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Inside-Out: Representational Ethics and Diverse Communities

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Abstract

© Society for Community Research and Action 2017 The purpose of this paper is to write about insights and special considerations for researchers who are, to some degree, “insiders” to the communities they study by expanding on the concept of representational ethics as applied to research in community psychology with diverse and marginalized groups. Representational ethics refers to the ways that researchers, artists, or corporations represent the identities of the people they portray in their communications. As community psychologists we generate and disseminate knowledge about the communities we work with, and in that process, create narratives about the people who participate in our studies. In preparing a report on psychological issues among Evangelical Christian refugees from the former Soviet Union, Dina Birman struggled with her portrayal of this group and her own status of being both an insider and an outsider to this community. When investigating academic aspirations and psychological distress among Muslim high school students, Ashmeet Oberoi was forced to acknowledge the one-sidedness of the discourse on autonomy and cultural socialization of Muslim adolescents. In her research with Cuban-educated doctors in Miami, Florida, Wendy Moore encountered similar issues as she considered how to represent gender dynamics among her participants.

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Keywords

Culture, Deficit model, Gender, Insider/outsider dynamics, Intersectionality, Representational ethics

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