Book Reviews

Bryan C. Clift / Ioannis Costas Batlle / Sheree Becker / Katharina Chudzikowsi (eds), *Qualitative Researcher Vulnerability. Negotiating, Experiencing and Embracing.* 262 pages, 5 b/w illustrations, £30.39. New York: Routledge, 2023. ISBN 978-1-0033-4926-6

Focusing on the vulnerability of the qualitative researcher, this edited volume suggests that vulnerability offers an additional conceptual and practical tool for thinking about how we relate to multiple dynamics of qualitative research, one that is not often present in or incorporated into current conceptualisations of empathy, ethics or risk (p. 1). Creating a space for engagement and inter- and multidisciplinary understanding, the collection examines how vulnerability is constructed, experienced and identified among researchers, their research projects and the methods they employ (p. 16). In addition to the introduction and scene-setting chapters, the book is organised into three parts: strategies for negotiating researcher vulnerability, experiences of this vulnerability and the approach of embracing it (p. 18).

Section 1 – Strategies for Negotiating Researcher Vulnerability (Chapters 2–5) covers a range of issues, such as vulnerability in the field and in online research, the shift from topic-related sensitivity to context-sensitivity, vulnerability beyond mere disclosure, internal recognition and reflexivity, understanding the precarity of oneself and others, as well as submission to the full range of human emotions (p. 36). Vulnerability is not a black-and-white condition, as the context, circumstances and project details matter in whether a person is vulnerable or not (p. 45). Thus, Chapter 2, written by Nicole Brown, views journaling as a starting point for dealing with researcher vulnerability "by making ourselves trying out innovative approaches and when we share our journal entries, we make ourselves vulnerable by opening our offering to the world" (p. 54). Olivia Brown, Julie Gore and Adam Joinson offer in Chapter 3 a framework for gaining an understanding of how researchers can protect themselves from vulnerability while working in an online research environment. In this context the authors anticipate experiencing vulnerability in two main ways: (1) ethical, legal and privacy challenges; and (2) an increased possibility of engaging with sensitive topics (p. 61). Chapter 4 by Susie Smillie and Julie Riddell delves into emotionally demanding research in online contexts and notes that conducting research can expose researchers to emotional demands in many ways, with an increased likelihood of negative effects on their physical and mental wellbeing (p. 74). Some topics may be less sensitive than others, but trauma or secondary

trauma may be triggered by issues other than the topic of interest (p. 97). Chapter 5 by Natalie Edelman chapter therefore calls for moving beyond understanding vulnerability as a topic-based phenomenon, but rather as a context-dependent phenomenon, marked by individual, social and cultural factors. The chapter also proposes the Trauma and Resilience Informed Principles and Practices Framework to attend to context in order to attenuate the risk of trauma and other harm and to recognise the benefits of vulnerability for our research practice, ourselves and our research participants, as part of a broader focus on researcher and participant resilience (p. 107).

"Opening" their "offering to the world" (p. 54) by drawing from their reflexive diaries, the contributors to *Section Two – Experiences of Researcher Vulnerability* not only deal with some overly sensitive topics, but also indicate the centrality of feelings in the research process. In this connection, the volume zooms in on how our embodied experiences powerfully shape research process, practices, outcomes and knowledge production (p. 171). Exploring vulnerability in autobiographies of a sensitive nature, Chapter 6, written by Kate Woodthorpe, offers an experiential account of writing an autobiography about her medically complex young son. This personal account reflects on the emotional work involved in being an academic and writing autobiographically as well as making difficult decisions about opening up very personal details to the public (pp. 123–124). The various emotions – related to the sharing of information about the author's son without his consent or to the crises of confidence as to whether the author will be able to deal with the critique of their work (p. 128) – and subsequently emotional reflexivity have implications for research both at the time of writing and beyond. Chapter 7 by Cassie Lowe delves into the emotional experiences of textual analyses of such sensitive autobiographies (p. 134). In this chapter the author stresses that studying traumatic autobiographies can affect a researcher's vulnerability as well. Procedural ethics often stresses the bureaucratic elements of conducting research, rather than the impact on researchers or ways to protect them from harm and the shifting contexts of conducting research with participants (p. 146). This is evident in Chapter 8, where the author Zoe Jon analyses her field notes about frequently experiencing humiliation and multiple forms of emotional vulnerability due to her gender in a predominantly masculine sports setting. Chapter 9 by Devra Waldman and her co-authors, on ethnographic vulnerabilities, draws attention to adverse situations and notes that researchers are vulnerable even when they do not perceive themselves to be (p. 160). This chapter endeavours to illustrate the diverse ways researchers become vulnerable subjects in ethnographic fieldwork, using adverse situations as generative experiences. Through these adverse experiences and the gendered, classed and situational vulnerabilities felt within them, Devra Waldman, Michael Dao, Hugo Ceron-Anaya and Michael D. Giardina aim to demonstrate that we are part of the same social world that we are trying to

explain, and hence subject to its forces (pp. 180–181). The vignettes presented demonstrate that vulnerability never assumes a single form; instead, the examples seek to reiterate the myriad ways ethnographers can experience vulnerable situations (p. 181).

The final *Section 3 – Embracing Researcher Vulnerability* focuses on how, from the outset, researcher vulnerability "can be useful, insightful, and productive within research practices" (p. 18). In this vein, in Chapter 10 Rhea Ashley Hoskin and Lilith A. Whiley underscore how vulnerability and femininity are constructed and propose that feminine values and characteristics that have been scorned and derogated by masculinist society, such as vulnerability, sensitivity and emotionality, can and should be truly valuable (p. 192). Researcher vulnerability is not only central to trust and rapport building but helps to inspire people and connect them on a deeper level (p. 193). Against institutionally, structurally and systemically unjust hierarchical knowledge productions, Hoskin and Whiley argue that femme theory and praxis, as methods of cultivating vulnerability, hold the capacity to radically shift sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic and femmephobic practices and align with egalitarian aims such as moving towards decolonising research methods (p. 200). By embracing vulnerability to decolonise knowledge production in a transdisciplinary way, Mark Batterham and Aled Singleton in Chapter 11 clear the path to a more democratic and inclusive research space and explain what being vulnerable means for our research practice (p. 218). The authors of this chapter reason that the research process then begins to take on some of the characteristics of an assemblage (p. 207), where vulnerability is relational. Chapter 12 by Dawn Mannay zooms in on the relational aspects of researcher vulnerability, considering why researchers may be at risk of harm and what can be learnt from the accounts of care-experiencing young people to reframe vulnerability as a structural challenge rather than an individual failure (p. 226).

The book is a useful resource for qualitative researchers – both novice and experienced – on multiple counts. First, it is truly transdisciplinary due to its authorship by both early career and established researchers, as well as academics and practitioners, and because of the range of settings within which a wide variety of vulnerable experiences are explored. Second, embodied reflexivity is at the core of unpacking vulnerability, but, more importantly, emotions and feelings take centre stage, which is not only useful but also a promising path for in-depth qualitative research. Third, besides exploring vulnerability in online and in-person settings, the examination of vulnerability in textual analyses of autobiographic texts invites researchers to ponder the role of emotions and feelings in the study of various forms of written materials. Finally, viewing vulnerability as relational within research as a process, the book invites embodied reflexivity along gender (Chapters 8 and 11), class (Chapter 9) and other axes of power (Chapter 11).

Despite these strengths, the volume does suffer from certain limitations that it fails to address. Its abrupt end, without a concluding chapter or epilogue, leaves the reader wondering if this edited volume can be read as a complete monograph or whether each chapter or section serves as a standalone resource. Second, the book's engagement with emotions appears to be limited. To frame emotions as factors contributing to vulnerability in its various forms, the authors contributing to this volume view emotions from the positions of strength/privilege or weakness, or in other words, as individual emotions. The opportunity seems to have been missed to explore the emotional dynamics of the research contexts and how they expose researchers to vulnerability. Third, the book primarily engages with empirical settings within the Global North. Signposting, if not including, empirical settings from the Global South might have further increased the practical utility and application of this book. Finally, the book covers vulnerability within a range of ethnographic, textual and online methods, but it offers little for those wishing to engage with vulnerability in online research. This is particularly the case beyond two aspects of vulnerability in online research that are covered in chapter two (1) ethical, legal and privacy challenges; and (2) an increased possibility of engaging with sensitive topics

Notwithstanding these limitations, the book is a useful resource for qualitative researchers at various stages of their careers across multiple social science disciplines.

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While technological developments are advancing at an unprecedented pace, the lines between online and offline have become increasingly blurred. Rapid digitisation, widespread internet usage and emerging social media platforms in recent years require more holistic and innovative approaches on the part of social scientists to grasp the intersections and interactions between online and offline. *Hybrid Ethnography*, a concept and practice combining digital and in-person ethnographic methods, is such a book that attempts to respond this need. Liz Przybylski, an interdisciplinary popular music scholar, offers a methodological guideline to carrying out ethnographic research in overlapping fields. The front cover hints perfectly at the blurring of online and offline boundaries with its illustration of an audience member recording a live concert with a