

Feminist research in times of COVID-19

based on the paper

Research as care

An attempt to decolonize Western research in Jordan through the ethics of care

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1. Personal background

- working experience in development practice
- growing awareness of White Western privilege and power relations in development → research

What kind of research can researchers who enjoy White Western privilege engage in when carrying out research in communities that are on the other end of the power equation?

2. Decolonizing research

The debate:

- The world is shaped by colonialism, imperialism and racism leading to unequal power relations;
- The dominant mode of knowledge production is a Eurocentric one that produces and re-produces inequalities;
- The university is a major site of knowledge production, it looks at the rest of the world through the prism of Eurocentrism.

The decolonization of research:

- attempts to offer an alternative mode of thought, practice and knowledge production (Ahmed, 2012; Bhabra et al., 2018; Mutua & Swadener, 2011; Smith, 2012).

2. Decolonizing research

In practice, decolonized research must

- take seriously the intellectual work produced in the Global Souths;
- acknowledge that the study of certain phenomena from alternative (Southern) viewpoints may bring different findings and innovation to social research;
- build knowledge from below, departing from research participants lives, experiences and needs (Richards 2014);
- build meaningful relationships with the studied communities;
- resist when institutions conduct themselves in colonizing ways (Alfred 2012).

3. Studying women's organizations in Jordan

- resistance of Jordanian women's organizations in the context of today's development discourse (Escobar 2012 [1995], Esteva 2010; Sachs 2010)

→ powerful transnational narrative that produces unequal power relations between the Norths and the Souths relying on, fostering and promoting knowledge produced by a Western academy.

3. Studying women's organizations in Jordan

Two types of power relations are at the core of my study:

1. between me and my Jordanian research participants (staff members of WR organizations) → knowledge production;
2. between my Jordanian research participants and their Northern donors → discursively and financially.

→ From a decolonial point of view, both types of power relations are a symptom of the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

4. Covid19 in Jordan

Same measures we know from Europe, but under different conditions:

- regional instability;
- challenges due to refugee crisis in health care and educational system;
- economically weak;
- semi-authoritarian regime that restricts civil society.

→ estimated increased impact on women and girls in Jordan:

- access to health;
- gender roles and gender-based violence;
- economic situation.

5. Decolonizing research through a caring ethical research approach

Care as an “activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, 40)

versus

unequal power relations

The *ideal act of care* is composed of four phases which may be translated into four guiding ethical research questions in order to approach research as an act of care.

5. Decolonizing research through a caring ethical research approach in times of COVID19

1. “care about”: being attentive to others’ needs in order to reply to it.

Translation: What are mine and my research participants’ specific needs with regard to the overall topic of my research? Where lie our priorities?

In times of Covid19:

- Assessed in 2017/18 but needs and priorities on both sides might have changed;
- Very time intensive and due to Covi19 different time constraints on both sides.

5. Decolonizing research through a caring ethical research approach in times of COVID19

2. “taking care of”: recognizing and assuming responsibility in order to satisfy a specific need for care.

Translation: How am I, as a researcher, responsible to satisfy my research participants’ needs?

In times of Covid19:

- Has my responsibility changed due to the current crisis?
- How can I take responsibility if I am not on site?
- What are my research participants’ expectations?

5. Decolonizing research through a caring ethical research approach in times of COVID19

3. “care-giving» : the act of caring as a reaction to a specific need (which also implies that the care-giver has the skills to satisfy this need).

Translation: What can I, as a researcher and with the skills and resources I have, do to satisfy my research participants' needs?

In times of Covid19:

- Some of my personal resources have decreased (time, budget).

5. Decolonizing research through a caring ethical research approach in times of COVID19

4. “care-receiving”: reciprocal and interdependent need between the care-giver and the care-receiver.

Translation: What needs to be done to make my research more reciprocal, participant and equal?

In times of Covid19:

- How to build meaningful relationships if there is no personal interaction?
- Participant methods and co-construction in times of Covid19?
- Assessing my own personal needs?

6. Conclusion

- Decolonizing research in times of Covid19 or increasing power relations?
- Opportunities:
 - Building meaningful relationships through:
 - Transnational disruptive event;
 - Mutual solidarity;
 - Reflect upon the European researcher's White Western privilege in times of crises;
 - Reflect upon new participant methods;
 - Time for change: resist when institutions conduct themselves in colonizing ways?