

## CHAPTER 1

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# PERSONAL~PASSIONATE~ PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY

## Research for Social Justice

Ming Fang He and JoAnn Phillion

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### INTRODUCTION

*Personal~Passionate~Participatory Inquiry Into Social Justice in Education*, the first book in the series, *Research for Social Justice: Personal~Passionate~Participatory Inquiry*, features 14 programs of social justice oriented research on life in schools, families, and communities. This work, done by a diverse group of practitioner researchers, educators, and scholars, connects the personal with the political, the theoretical with the practical, and research with social and educational change. The principal aspect of this work that distinguishes it from other work is that the researcher is not separate from the sociopolitical and cultural phenomena of the inquiry, the data collected, findings, interpretations, or writing.

This book draws together work which demonstrates three distinct and interconnected qualities: *personal~passionate~participatory*. Each is

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personal, compelled by values and experiences researchers bring to the work. Each is passionate, grounded in a commitment to social justice concerns of people and places under consideration. Each is participatory, built on long term, heart-felt engagement, and shared efforts. Self, others, and inquiry become interrelated in complex and dialogical relationships over time and place as researchers develop and refine questions, perspectives, and methods by drawing upon passions and commitments. Researchers have explicit research agendas that focus on equity, equality, and social justice. They are not detached observers, nor putatively objective recorders, but active participants in schools, families, and communities. Researchers are immersed in lives, take on the concerns of people who are marginalized and disfranchised, and act upon those concerns. Rather than aiming solely at traditional academic outcomes, positive social and educational change is the focal outcome of inquiry.

Researchers featured in this book

recognize the necessity of opening spaces to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. (Saïd, 1994, p. 12, as cited in Ayers, 2006, p. 85)

Further, they

draw sustenance and perspective from the humanities in order to better see the world as it is. Whatever [they] find that is out-of-balance must be challenged, the devastating taken-for-granted dissected, exposed, illuminated.... [The] core of all our work must be human knowledge and human freedom, both enlightenment and emancipation. (Ayers, 2006, p. 87)

They “join one another to imagine and build a participatory movement for justice, a public space for the enactment of democratic dreams” (p. 96).

With equity, equality, social justice, and human freedom as explicit goals of the inquiries, the following guiding questions suggested by Ayers (2006) are illuminated in these inquiries:

1. What are the issues that marginalized or disadvantaged people speak of with excitement, anger, fear, or hope?
2. How can I enter a dialogue in which I will learn from a specific community itself about problems and obstacles they face?
3. What endogenous experiences do people already have that can point the way toward solutions?

4. What is missing from the “official story” that will make the problems of the oppressed more understandable?
5. What current proposed policies serve the privileged and the powerful, and how are they made to appear inevitable?
6. How can the public space for discussion, problem posing, and problem solving be expanded? (p. 88)

The work featured in this book, embedded in lives and communities on the one hand, and powerful ideas of being human with strong commitment to a just society on the other hand, are at the heart of social justice oriented work. These researchers are not only collecting, but also living in, the stories of people with whom they engage in inquiry. These researchers position stories collected in sociopolitical, economic, linguistic, and cultural contexts to pose questions with an “epistemological curiosity—a curiosity that is often missing in dialogue as conversation” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 382). These inquirers are able to connect the practical with the theoretical, and the personal with the political, through passionate participation in, and critical reflection upon inquiry and life. As Freire and Macedo strongly argued:

We must not negate practice for the sake of theory. To do so would reduce theory to a pure verbalism or intellectualism. By the same token, to negate theory for the sake of practice, as in the use of dialogue as conversation, is to run the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. It is for this reason that I never advocate either a theoretic elitism or a practice ungrounded in theory, but the unity between theory and practice. In order to achieve this unity, one must have an epistemological curiosity. (p. 382)

Researchers featured in this book cultivate this epistemological curiosity in inquiry and life to foster critical consciousness to comprehend and act upon the often contradictory and contested real life world. These researchers thrive on passionate involvement and commitment, advocate for disenfranchised, underrepresented, and invisible groups and individuals, and unite with allies to build communities of researchers and practitioners with shared concerns to foster social justice for educational and social change.

### STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book consists of a preface, introduction (chapter 1), 14 additional chapters, and a conclusion (chapter 16). Each chapter features one program of research. Each author begins with an autobiographical account of

has found that for these Native American women, success is not defined in orthodox terms of publications, tenure, and promotion, but rather in terms of giving back to their communities, developing indigenous knowledge, and honoring the struggles of Native Americans who have come before them to address pressing issues of social justice and self-determination. Angela articulates a new Native American perspective, one that moves beyond post colonial perspectives to transcendent perspectives, and calls for the education of Native Americans to be brought to the center of concerns in education.

In chapter 14, "It Starts at Home: The Familial Relationship of Scholarship, Education, and Advocacy," Tammy Turner-Vorbeck explores the relationship between scholarship, education and advocacy in relation to family diversity. As a curriculum researcher, scholar, teacher educator, and a mother of three adopted children, she advocates for an inclusion of family diversity in multicultural education. She embeds her research in her teaching practice and explores the complex relationship between the primary forms of curriculum on family at work in schools in order to fully illuminate the real-life consequences that various curricular messages about the concept of family create for students. She inquires about and advocates for the expansion of multicultural education to include an often neglected, yet common form of diversity—family structure diversity. She works with preservice and in-service teachers and administrators to foster awareness of family diversity and to make curriculum change to meet the challenge of such diversity.

In chapter 15, "Becoming an Agent of Social Change: Women's Stories of Sweatshops and Sweetshops," using Asian American and cross-cultural perspectives as a theoretical framework and autobiographical narrative inquiry as research methodology, Betty Eng explores her personal and family narrative which parallels the historical narrative of Asian Americans who fight for social justice, equality, and human rights in the United States. To search for the origins of her passion for social justice, she reflects upon her experience of being born in a village in People's Republic of China, growing up as an Asian American in California where her parents worked in sweatshops and canneries and where she became an advocate for Asian American rights, and advocating for women's rights in Hong Kong. As she critically examines her personal and family narrative and the historical narrative of Asian Americans, she has recognized that the social activist awareness she grew up with has become the driving force to teach and live for social justice as she continues to work with and advocate for Asian Americans and Asian women in Hong Kong and the United States.

In chapter 16, "Personal~Passionate~Participatory Inquiry: Potentials, Contributions, Concerns, and Future Directions," JoAnn Phillion

and Ming Fang He open discussions on potentials, contributions, concerns, and future directions of personal~passionate~participatory inquiry. Issues not explicitly addressed in each individual chapter are also explored.

START HERE:

## PERSONAL~PASSIONATE~PARTICIPATORY INQUIRY

### Convergence of Diversity and Inquiry

The world landscape is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2003). Global diversity permeates life in schools, communities, and societies. In response to the emergence of this cultural and linguistic diversity, there has been a movement toward developing methods appropriate for understanding the complexities and contradictions engendered by this diversity. There is a new wave of thinking in education that challenges traditional ways of engaging in and interpreting research. It has been called the "sixth moment" (Denzin, 1997), a time of questioning whose knowledge should be considered valid, and a time when people have their own ideas on how their experiences are to be interpreted, theorized, and represented. Many researchers, such as those featured in this book, have responded to the sixth moment by developing approaches to diversity issues in education that focus on an in-depth understanding of the complexity of experience of individuals, families, and communities who are often underrepresented or misrepresented in the literature (Carger, 1996; Feuerwerker, 2001; Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). Many of these researchers speak the languages of their participants, hold similar ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritages, and share similar experiences of injustice.

This new wave of thinking led to "paradigms wars" (Schön, 1991) among positivists, interpretivists, and critical theorists in the field of educational research. The action orientation, reflectiveness and reflexiveness on action, and dialogical relationship between research to practice are alien, or somewhat marginalized, within the above mentioned three paradigms on the one hand; yet, they respond strongly, on the other hand, to the sixth moment. Researchers engaged in personal~passionate~participatory inquiry have not only responded to the sixth moment by questioning whose knowledge should be considered valid and how experience should be interpreted, theorized, and represented, but also

have confronted issues of equity, equality, social justice, and societal change through both research and action.

### Research Traditions

Personal~passionate~participatory inquiry draws on an array of research traditions: action research, teacher research, self study, life history, teacher lore, participatory inquiry, narrative inquiry, and cross-cultural and multicultural narrative inquiry. Many of these traditions can be traced back to practitioner research, which originated in action research in social sciences such as social psychology (Collier, 1945; Lewin, 1946) to counteract racial prejudice and promote more democratic forms of leadership in the workplace. The scientific study of education movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought practitioner research to education (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). It flourished during the progressive movement of John Dewey's era (Dewey, 1938; Schubert & Lopez-Schubert, 1997) to promote the "Democratic Ideal" (Dewey, 1916, pp. 86–88) in education and in many aspects of life (Kemmis, 1980/1988; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). For Dewey (1938),

a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority.... A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience ... individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the actions of others to give point and direction to his own. (p. 87)

Parallel with Dewey's democratic ideas, the work of W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/1994), Anna Julia Cooper (1892/1988), and Carter G. Woodson (1933/1977) also greatly influenced practitioner research in terms of perceiving research connected to equity, equality, and social justice. However, action research was ridiculed by traditional educational researchers and theorists for lack of academic rigor and validity. Thus action research almost disappeared in the U.S. educational literature until the late 1970s (Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). In spite of the decline of action research in the United States in the early 1960s, it became prominent in the United Kingdom in the context of school based curriculum development (e.g., Elliot, 1991; Stenhouse, 1968). In Australia "emancipatory action research" (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Grundy & Kemmis, 1988) built on Habermas' (1971) critical theory with an emphasis on the participatory and social action orientation of the inquiry.

In the 1980s, new movement for teacher research emerged to "challenge the hegemony of an exclusively university-generated knowledge

base for teaching" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Cochran-Smith and Lytle have identified five trends that characterize the teacher research movement in the United States in the past 2 decades (p. 15): (a) "the prominence of teacher research and inquiry communities in preservice teacher education, professional development, and school reform" (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994); (b) "the development of conceptual frameworks for teacher research that may be thought of as social inquiry" (e.g., Anderson, Herr, & Nihlem, 1994), "ways of knowing in communities" (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1994), "practical inquiry" (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1995); (c) "the dissemination of teacher research at and beyond the local level" (e.g., Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994); (d) "the emergence of critique of the teacher research movement on epistemological" (e.g., Fenstermacher, 1994), "methodological" (e.g., Huberman, 1996), and "critical grounds" (e.g., Anderson, Herr, & Nihlem, 1994); and (e) "the transformative possibilities of teacher research for university cultures" (e.g., Allen, Cary, & Delgado, 1995; Richardson, 1997).

Self study in the teacher research movement parallels the development in life history research (e.g., Cole & Knowles, 2001) and teacher lore (Schubert & Ayers, 1999), in which the teacher is perceived as researcher engaged in deeply reflective practice to change the curriculum and the world (Schön, 1991). Participatory inquiry, another form of practitioner inquiry, originated in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (e.g., Freire, 1970; Hall, 1993). This research tradition has been closely associated with adult education and literacy movements (Freire & Marcedo, 1987). The explicit aim of participatory inquiry is to work with oppressed groups and individuals to empower them so that they take effective actions toward more just and humane conditions (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994).

### A Turn to Narrative

In addition to action research, teacher research, self study, life history, teacher lore, and participatory inquiry, another major response to the sixth moment is a turn to narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005; Witherall & Noddings, 1991) in educational research, which Denzin and Lincoln (2003) call the "seventh moment." This turn to narrative, prominent in personal~passionate~participatory inquiry, is in response to recognition of the complexity of human experience in increasingly diversified societies (Coles, 1989). Researchers in different disciplines, responding to the call of the seventh moment, incorporate narrative, story, autobiography, memoir, fiction, oral history, documentary film, painting, and poetry into inquiries in education such

as Bell (1997), Carger (1996), and Valdés (1996) in language and culture issues; Carter (1993), Florio-Ruane (2001), Foster (1997), Michie (1999), and Schubert (1991) in teacher narrative; Ayers and Ford (1996), Ayers, Ladson-Billings, Noguera, and Michie (2008) in teacher and student stories and poetry; Ayers (2001), Neumann and Peterson (1997), Hoffman (1989), and Tan (1989) in autobiography, memoir, and fiction; Knowles and Cole (2008) in art including painting and poetry; Feuerverger (2001) and Soto (1997) in family and community narrative; Chan (2006), Elbaz-Luwisch (1997, 2002), Hollingsworth (1994), and Phillion (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d) in multicultural teaching and learning; Conle (2000) and He (1999, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003) in cross-cultural teaching and learning; Gay (2000) in culturally responsive teaching, and hooks (1991) in race, gender, and class.

One quality of narrative inquiry that distinguishes it from other forms of educational research, but similar to personal~passionate~participatory inquiry, lies in understanding experience in its own terms rather than categorizing experience according to predetermined structures and theories (Phillion, 1999). This form of inquiry is "peopled" with characters, rather than filled with categories and labels. In some forms of traditional educational research, experience is seen, shaped, and written about by the researcher using theoretically derived forms; in effect the experience is determined by the theory. In contrast, experience is the starting point of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and is in the forefront at every stage of research; as such, narrative inquiries, as well as personal~passionate~participatory inquiries, arise from experiences of researchers and participants, rather than being formulated as abstract research questions, and they proceed by continual reference to experience as field texts are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and as meanings are crafted. Another quality of narrative inquiry is the fluidity of the inquiry. This notion of fluid inquiry is influenced by the work of Schwab (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978):

There are two kinds of inquiries: stable inquiry and fluid inquiry. Stable inquiry lends itself to fixed research phenomena, questions, purposes, objectives, methodologies and outcomes ... ambiguity characterizes fluid inquiry ... focused on developing understandings of changing real-life situations and contexts, rather than on the use of pre-established, often unfit, theory. (He, 2003, p. 80)

This fluid quality permeates every aspect of both narrative inquiry and personal~passionate~participatory inquiry.

The inquirers engaged in this form of inquiry, such as the authors featured in this book, explore experience by bringing personal experience to bear on inquiry, seeing research as having autobiographical roots, as

connected to, rather than disconnected from life; by thinking narratively, seeing experience as the starting point of inquiry, as fluid and changing rather than fixed, as contextualized rather than decontextualized; by being in the midst of lives, seeing research as long-term, passionate involvement in daily lives of participants, rather than short-term, in and out, detached observation; and by making meaning of experience in relationship, rather than making meaning in isolation (Phillion & He, 2001, 2007). Narrative inquiry and personal~passionate~participatory inquiry, approaches that focus on experience, humanize research.

### Cross-Cultural and Multicultural Narrative Inquiry

Within the turn to narrative, there is a significant shift of focus on narrative and contextual qualities of experience to a focus on the complex and untold experience of marginalized and underrepresented groups and individuals played out in contested cultural, linguistic, and sociopolitical milieus. We term this recent, significant shift *cross-cultural and multicultural narrative inquiry* (He, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003; Phillion, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d; Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2005). Cross-cultural and multicultural narrative inquiry (Phillion & He, 2008) builds on Dewey's theory of experience (1938), Schwab's fluid inquiry (Westbury & Wilkof, 1978), Connelly and Clandinin's narrative inquiry (1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), multicultural perspectives (Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), life based literary narratives (Hoffman, 1989; Tan, 1989), ethnographic work (Soto, 1997), and Ayers' (2004, 2006) social justice and activist oriented inquiry. Cross-cultural and multicultural narrative inquiry connects the personal with the political, the theoretical with the practical, and inquiry with social change.

This shift originated in our growing concerns with language, culture, identity and power issues (Cummins, 1989a, 1989b, 2000) in the education of marginalized and disenfranchised individuals and groups. To understand these issues, rather than relying solely on theoretical literature in this area (Banks & Banks, 1989, 2004; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000), we turned to life based literary narratives written by immigrant and minorities including memoirs, autobiographies and novels (Hoffman, 1989; Kaplan, 1993; Kingston, 1975; Rodriguez, 1982; Santiago, 1993; Tan, 1989), narrative inquiries (Carger, 1996; He, 2003; Phillion, 2002d), and ethnographies (Feuerverger, 2001; Soto, 1997; Valdés, 1996). These researchers, such as those featured in this book, passionately engage in nuanced, in-depth, explorations of the experience of diverse individuals and groups which are often stereotyped, misrepresented, or dehumanized in research literature (Phillion & He, 2004, 2007).

We also turn to life based literary narratives written by oppressed and underrepresented individuals who narrativize untold stories of experience of injustice which may foster critical consciousness and inspire social action. This work, as well as personal~passionate~participatory inquiry work and some narrative, cross-cultural and multicultural narrative work, brings theoretical literature to life; develops narrative imagination—the ability to reflect on experience, question assumptions, and actively empathize with others; and fosters critical self-examination of who we are as educational researchers, and how we live and relate to others (Greene, 1995; Nussbaum, 1997). Unlike theoretical literature, this work is filled with people with names and faces, experiences and actions, feelings and emotions. It promotes learning not only to listen to, but also to hear, the stories of others, to enter the realities of others' lives different than their own, not through abstract reasoning, but through developing emotions and empathic understanding (Phillion & He, 2004).

Narrative is also becoming prevalent as educational researchers draw on critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003; Stovall, 2005). These researchers use stories to tell hidden and silenced narratives of suppressed and underrepresented groups to counter the preconceived metanarrative represented in “scientific based research” that has often portrayed these groups as deficient and inferior. By telling counter stories, researchers begin to be aware of the importance of commitment to equity and social justice, and to recognize their obligation to link inquiry to social and educational change.

There is a convergence of research traditions in personal~passionate~participatory inquiry: action research, teacher research, self study, life history, teacher lore, participatory inquiry, narrative inquiry, and cross-cultural and multicultural narrative inquiry. The work featured in this book draws on aspects of these traditions. It is inherently personal, passionate, and participatory. This intrinsic quality politicizes and transforms inquiry. Personal~passionate~participatory inquiry begins with conscious reflection on experience to challenge assumptions and recognize contradictions between theory and practice, and demands an epistemological curiosity (Freire & Macedo, 1995) to critically examine the impact of inquiry on practice and the impact of practice on theory. It builds on long term, heart-felt engagement, and shared efforts driven by commitment to social justice. Researchers engaged in this form of inquiry are not distant observers but active participants in the life of schools, families, and communities. It embodies an unfaltering stance on equity, equality, social justice, freedom, and human possibility. The explicit agendas of the research featured in this book bring inquiry to life and life to inquiry as vulnerable and resilient, and always dynamic, grounded, and incomplete. Researchers join one another and others to move beyond

boundaries, to transgress orthodoxies, and to build a participatory movement to promote a more balanced, fair, and equitable human condition in an increasingly diversified world.

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