

Why Do We Research?

Social Research, Power and the
Role of Action Research

Goals for Social Research

- To understand society and social processes.
- To create better social theories.
- To inform social action.
- To improve social conditions.

Achieving our Goals

- Gaining Knowledge
- Improving lives
- Creating or Evaluating Policy
- Raising Awareness
- Building Community

Problems of Power

- Power Over and Power To
 - Designing research from the top down
 - Designing research across
 - Designing research from the bottom up
- Differing power and status
 - Researcher power
 - Researched power
 - Institutional power

About Power and Privilege

- What privileges do you have?
 - Give me some examples
- What power do you have over your research projects?
 - What are the costs of your research?
 - What are the benefits of your research?
 - To participants?
 - To society as a whole?

Power and Knowledge

- Where does knowledge come from?
- Who “owns” knowledge?
 - Who gets to decide what ‘counts’ as valuable knowledge?
 - How is knowledge disseminated?
 - Why does that matter?

The Nature of Knowledge

- Knowledge is situated.
 - Historical and cultural specificity of knowledge.
- ‘Knowledge’ and ‘truth’ are subject to revision.
 - We should maintain a critical stance towards ‘taken for granted’ assumptions.
- Knowledge and social action go together.
 - How we ‘think’ about something shapes how we ‘act’ towards it.

Introducing Action Research

- **Characteristics**
 - rejects a clear separation between researchers and researched.
 - Focuses on the importance of all groups of stakeholders
 - Addresses the issues of power inherent in research

Types of Action Research

- Participatory Action Research
 - Includes the idea that researched should be directly involved in research processes
 - They look for equal participation between researchers and participants.
 - Further argues that all research is political
 - Do you agree or disagree

Types of Action Research

- Feminist Action Research
 - Focused on 'giving voice'
 - Created to raise awareness of social inequalities
 - Focuses on Social activism

Types of Action Research

- Evaluation Research
 - Tries to evaluate the effectiveness of social policy by analyzing impact
 - For example: Abstinence only education

Look, Think, Act

- Identify Stakeholders
 - Who are affected by the social problem?
 - Who should contribute to the discussion?
- Formulate a Collective Problem
 - Group definition of the problem
 - Guided by group knowledge not researcher knowledge

Look, Think, Act

- Explore the problem through collective meeting
 - The groups who are involved discuss the parts of the problem
 - The develop and discuss each stakeholders position on the problem

Look, Think, Act

- Defining and Agenda for Action
 - Craft a solution.
 - What can be done?
 - How can we do it?
 - Who needs to be involved?
 - What needs to change?

In Class Activity - Step 1: Getting into Groups

<u>Campus Social Life</u>	<u>Identity and Space</u>	<u>Activities & Groups</u>	<u>Daily Life & Self Care</u>	<u>Campus Community</u>	<u>Athletics</u>

Class Activity - Step 2: Meeting the Group

- Introduce yourself and share your research plans
 - Discuss what similarities and differences exist in your projects
 - Consider how these similarities and differences might be tied to a social problem of interest to you.
 - Take notes, you will need them next time!

In Class Activity - Step 3:

Mock Action Plan

- Based on a your group interests **identify a problem** statement that could be explored using Action Research...
- Form an **action plan** using the steps identified in the reading and discussed in class.
- **Turn in** a set of discussion notes that explains your problem and discusses how it could be addressed using action research.