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Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape. Rebecca Campbell. Reviewed by Laura S. Abrams.

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Book Reviews

Rebecca Campbell, *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape*. New York: Routledge, 2002. \$21.95 papercover.

Psychologist Rebecca Campbell eloquently challenges the social science ideal of “objective neutrality” in her study of the emotional impact of conducting research with rape victims. Stemming from a project that recorded the stories of over 100 Chicago rape victims, she uses process notes and exit interviews with her research team to document the researchers’ emotional experiences and to show how these emotions can lead to important new knowledge about rape. Her work builds upon literature in feminist sociology, epistemology, and qualitative methods. Throughout the book, she intersperses scholarly debates concerning the role of the researcher’s emotions in social science, the contested value of objective neutrality, and the nature of the relationship between researcher and participant. Grounding herself in the feminist social science tradition, Campbell’s unique method of ‘researching the researcher’ presents several innovative insights into these important themes and debates.

The first chapter frames the study through a critical analysis of the socialization of researchers into a rigid dichotomy of ‘thinking versus feeling’ with the former positioned as the ultimate objective for ‘value-free’ social science. She draws upon literature in psychology and sociology to understand why the positivist tradition has historically deemed the researcher’s emotions as a contaminating form of bias. Campbell then presents philosophical and practical challenges to this positivist philosophy, particularly from feminist and postmodern sociologists. Not surprisingly given the purpose of the book, she takes a strong stance that social research is never free from bias or personal values. Campbell also moves beyond this argument to suggest that researchers’ emotions are not only unavoidable, but that they can bring valuable insights to the research topic and to the research process itself.

The next three chapters present data from her study of the research team to exemplify how researchers’ emotions can and should be used to intellectually benefit the findings. Chapter Two describes how her research team of women from diverse racial

and socioeconomic backgrounds progressed from 'thinking about rape' to 'feeling rape' through their contact with the rape victims. All of the interviewers experienced the terrifying revelation that they are personally as vulnerable to rape as the subjects of their study. Working through the denial of their personal potential for sexual victimization moved the research team from thinking about rape as an intellectual exercise to feeling its dark and profound impact. Chapter Three delves deeper into the 'feeling stage' of the research, when the team was immersed in the emotional components of the rape victims' stories. Campbell shows how this exposure to rape generated feelings such as loss, pain, anger, and fear. Using many powerful quotes and examples, she describes how these emotions permeated the researchers' relationships, day-to-day safety precautions, and other aspects of their personal lives.

Chapter Four completes the cycle of 'thinking and feeling' by illustrating how the researchers' awareness of their own feelings allowed them to arrive at important insights about the experience of rape and its aftermath. These understandings, Campbell argues, would have been unattainable if these emotions had remained unexplored throughout the research process. Arguing the rape is a complex and traumatic emotional process for the survivors, she shows how past research on rape and sexual assault has essentially eclipsed the 'feeling' content of this highly emotionally involved experience. Moreover, akin to the secondary trauma theory that accounts for the influence of trauma on those close to rape survivors, Campbell uses the interviewers' reflections on their responses to the work to demonstrate that the impact of rape clearly extends beyond its most immediate and apparent victims.

Chapter Five concludes with suggestions for what the author terms 'emotionally engaged' research. This vision rests upon 'ethics of caring' for the researched, the researchers, and the products of the study. While the notion of caring research is not necessarily new, particularly for feminist researchers, Campbell's suggestions for implementing such an approach add valuable information to the literature on research methods and epistemology. Readers who are wedded to strict positivist and quantitative traditions may have some trouble applying these principles to their own work. Moreover, the conclusions she makes don't necessarily

reflect the power of her findings. Yet this book forces the reader to at least consider her argument that researchers' emotions can be a critical source of knowledge rather than a negative form of bias.

Perhaps the success of Campbell's work hinges on its ability to emotionally engage the reader. The preface immediately captures the reader's attention with a highly disturbing rape story that Campbell herself experienced as a pivotal moment in her research process, and the book is full of stories of a similar chilling quality. These rape stories don't come across as gratuitous shock value. On the contrary, they lead the reader to construct a vision of how rape emotionally impacts the rape victim and all those who hear her story. I began reading this book while I was coincidentally at a conference in Chicago, and I vividly recall the book's impact on my own emotions while walking alone through the dimly lit city streets. Throughout the book, the reader can really sense the impact of rape in tandem with the victims and the researchers' experiences. I believe all researchers can benefit from this book, regardless of their orientation to quantitative or qualitative methods, positivism or postmodernism. For essentially Campbell's work is a powerful testimony to our own humanity, as researchers, in the process of building knowledge about real-life social problems.

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Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr. and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion: Contemporary Developments*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2002. \$44.95 papercover.

The sociological study of religion is witnessing an academic revival. The inclusion of religious issues in explaining social phenomena is mounting. More and more social scientists realize the need to include religious variables in their work. Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos Jr. and Peter Kivisto are anything but new comers to this field. Each one has devoted many years to the study of religion and together they have begun to provide us with a roadmap of religion in America since the 1960s.

The study of religion in secular-academic circles is both difficult and challenging. The authors use Martin E. Marty's statement