



Antiracist Curriculum and Pedagogy: Teaching Critical Theory, Participatory Action Research, and Narrative Storytelling to Reduce Oppression.

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Oppression of racial groups, indigenous people, and the disabled continues to be a worldwide problem (Christ, 2007; Mertens, 2007). Historically, acts such as colonization, suppression of knowledge, language, and culture (Denzin, 2010) have resulted in whole groups being voiceless and powerless to change their social conditions. Smith (2006) argues that traditional western research does little to alleviate the oppression that these groups face. Fortunately numerous innovative research techniques have recently emerged that challenge traditional methodologies which does little to support the disenfranchised. Participatory Action Research (Rahman, 2008), Auto-Ethnography (Grbich, 2007), and Narrative Storytelling (Meyer, 2004) are three of the methodologies that have emerged to overshadow the western-based research methods promoted in postsecondary institutions that have done little to alleviate the imbalances in power and authority over the disenfranchised. This chapter highlights the importance of teaching research inclusive of a critical transformative and emancipatory paradigm (Kemmis, 2008; Greene, 2007) that is used to frame research methodologies that better meet the needs of disenfranchised minorities. This chapter also advocates for postsecondary institutions to advance more inclusive curricula designed to bring voice to the oppressed while providing students the skills they need to help advocate for the causes they believe in.

The Problem

The majority of faculty who teach research at Postsecondary institutions promote methodologies including Randomized Control Trials said to be the 'Gold Standard' (Christ, 2014). Unfortunately experimental research is virtually the only type that receives funding by the federal government, yet it does very little to challenge power imbalances or assist in the struggles that minorities often face (Lather, 2004). Specific research designs are best suited to address issues of oppression and inequality, yet the most common of these methodologies are neither taught or likely to receive funding (Christ, 2014).

Purpose

This paper highlights the importance of training researchers about transformative and critical research paradigms designed to promote equality and social justice (Christ, 2009). Critical transformative research relies on methodological techniques that promote the inclusion of the disenfranchised. Participatory Action Research, Critical Auto-Ethnography, and Narrative Storytelling are some of the research methodologies that when combined in a mixed methods study work to reinforce an emancipatory stance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2007).

Transformative-Emancipatory Paradigm

Teaching about transformative, emancipatory and paradigmatic research paradigms (Bradbury, 2007) helps researchers to consider historical and societal injustices by highlighting how to study power relationships at every stage of the research process (Lykes & Mallona, 2008). Emancipatory oriented research specifically focuses on the concerns of the marginalized giving participants an active and public voice in advocating for social change (Greene, 2007). Culturally responsive research framed in transformative and critical paradigms (Christ, 2013) considers the needs of oppressed communities and advocates for the use of techniques that bring to light the stories and views of those who have traditionally been disenfranchised.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves participants and researchers in the research process recognizing unique strengths that all parties in the research process bring (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Most definitions of PAR indicate it is a systematic approach to inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issues being studied with intent of taking action and effecting change (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). PAR is one of the few methodologies which can be used to reduce power inequalities between dominant and dominated and the researchers and the researched. Researchers and participants work to build strength and the resources within disenfranchised groups to identify, support, and reinforce social structures and the knowledge that already exists. PAR is a cyclical and iterative process that emphasizes trust-building, partnership development and maintenance at all of the phases in the research process (Lewin, 1946/1948).

Critical Auto-ethnography

Critical auto-ethnography is an emerging approach within qualitative methods that fits well with a transformative constructivist stance of researchers interested in addressing diversity and inequality. Critical auto-ethnography provides a medium for researchers who want to study their own cultures and how they view themselves in that culture while exposing inherent societal inequities and oppressive practices. Researchers who use this technique personally and critically analyze their position within society within the contexts of power and domination in order to bring about empowerment and freedom. (Cohen et. al., 2007).

Narrative Storytelling

Narrative storytelling is an underutilized research methodology yet it is one of the preferred and culturally appropriate methodologies when studying disenfranchised minority groups. Storytelling, like oral literature, has meaning situated and rooted in cultural contexts. Similar to biographies and interviews, the data gathered from narrative storytelling often has profoundly rich and deeply authentic detail compelling to those outside of the group for which it was created. These stories have had impact on society, providing insight into the mindsets of the disenfranchised participants and describing their injustices (Cohen et. al., 2007).