

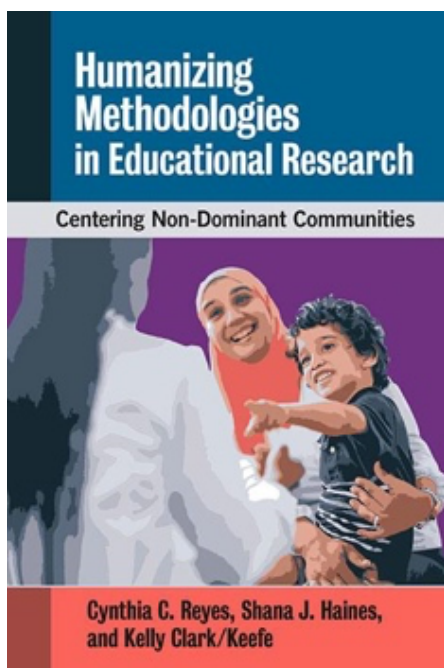
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## Humanizing Methodologies in Educational Research: Centering Non-Dominant Communities

By C. C. Reyes, S. J. Haines, & K. Clark. (2021). Teachers College Press, US. ISBN 13 978-0807765548

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Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and continued instances of systemic racism, societies of trauma unfold before us. The impact of these and other events on school children, especially those from non-dominant families, compels a growing number of scholars and educators to act and render care and support. In this context, the book *Humanizing Methodologies in Educational Research: Centering Non-Dominant Communities* written by Reyes et al. was born. These authors apply Ishimaru et al.'s (2016) definition of *non-dominant groups*, which are groups comprising low-income, immigrants/refugees, and other groups of color, marginalized by dominant institutions. They reflect on ethical concerns and methodological challenges associated with leading a

community-based research project, *Centering Connections*, which explored the relationship between refugee families and schools. Engaging in critical reflexivity, the authors examine the complex dynamics of power relations in

research relationships, particularly between researchers and refugee participants and detail how a humanizing approach is a powerful tool for fostering mutually beneficial researcher-participant relationships. The book challenges the conventional stance of researchers remaining impersonal and neutral, an elitist view of researchers as all-knowing experts, and deficit-based stereotypes of refugee communities.

The book provides practical strategies for research alongside marginalized communities and insightful thoughts on applying humanizing approaches in future qualitative research.

In Chapter 1, the authors delve into relationship building with non-dominant communities, focusing on researchers' commitment to participants. The authors argue that the humanizing approach, based on decolonizing self-reflection within the Filipino concept of *Kapawa* and critical, postcolonial, and feminist theoretical frameworks, helped them cope with the relational tensions encountered in *Centering Connections*. The approach is mainly composed of three key elements: critical reflexivity, humility, and reciprocity. Critical reflexivity requires intentional listening (Paris, 2011) to understand others' ways of knowing, and examining one's own epistemology to develop an awareness of the unequal power dynamics in research relationships. Humility calls for respecting and centering others' ways of knowing and generating learning through dialogic engagement. Reciprocity involves a transactional "give and take" (Harrison et al., 2001) and researchers' initiative to interpret, represent, and center participants' voices. These concepts guide humanizing research relationships, as explained in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 2 examines tensions arising in navigating the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and following IRB standards regarding research on non-dominant communities, especially with respect to recruiting, obtaining informed consent, and interviews. It discusses the limitations of IRB protocols and questions the term "vulnerable population," which fails to acknowledge participants' strengths and assets. The authors advise researchers to critically examine the language of consent forms and interview protocols and build relationships with participants while maintaining full consideration of the cultural, linguistic, and historical differences to ensure meaningful and respectful engagement.

In Chapter 3, the authors reflect on their experiences working with student researchers (students with refugee backgrounds and their U.S.-born peers), particularly around the dynamics of relationships. The authors emphasize that principal investigators should position themselves as learners and teachers and construct a comfortable, personal, and growing space for the team to thrive. Humanizing the relationship within the team would enable co-construction of knowledge, negotiating meaning from the lenses of cultural insiders and outsiders. Recommended practices for working with students are also put forward.

As principal investigators and the refugee families did not share the same language, partnership with interpreters was essential across the research project in focus here. In Chapter 4, the authors discuss their experiences in working with interpreters through a decolonizing lens. The salient roles different types of

interpreters (home-school liaisons, student researchers, and other community members) played are highlighted, including, yet not limited to, participant recruitment, data collection, and data interpretation. The authors also elucidate how interpreters might filter data, thus underscoring the importance of understanding interpreters' connections with the community, seeking interpreters' understanding of the project, and building trust with them.

Chapter 5 further elucidates what "reciprocity" means for both researchers and participants, expanding the notion to encompass "relational reciprocating actions like processing, advocating, and amplifying voices" (p. 129). The authors posit that to make the research mutually beneficial, researchers should approach a project with decent care of relationship-building, creating a space not only for participants to recount their stories but also for researchers themselves to listen intentionally to gain knowledge and establish friendships. Participants' voices as insiders and "co-thinkers" (p. 129) should be respected and augmented through researchers' probing, writing, and disseminating research results.

The authors devoted Chapter 6 to the methodological reflections of guest researchers on their work with "vulnerable" groups. Two guest authors describe a five-step research model they developed for researching individuals with disabilities that stresses focusing on participants' needs and including them throughout the research process. They suggest including reflexivity at every stage, positioning participants as co-researchers and co-constructors of knowledge, and committing to them. Another guest author presents research with undocumented students, demonstrating the importance of transparency, rapport, trustworthiness, and confidentiality in maintaining a connected relationship. The consensus among guest authors is the need for culturally responsive research designs.

The authors conclude the book by summarizing significant insights from each chapter and offering implications to inform future research. The authors recommend (1) creating an inclusive, transparent research space by critically self-reflecting on preconceptions and analytic foci and by simultaneously helping mentees establish such mindset; (2) conducting follow-up participant interviews to co-construct knowledge; (3) engaging multiple embedded case studies; and (4) building dynamic relationships to ensure iterative community responses.

From interrogating the language used in IRB protocols through data analysis, the authors expound on tensions, challenges, and ambiguities researchers experience when performing research with non-dominant populations. This book heightens our awareness of dilemmas researchers frequently encounter by detailing researchers' experiences and presenting relevant examples substantiating the authors' proposed process for pursuing a humanizing approach to research.

*Centering Connections* describes the intricacies of employing the humanizing approach while critically reflecting on the process. The authors offer insightful, practical strategies for employing this approach, based on the authors' and guest authors' experiences. Interwoven throughout and heavily emphasized is the necessity for researchers to gain participants' trust and build dynamic, respectful, and reciprocal relationships with non-dominant participants, teachers, schools, and interpreters. Through vivid descriptive stories, the authors solidify

their case for humanizing research by citing the impossibility of producing iterative community responses yielding substantial change and/or supportive resources for refugee children without it.

The book encourages self-reflexivity and reiterates how researchers should assume the role of a learner. As argued by Nieto in the foreword, researchers should be “more vulnerable, more human, and less certain of our own expertise and knowledge” (p. 12). The authors of *Centering Connections* do a remarkable job of deconstructing deficit perspectives toward refugee families in educational literature. Further, the book makes a valuable contribution to the dearth of literature regarding the ethics of performing research with non-dominant populations.

School administrators, teachers, liaisons, researchers, and members of non-dominant communities can benefit from the ideas this book presents. Policymakers in universities can also derive lessons concerning policies and practices for researching non-dominant populations. While the book reported on a study situated within the educational context, the publication’s insights may be generalized and applied across disciplines. Readers may note that the language used to define concepts like “humility” and “reciprocity” distracts from some salient points. Simplifying the verbiage used to describe essential concepts would enhance reader engagement and connectivity with concepts and their applications. However, this does not detract from the overall quality of publication.

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