices-Luna suggests that thinking of ethics as an object that needs to be controlled, predicted, and achieved in a predetermined and bureaucratic fashion leads institutional research ethics review boards and university administrators to focus on procedural ethics as a means of ensuring ethical research and avoiding liability. She shows the inadequacies of such a model for research that uses qualitative methodologies drawing from constructivist, critical, participatory, postmodern, and postcolonial epistemologies. She proposes ethics as a fluid process and ongoing negotiation that may be seen as a form of moral responsibility and commitment toward participants, the population being researched, and the wider research community. In Chapter 10, the final chapter of the section, John Lowman and Ted Palys expose the political nature of university administrations by examining how they challenge and marginalize ethnographic fieldwork on sensitive topics. The authors identify the paradox of how university and other bureaucratic administrations have established distinct oversight mechanisms for individual researchers, while there remains little to no external oversight of administrative practices and the complications this may present for some researchers.

The third and final part of the book, "Emotion Work and Identity: Self-Examination and Self-Awareness," examines the role of emotion and identity in research. Contributors highlight debates about research and data ownership and the sometimes conflicting roles of voice and positionality. In Chapter 11, Sheryl Fabian uses her work for the Canadian federal government, which, in part, determines the outcomes of Aboriginal claims of residential school abuse, to demonstrate how researchers reconcile the emotions they face both in the field and at home. In particular, she considers how the research conducted to determine the legitimacy of claims of residential school abuse plays a role in silencing the voices of Aboriginal applicants. This work does not require "participation" of the communities but rather treats Aboriginal claimants as applicants, which inherently reconstructs researchers as arbiters for the government. In Chapter 12, Stacey Hannem also discusses the emotionality involved in conducting research. However, unlike Fabian, who connects the emotions evoked during research to sympathy for those

she researches, Hannem connects them to conducting research on sexual offenders whose actions and discourses she condemns. Both Hannem and Fabian contend that emotionality in research is unavoidable and that, depending on the nature of the work, it can be problematic and debilitating at times.

The final two chapters of the book present the difficulties that arise when negotiating the dual identities of the academic and the activist. In Chapter 13, Melissa Munn identifies the multiple sources and moments of angst that she experienced while conducting her doctoral research. In particular, Munn discusses the evolution of her identity as a researcher throughout this academic process and the tensions that emerged in relation to voice and the potential for voice appropriation and misinterpretation that often plagues the qualitative researcher. Chapter 14, the last chapter of the book, offers an original autoethnographic piece written by Chris Bruckert, a researcher and activist. Her careful and highly reflexive analysis presents the difficulties associated with wearing different hats and the impact these identities have on one's ability to conduct research. Bruckert deftly illustrates how the ways in which researchers' self-identity, in conjunction with how they are identified by others, demonstrably affects their ability to build rapport and trust and to develop the necessary credibility for a group to accept them and allow them entrance into their culture. She candidly discusses how the identity of the researcher impacts both traditional academic pursuits, such as job security and tenure, and research pursuits, such as building a community-based research project – and how self-censorship is a tool that many researchers utilize to protect themselves and their work.

Overall, we hope that this volume is a think piece for critical scholars. Our goal is to problematize the increasing construction and treatment of research as linear and as something that can be methodologically and ethically predetermined. We hope that this text encourages increased methodological reflection among researchers and acts as a discussion point for funding evaluators and ethics protocol officers who review qualitative and methodologically alternative research proposals. This book invites criminologists, sociolegal scholars, and sociologists of deviance in particular to reflect on the diverse and multilevel issues and challenges they face in the production of academic scholarship. As you read the contributors' reflections on their research experiences; the strategies they developed to confront different research challenges; their understanding of the resistance their work faces; and the process of creating or developing a novel, radical, or otherwise alternative research project, we encourage you to consider the following questions. How does the corporate university play a role in our choices regarding who and what to research and how to do so? Given that current research ethics boards appear

to focus more on issues of liability than on the hallmark of ethical research (that which "does no harm"), in what ways do they presume researchers to be inherently unethical? How can we use reflexivity to increase the credibility of our work, especially when it involves a considerable emotional response to participant experiences? And finally, what is the relationship between censorship, silencing, and our research decisions? These questions reflect broader threads that run throughout the chapters and structure much of the discussion offered in the concluding chapter.

Notes

1 In 1961, Stanley Milgram (1974) used deception to study obedience to authority figures; he had a control group administer, unknowingly, fake electric shocks to others with increasing voltage to see how far they would go to follow instructions. In 1971, Philip Zimbardo created a prison environment in the Psychology Department at Stanford University; students acted as prison guards and prisoners to study the psychological effects of carceral settings on these relationships. When the guards began to act sadistically, Zimbardo ended the experiment a week early (Zimbardo and Musen 2004). Laud Humphreys (1970) conducted an ethnography of men who have sex with men in public washrooms; he is widely criticized for failing to get his subjects' consent, tracking down names and addresses through licence plate numbers, and interviewing the men in their homes in disguise and under false pretenses.

2 Postpositivism is characterized by critical realism (reality does exist but only imperfectly; it is probabilistically apprehendable) as the ontological position; a modified dualist/objectivist epistemology where findings are probably true; and a modified experimental/manipulative methodology aiming to falsify hypotheses through quantitative and, in some instances, qualitative methods (Lincoln and Guba 2003, 256).

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