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WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, you will be able to

- Articulate the ontological and epistemological roots of critical participatory inquiry (CPI).
- Explain CPI's goal of knowledge democratization.
- Describe the various strands of CPI and how it is adopted and adapted by and in academic disciplines.
- Recognize how CPI has been and continues to be coopted and appropriated.

FOCUS ACTIVITY 1.1: WHO AM I?

Conduct a researcher positionality inventory. Some questions you may ask yourself are listed below, but do not limit yourself to these. Refer to the Appendix for a sample researcher positionality inventory.

1. What are all the identities I hold?
2. How are these identities salient to who I am as a researcher?
3. How might some of these identities help my CPI?
4. How might some of these identities hinder my CPI?
5. What can I start doing now to become aware of how my identities play a role in my inquiry and research?

Have you ever sat in a classroom, conference room, religious space, family gathering, or other social situation and thought, “It doesn’t really matter if I say anything,” or “They know way more than I do about this”? We all have. Meagan has told a story to some of her students about a time a few years ago when she was sitting around a large dining table with her family at an

annual family reunion. The group had begun what they typically referred to as a “family meeting,” which they would have toward the end of each of their reunions to reflect on what went well that year as well as what could be improved in years to come, and then to start planning for the next reunion. Her parents could not make it that year because they were traveling elsewhere, so they had asked that her oldest brother lead the meeting. As she sat there, she felt herself becoming quieter and quieter. She describes it as an almost out-of-body experience. She realized in that moment that she, as the only daughter and youngest of the four siblings, would have never been asked to lead such a discussion. It was seen as “normal” to ask one of the brothers to lead. Even though it was completely unspoken, it was taken for granted that a man would lead the family in their process of knowledge creation.

We begin with this short vignette because it highlights how we often make assumptions about **knowledge creation** even in our everyday lives. Often these assumptions are ingrained into our daily practices, and they can make their way into our research practices without us knowing. The overarching goal of this book is to help you develop a keen understanding of the principles of critical participatory inquiry so that you are positioned to create knowledge with communities effectively and ethically. We will question the definition of knowledge, whose knowledge has traditionally been seen as valuable, and who determines this, introducing the guiding concept of **knowledge democratization**. We will define central concepts of **positionality**, **ontology**, and **epistemology** and situate CPI within its historical, cultural, and conceptual contexts. In the second part of the chapter, we will introduce the lineage of the CPI ecosystem—from its roots in Indigenous, Global South, and activist knowledge systems around the world—through the development of what is often referred to as action research and carefully consider how the action research approach has been coopted for various goals.

Before getting started, though, we want to offer a brief note about these first few chapters that may appear somewhat daunting or perhaps peripheral to a reader’s interest in getting to the “nuts and bolts” of CPI. We want to clearly state that we are not trying to intimidate you with what may appear to be highly theoretical concepts, but rather to engage theory in a way that is meaningful and that illustrates how CPI is radically different from most forms of research. We understand the tendency for methodologists to become obsessed with theory at the risk of alienating practitioners and those who really need “tools in their toolbox.” While we do offer tools, it is imperative to understand and grapple with the underlying roots of CPI because it is not a one-size-fits-all method, nor is it a set of methods from which to choose depending on what you are doing or who you are working with. To “do” CPI is to make a commitment to unlearning and relearning what we think knowledge is, what is “normal” in the knowledge creation process, and which knowledge(s) is or are valuable and useful for meaningful social change.

WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE AND WHOSE KNOWLEDGE COUNTS?

We began this chapter with Meagan’s reflection because it is important to start considering that the ways in which things always happen may perhaps not be the best or most ethical or most useful ways. Have you ever had an experience like that? Maybe it was less obvious in that moment. Think back about times in your life when you have felt like your voice, your experiences, and

your knowledge mattered less than those of others. Can you remember a time when you felt that your knowledge counted *more* than others'? Perhaps you were teaching a class or were positioned as an authority figure at work or at a community meeting. How did that feel to you at the time? How does it feel now? These questions about power dynamics and one's position in the world are important to reflect on before committing to CPI.

As we consider how or if we engage with communities in CPI toward positive social change, reconciliation, or peacebuilding, we urge you to think intentionally and often about how what we take for granted as normal or even desirable may run counter to commitments of social justice and change. To begin this reconsideration of whose knowledge counts, we need to establish a few foundational concepts that will appear throughout this book.

Positionality and Reflexivity

As you may have noticed in Meagan's story at the beginning of this chapter, she holds a particular identity and position within her family. Her identity, and yours, are not static concepts: Identity is complex, changes in different contexts and geographies, and is constantly evolving. As we mentioned before, we need to reflect on our identities to ethically engage in CPI. We understand **positionality** to be those intersecting, multiple, and evolving identities that involve both the totality and individuality of our experiences in this world, our socialization, our physical markers, our privileges, and the ways in which we are socially, politically, and economically targeted. More concretely, positionality can be thought of as our position in this world. Positionality is who we are. It is not a list of identities. It is not a statement like many we see in class papers or manuscripts: "I am a white, cisgender, educated, middle-class woman." While it includes the identities listed here, it is much more expansive than such a list. Grappling with our own positionality involves a process of **reflexivity**, which can include self-questioning and critically reflecting on our relationships to other individuals and groups as well as social, political, and economic structures and systems. Positionality statements provide an opportunity to reflect on our privileges while also understanding **intersectionality** (Collins, 2002; Crenshaw, 1989), or how an individual's various identities produce a competing and interconnected web of oppression and discrimination. By critically reflecting on our social categories, we can better understand our relationships to systems of power.

We believe that uncovering and questioning our own positionality as researchers or social inquirers is a necessary first step to engaging with communities. If we do not make explicit for ourselves who we are, what our interest or agenda is, where our expertise lies, what our personal and professional needs are, and what biases we may carry, how can we enter a community claiming to be open to or understanding of their identities, agendas, expertise, needs, or biases?

Ontology and Epistemology

As we start to reflect on our identities and positions in the world, the opportunity arises to question the research process and knowledge creation. The next two concepts work hand in hand and are often hard to discuss separately. **Ontology**, simply put, relates to what can be known. Each research tradition or paradigm holds ontological assumptions on the definition of reality:

Positivism, which is rooted in the scientific method, contends that there is an objective reality or truth that can be discovered through research and the search for knowledge. Constructivists assume relativism—there are multiple realities dependent on individuals’ experiences, socialization, and cognition. Critical theorists posit that the nature of reality must be approached from historical realism—how knowledge and reality have been shaped by socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, gender, and abilities. Participatory and postmodern researchers assume that reality is socially constructed but must be based on the recognition and participation of those with lived experience (Lincoln et al., 2011).

On the other hand, **epistemology** refers to how we know or how we come to know. Just as with ontology, each paradigm has its own epistemological assumptions. Since positivism evolved from the scientific method, its proponents see findings as true or objective. Although a positivist orientation is most often assumed in the life sciences, it has been endorsed by those in the social sciences as well. On the other hand, constructivist, critical, and participatory paradigms embrace the subjective, noting that much of what we know and how we come to know it can only be truly known by the knower (Lincoln et al., 2011). We can come to a fuller understanding of someone’s reality through dialogue and study, and as we do so, we co-construct knowledge that is shaped by our own experiences and those of others (i.e., co-constructing knowledge and reality).

Thus, when we approach research from any paradigm—be it positivism or a critical and participatory paradigm—we must establish our ontological and epistemological bases, which are considered when we speak to the quality and commitments behind our work. As you can see, some of these paradigms are generally incommensurable. While you may find it difficult to combine ontological and epistemological assumptions from the positivist and the critical paradigms, many researchers are able to reconcile and justify the critical paradigm with constructivism or participatory/postmodern orientations. Before learning about CPI’s ontological and epistemological roots, it is important to understand the assumptions about knowledge that we are carrying with us.

REFLEXIVITY QUESTION

How have you been socialized to think about what can be known and how we come to know?

For many of us, we have been brought up in a society that values knowledge of the tangible or concrete. I know because I *see*. I know because I *feel*. I know because I *touch*. In terms of how we come to know, many of us were taught the scientific method in school: State your hypothesis, test it, modify the hypothesis, test it again, and so on. This method, and so many of its derivatives, value what can be established or illustrated in tangible ways. How many times have you heard someone say, “Prove it,” or “I’ll know it when I see it,” or some other version of that?

What do *you* think can be known? Consider, for a moment, how you know you are loved by someone. Or how you feel when you are sad or discouraged. We often give an example in our introductory research methods classes of the statement, “I love my children.” You can, through something like the scientific method, verify that I have children, laying out definitions of what it means to “have” children, definitions of who is a “child,” and more. Once you have determined those definitions, you could obtain “evidence” of my love for them (I provide for them financially, I feed them, I bandage their wounds, I take care of them emotionally), but you cannot ever *know* my love for them. Similarly, you can never *know* my pain or sadness when I am discriminated against because of my identities. You may be able to empathize, but your knowledge will never fully inhabit the same space as my knowledge. We will delve more deeply into other concepts related to what can be known and how we know, such as science, scientism, positivism, and postpositivism, in Chapter 3.

For now, it is important to understand that CPI is rooted in a critical tradition that privileges the knowledge and expertise of all individuals. It situates each person as the expert of their own lived experience. It is a form of inquiry that calls on us to question the status quo, to push against systems of oppression, and to build relationships based on respectful human interaction, all for the purpose of co-constructing knowledges and practices that aim for social transformation in solidarity.

Epistemologies That Inform CPI

Before we get more into the topic of why epistemology matters, we thought it would be valuable to pause and reflect on the epistemological roots of CPI. In this section, we highlight the importance of drawing from a multiplicity of systems (knowledge, language, and culture)—holding true to the concept of **knowledge democratization** and its role in CPI. While we briefly summarize a number of epistemologies here, you can look to Chapter 3 to learn more about these various traditions.

First, we place the work of several Indigenous¹ scholars and communities at the forefront of this summary, as throughout history, these ways of knowing were often invalidated through colonization, displacement, and historical erasure. In *Pulling Together: A Guide for Indigenization of Post-Secondary Institutions* (Antoine et al., 2018), Asma-na-hi Antoine, an Indigenous educator (Toquaht, Nuuchah-nulth), and her Indigenous and non-Indigenous co-authors note that across various Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge is a practice based in relationality (an interdependence among peoples, the environment, and the metaphysical), holism (learning through emotion, spirit, mind, and body), and spiritual development (understanding the interrelation between the sacred and secular). The concepts of interconnectedness and relationships are embedded within Indigenous epistemologies, demonstrating how these epistemologies can inform the principles of CPI.

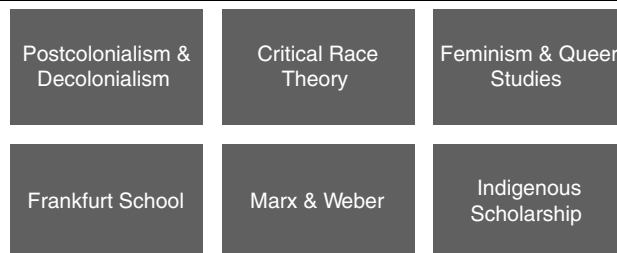
Beyond Indigenous scholarship, it is imperative that we introduce the work of those across the Global South, as many of the fundamental principles of CPI are based in the work of notable scholar-activists such as Paulo Freire in Brazil, Orlando Fals-Borda in Colombia, and Mohammad Anisur Rahman in Bangladesh. In the 1970s, Finnish researcher Marja-Liisa Swantz should also be credited, as her collaboration with the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania

and local community members was one of the first instances when these types of activities were termed “participatory research” (Swantz, 1982, 2008). In their work, they showed how participation, democracy, and pluralism are vital in promoting forms of inquiry that are anchored in and aim for equitable knowledge creation (or *knowledge democracy*) and social change.

In noting that social change (or action) is aligned with inquiry, these scholar--activists in the Global South drew on the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber. They demonstrate that it is not enough to simply theorize about social problems, but it is necessary to understand oppressive structures and seek change. This idea of inquiry as a critical activity toward transformative change was foundational to the work of the Frankfurt School. These scholars, many of whom escaped Nazi Germany, showed that action, without theory, could simply lead to the continuation of conformist thought and practices that perpetuate an oppressive status quo. Through the work of Jürgen Habermas, practitioners of CPI aim to understand how collective action can be achieved through committing to mutual understanding, reaching consensus, and creating space for dialogue and deliberation. While the work of these scholars, from Marx to the Frankfurt School, shaped the basis of much of what we see in critical inquiry, it should be noted that their perspectives were grounded and limited by their experiences as White, European men. Over time, feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway (1988) established the importance of situated or embodied knowledge, a notion inherent in CPI. That said, we must acknowledge that the feminist theorists most often cited in academic literature are those who identify as White, cisgender women; thus, it is necessary to consider whose ideas we are citing, the perspectives they bring to their work, and those we may be excluding or silencing. Figure 1.1 displays the various schools of thought that have contributed to critical forms of participatory inquiry and how these interdependent ideas provide the epistemological and ontological foundation for how one theorizes and practices CPI.

Although the idea of situating knowledge is essential to feminist theory and CPI as well, it is important to note the work of postcolonial and feminist literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1981), who suggests that critical theorists should not affix one epistemological view to all women (or any other social group). Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins (2002) describes in *Black Feminist Thought* how dominant research paradigms portray majoritarian views as neutral or objective, while minority views are often thought of as outliers or treated as less than. Collins and other critical race theorists (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) question why dominant research designs often portray communities of Color through a deficit lens rather than exploring how race and racism may shape the systems that affect these communities.

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Various Schools of Critical Thought Contributing to CPI Theory and Practice



By exploring the work of various scholars and practitioners of critical theory, we see how these various strands can inform CPI. Remember, CPI is a form of inquiry that questions the status quo and oppressive systems, all for the purpose of co-constructing equitable knowledge systems and pushing for transformative change. Also, by understanding how various strands of critical theory inform CPI—from Indigenous to Global South to critical race theory—we intentionally counter acts of **epistemicide** (de Sousa Santos, 2008; Hall & Tandon, 2017), or efforts to erase the knowledge of subordinated cultures.

It is not our goal, nor is it desirable or helpful, to separate ontologies and epistemologies into tidy, dichotomous, or distinct categories or types. Ontological and epistemological beliefs and approaches are always blurred, always overlapping, and always contextualized. In addition, they are tied up with our own positionalities and often evolve over time. For example, we may believe in, value, and enact a Black feminist epistemology, but because we have been socialized in ways that do not value that approach, we may sometimes act in ways that are contrary to that epistemology. We may engage with a community that values or holds a different epistemology. As critical participatory inquirers, we seek to better understand, respect, and act in relation to that community's epistemology.

It is vital to question how our epistemological assumptions—how we (come to) know—influence (intentionally and unintentionally) the questions we ask, the methods we use, and how we interact with others. Use the scenario and questions in Box 1.1 to think through the relationship between positionality, epistemology, and methods.

BOX 1.1: CONSIDERING EPISTEMOLOGICAL MIS/MATCH

Consider, for instance, a student in Canada who approaches a critical friend for assistance on her dissertation proposal. The study will be related to justice-oriented pedagogies in secondary schools in Uganda. The student–researcher identifies as White and claims a critical and participatory epistemology and an explicitly anti-racist agenda. The study she proposes will use interviews and focus groups of Black school teachers in Uganda to better understand how they employ justice-oriented pedagogies in their classrooms. What advice should the friend offer?

- How is the student positioning herself in relation to those with whom she will engage? (Is she positioning herself as Knower or the teachers as Knowers? Somewhere in between? How?)
- How does her stated epistemology (critical, participatory) align with her chosen methods? (Do her methods reinforce a CPI epistemological stance? Do her methods indicate she values and honors the teachers' expertise as knowledge? In what ways?)
- How might the methods she intends to use help or hinder her ability to better understand the participants' intentions and experiences? (Do her chosen methods allow the teachers the opportunity to be sincere, open, and honest about their experiences, or will the methods lean toward the extractive?)

- What are some other possibilities for engaging with this group of teachers or for better understanding justice-oriented pedagogies? (Could she consider other methods or approaches that would clearly connect with a CPI epistemology? Could she wait to decide on methods until after she engages dialogically with the teachers and builds authentic relationships?)

We note that the reflexive questions here are not simply meant to be answered as a check-box exercise, which could potentially lead to implicitly justifying and enacting hegemonic practices. Rather, as Pillow (2003) states, we must ask ourselves difficult questions to evoke discomfort, in an effort to improve the quality and ethics of our critical inquiry. We must also use these opportunities for reflexivity to think beyond the instrumental (“I should build relationships so I can get better data”) and move toward the relational and ethical. We expand on this later in the book. For now it is important to work on pushing ourselves to explicitly link positionality with epistemology and methodology.

As you think through these questions, we encourage you to take a moment and add to the positionality inventory you started at the beginning of this chapter. You may choose to add some research questions or topics you are interested in pursuing. You may also list a few methods you would like to use or have learned about. Finally, write out the contexts in which you may begin your inquiry. Then, as you move forward in this chapter and beyond, perhaps you could add some visual components (like arrows, circles, etc.) to illustrate to yourself how your stated epistemology matches (or does not match) your goals, methods, and contexts. This is just a starting point. As we move on, we will help you clarify how or if your epistemological assumptions align with the methods you use.

Why Epistemology Matters

Epistemology and the goals, agendas, and commitments that stem from one’s positionality determine and inform every step of the inquiry process, even if we do not make them explicit. Often as researchers we feel more comfortable pretending that we are detached from our research and the communities with which we work, that we have no agenda, that as long as we control for certain variables or enact multiple validity techniques, we do not need to consider *ourselves*. This could not be further from the truth. We believe that strong inquiry is inherently connected to and enhanced by clarifying and foregrounding our own positionalities and epistemologies. Figure 1.2 may be helpful to clearly see how epistemology matters in the grand scheme of inquiry, guiding every step of the process.

THE LINEAGE OF KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRATIZATION

Moving on from the various epistemologies that inform CPI, in this section we further trace its development. We start with CPI’s Indigenous roots through what is typically known as action research, including the related approach of participatory action research. We will establish the

FIGURE 1.2 ■ Cycle of Continuous Reflexivity

origins and epistemologies of this movement to democratize knowledge and then provide an overview of the current family tree of participatory inquiry.

Research as Inquiry Among Indigenous Peoples

Tracing the history of Indigenous inquiry is not as simple as combing through textbooks and journal articles to show how Indigenous ways of knowing were the first to contribute to methodological discussions. As previously mentioned, many forms of Indigenous knowledge around the world have been coopted, appropriated, displaced, or erased through colonialism (Smith et al., 2018).

REFLEXIVITY QUESTION

How have you seen colonialism enacted in or through research practices in your own field?

As Cook-Lynn (1997) shows in a history of Native American Studies (NAS) in North America, Indigenous scholars met in the 1970s to create networks and space where NAS could be seen as an autonomous discipline. The purpose of these discussions—and the development of courses, academic programs, and recruitment of Indigenous scholars—was not simply to create another academic discipline but to show how NAS was different. NAS would emerge as a

discipline grounded in local knowledge systems (not simply the knowledge of academics), and it would be specific to the multiplicity of oral traditions, languages, and geographies across the First Nations.

Through the NAS project, Indigenous forms of inquiry were not established to further the reductionist views of the traditional scientific method; rather, the initial development of NAS was inherently based in an ethic of care, participation, and knowledge democracy. Prior to the development of NAS in the 1970s, these principles are evidenced as early as the 1940s, through what we would generally define as participatory methods, by Cree bureaucrats conducting land use studies in North America (Jackson, 1993).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith's groundbreaking book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), is written from the author's perspective as a professor of Indigenous education in New Zealand who identifies as Indigenous Māori. In the book, Tuhiwai Smith critiques the heritage and harms of Western/Northern imperialist/colonialist research and provides guidance toward a "framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice" for "those researchers who work with, alongside and for communities who have chosen to identify themselves as indigenous" (pp. 4–5). This framework shares many CPI values, particularly the emphasis on "cultural protocols, values and behaviors as an integral part of methodology" and the importance of sharing knowledge with "people in culturally appropriate ways" (Smith, 1999, p. 15) as well as a "long-term commitment" to communities. Much like CPI, Indigenous inquiry stresses that research must be contextualized according to local knowledge systems and cultures—it is not simply research about Indigenous peoples. Studies should be focused on Indigenous experience and conducted by Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). Although this summary focuses on an example of Indigenous inquiry across North America, the use of participatory methods is well documented by Indigenous scholars around the world, from New Zealand (Bishop & Glynn, 2003) to Botswana (Chilisa, 2020).

Research as Action in the Global North

Participatory methods also have a strong tradition in the Global North. One form, **action research** (AR), is typically traced to social psychologist Kurt Lewin's social change research in the 1940s (Feldman, 2017; McTaggart et al., 2017). Lewin, who had fled Nazi Germany in 1933, aimed to address prejudice and intergroup tensions in the United States by bringing community members into participatory, nonhierarchical dialogue. Informed by Lewin's (1943, 1951) field theory, this form of inquiry sought to surface and disrupt "entrenched habits of power" (Glassman et al., 2013, p. 274) in order to effect change in community relations. Unlike more traditional forms of social research, AR aims not just to document the status quo or conduct experiments in accordance with the scientific method but to *transform* reality through a reflective, democratic, and collective problem-solving process (Glassman et al., 2013).

AR comprises a continuous cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting and positions participants and researchers as learners and actors who implement the solutions they devise (McTaggart et al., 2017). The approach has three distinct features (Glassman et al., 2013; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005):

1. Shared ownership of research,
2. Community-based knowledge creation/analysis of social problems, and
3. Local, community-based actions to solve real-world problems.

The data provide evidence of the change process instead of simply the outcome. This sounds quite different from the traditional scientific method, doesn't it?

Lewin's AR approach gained ground, becoming a social movement influenced by other researchers, activists, and both governmental and nongovernmental organizations (Glassman et al., 2013). This movement also incorporated ideas from progressive educators of the era, including Dewey (1933), Piaget (1932), and Gardner's (1946) and Bradford's (1967) conception of adult education as a democratic quest for transformation (Glassman et al., 2013; McTaggart, 1991). A 1946 scholarly publication authored by Ronald Lippitt and Marian Radke called for social scientists to "understand, examine and challenge the dynamics of prejudice among social groups" (p. 167) through a cyclical nine-step process. Lippitt and Radke asserted that top-down efforts would not effectively diminish prejudice and that "the process of re-education is a spontaneous, voluntary acceptance of new values and behavioral patterns" (p. 172). They expressed a belief that the fledgling AR movement could help expose and ultimately reduce "conflict and misunderstanding between ethnic groups" (p. 172) evident in "both everyday and catastrophic problems" (Glassman et al., 2013, p. 276).

Other forms of AR also emerged around the same time, including one led by University of Chicago sociologist George Mead (Glassman et al., 2013). William Foote Whyte, a PhD graduate of this department, developed a form of participatory action research focused primarily on mapping community interactions and organizational structures with a view to changing behavioral patterns. Embracing a more traditional notion of the purpose of research, Whyte was openly critical of Lewin's approach, seemingly missing the democratic ethic around which it was designed (Glassman et al., 2013; Whyte, 1994). Chris Argyris, who studied under Whyte and founded a social research center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Glassman et al., 2013), melded Whyte's practices with a more democratic, justice-focused ethic (Glassman et al., 2013, p. 282). In post-World War II England, Eric Trist, who was influenced by Lewin's work, cofounded the Tavistock Institute with an emphasis on psychotherapy; his approach to AR accounted for power dynamics in human behavior and organizational change (Glassman et al., 2013).

As you can see, the interpretations of Lewin's transformative AR were already starting to differentiate and drift from the original principles by the mid-20th century in North America and Europe. Now, we will look at how knowledge democratization developed in other parts of the world in the second half of the century in light of local contexts and concerns.

Research as Activism in the Global South

A more radical approach to inquiry emerged in Latin America and other parts of the Global South in the 1970s as a response to sociopolitical and intellectual domination from the Global North (Fals-Borda, 1987; Glassman & Erdem, 2014). As Fals-Borda, a leader of this movement in Colombia who coined the term "**participatory action research**" (Rahman, 2008)

recounts, many intellectuals' ideas about "the relation between theory and practice" shifted drastically over the last three decades of the 20th century. These intellectuals were compelled by widespread "structural crises," "economic exploitation and human/cultural destruction," and everyday problems to take a stand against the dominance of "value-neutrality and aloofness" (Fals-Borda, 2001, p. 27) in scientific inquiry that propped up these injustices. Some adopted and adapted Lewin's AR as a promising framework for resisting positivist and colonial abuses (Fals-Borda, 2001).

Southern, participatory AR developed largely around Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, particularly the concept of *conscientização*, or development of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970). Becoming aware or "conscientized" about oppression, Freire argued, is the first step in gaining liberation. Freire suggested that this occurs through critical reflection on and dialogue about one's lived experiences and circumstances and then taking action to challenge injustice: he called this marriage of reflection and action or theory and practice praxis. We cover this in more detail in Chapter 3. For now, it is important to understand that Freire's critical pedagogy has been key in the development of critical participatory inquiry.

Fals-Borda (2001) traces the development of this decentralized movement, spearheaded mainly by social scientists from anthropology, sociology, education, and theology who were deeply concerned by conditions in their communities, which they connected to capitalism and "universalistic modernization" (p. 27). They saw a need for "a radical critique and reorientation of social theory and practice" (Fals-Borda, 2001, p. 27) that broke with the practices and institutions of academia; in 1970, many even left their university jobs and established "alternative institutions and procedures for research and action" to solve real-world problems. This occurred through organizing and civil disobedience in India, Tanzania, Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico (Fals-Borda, 2001). Participatory action research (PAR) came to be seen as "a vivencia necessary for the achievement of progress and democracy . . . not only as a research methodology but also as a philosophy of life" (Fals-Borda, 2001, p. 31).

This philosophy grew into a truly global movement. The World Symposium of Action Research was held in Cartagena, Colombia, in 1977, bringing together speakers from Nicaragua, Germany, United States, Peru, Mexico, and Sweden (Fals-Borda, 2001). The 1997 meeting, again in Cartagena, included 2,000 delegates from 61 countries. Throughout this evolution of Northern and Southern (participatory) action research, a range of different approaches and research practices developed (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Also, with this increased interest and use of AR in university courses and research projects, worries rose about straying from the foundational principles and epistemology of the approach: Would this lead to a new colonization of knowledge?

There are differing views on the relationship between Northern and Southern developments in AR. Some scholars, like Glassman and Erdem (2014) and Greenwood and Levin (2007), see Southern AR as evolving in parallel to Northern AR but within oppressive contexts from Latin America to Africa and South/Southeast Asia and expressly developed as a tool in the struggle for democracy and equality. Similarly, Fals-Borda (2006) "interprets the origins of PAR in the so-called Third World an endogenous proposal based on an examination of local social, cultural, historical, and environmental roots in order to explain, describe, systematize, and transform context and existing conditions" (Santos, 2015, p. 498). While acknowledging the role

FIGURE 1.3 ■ Lineage or Generations of PAR

| First generation | Second generation | Third generation | Fourth generation |
|--|---|---|---|
| Action research J.L. Moreno (1910s) Kurt Lewin (1930s) Stephen Corey (educational action research) Temporary decline due to positivistic ideology in the U.S. | British tradition Tavistock Institute of Human Relations following Lewin's theories (starting in the 1940s) Ford Teaching Project (1970s) | Critical + emancipatory Appreciation for the practical character of the British tradition of action research Call for more explicitly critical and emancipatory action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) | Participatory action research Connect critical emancipatory AR and participation Social movement theory: Freire (1960s), Fals Borda Adult education: Budd Hall (1970s) Development studies: Robert Chambers (1980s) |

Adapted from "Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public Sphere," by Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* 3rd ed., by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE), 559–604.

of international theoretical developments and cooperation like the congresses in Cartagena, Rahman (2008) shares Fals-Borda's assertion, pointing to rural development initiatives in South and Southeast Asia as origins of PAR practice (Santos, 2015).

On the other hand, as shown in Figure 1.3, Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) trace the lineage of PAR as the fourth generation of AR following the first generation of Lewin and company in the United States, a second generation in the United Kingdom, and then an international critical approach. Kemmis and McTaggart view Southern scholars as building on this foundation to inspire social movements and community development in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia. Regardless of the disputed lineage and fuzzy boundaries between AR and PAR, we agree with the likes of Fals-Borda and Mora-Osejo (2003), and Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), that a key, defining, and inalienable feature of participatory inquiry is its political nature.

It should be noted that Figure 1.3 is not meant to suggest a chronological order of what occurred or who enacted action research first or last. As previously mentioned in this chapter, knowledge and traditions from minoritized, colonized, and racialized communities have often been stolen, hidden, or disregarded within literature. Rather, Figure 1.3 denotes the major philosophical traditions surrounding various forms of action research and how they have been considered, acknowledged, and cited throughout history. Many of the scholars and communities who may identify within the third and fourth generation enacted their form of action research contemporaneously as those considered to be in the first and second generations.

REFLEXIVITY QUESTION

How do you view your own research through the lens of democracy, equality, and politics?

Calls emerged in the early 21st century for the development and use of an organic, localized paradigm suitable for each community's reality (*vivencia*) and needs (Fals-Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003; Santos, 2015). Fals-Borda (2006) and Greenwood and Levin (2007) advocated for a convergence of Northern and Southern traditions in response to what they saw as the appropriation of AR's "radical ideas for social change" (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 15) for creating more efficient organizational and industrial processes in North America and Western/Northern Europe, like Whyte and Trist's work. They also called out the "domestication" of AR for development purposes in forms like Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Rural Appraisal, and Participatory Learning Analysis, which "unintentionally made participation into a commodity" (p. 15), which we will return to later.

Around the same time, however, action researchers seemed to incorporate participation into AR more generally, blurring the line between AR and PAR and the definition of participation itself (McTaggart, 1997; Santos, 2015). The approach was adopted into various disciplines, perhaps most notably education and public health, and strands such as critical and feminist PAR emerged in alignment with particular epistemological perspectives (Dick, 2009; Santos, 2015).

DEVELOPMENT INTO VARIOUS STRANDS AND THROUGH DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES

In this section, we briefly trace the adaptation of participatory inquiry into these strands and academic disciplines and call attention to some ways that it has drifted from its roots in the process. These varieties can be seen along a spectrum between PAR's critical ontoepistemological roots and more traditional ideas about research.

Strands

Although we cover several strands of participatory inquiry in this section, it is important to note that practitioners of these strands generally follow the core epistemological principles emphasized earlier in this chapter. For instance, researchers are not solely those affiliated with universities or academic institutions; there is an explicit acknowledgment that all community members can be involved in the knowledge creation and learning process. Rather than the researcher–scientist proposing a problem statement or hypothesis, issues are defined by community members, and community strengths and capacities are recognized in this process. Additionally, practitioners of these strands all follow the cyclical nature of action research and are interested in using research for action and beneficial social change.

CPAR

As you might guess, there is a strand of PAR that espouses an explicitly critical onto-epistemology and, given the title of this book, it might not surprise you that we most closely align with this strand. Critical participatory action research (CPAR) asserts that "people hold

deep knowledge about their lives and experiences, and should help shape the questions, [and] frame the interpretations” of research (Torre & Fine, 2006, p. 458). The approach rejects the idea that objectivity is necessary or even possible and urges researchers to practice critical self-reflection throughout the process (Kemmis et al., 2014). As we will describe in Chapter 3, this strand views ethics as an ongoing practice rather than an institutional checklist or set of forms and as a way of ensuring the validity of the research (Lather, 1986). And most importantly, CPAR aims to illuminate, disrupt, and transform unjust conditions and practices alongside those affected by them (Kemmis et al., 2014; McTaggart et al., 2017; Sandwick et al., 2018). It is a “practice-changing practice” (Kemmis et al., 2014; McTaggart et al., 2017). CPAR is not always labeled as such, but a cursory examination of PAR studies will often reveal the researchers’ epistemology.

CPAR is, in many ways, a reaction to the proliferation of AR approaches that developed during the second half of the 20th century and the cooptation of social action research (Kemmis et al., 2014). It is also a recommitment to Freire’s critical pedagogy and PAR’s origins in anti-colonial movements in the Global South. CPAR has strong roots in the discipline of education; for example, in their influential 1986 book *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge, and Action Research*, Carr and Kemmis, educational researchers in the United Kingdom and Australia, respectively, critiqued both traditional approaches to research and the disconnect between theory and practice. They encouraged teachers to conduct their own inquiry, rejecting the idea that research should only be done by outside, university-based researchers, and outlining how they could use AR to reflect on, problematize, and ultimately transform their practice. Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon built on this in their 2014 guide for practitioners (primarily teachers but also health workers, organizational leaders, community groups, and others) planning CPAR projects. For example, CPAR has been used with and by youth in New York City to examine experiences of injustice and contest structures of privilege (Fox & Fine, 2015; Stoudt et al., 2012).

Feminist and Queer PAR

There is substantial overlap between critical, feminist, and queer ontoepistemology (Bain & Payne, 2016), but for the purposes of this chapter, we will highlight the unique aspects of each. These strands of PAR grew out of the belief that PAR could not be truly emancipatory without examining oppression and injustice (Maguire, 1996) for the purpose of disrupting cisgender, heterosexual, and patriarchal systems. For instance, feminist PAR can be defined as “a conceptual framework that enables a critical understanding of women’s multiple perspectives and works towards inclusion and social change through participatory processes while exposing researchers’ own biases and assumptions” (Reid & Gillberg, 2014, para. 1).

Patricia Maguire’s 1987 book, *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*, asserted that despite its focus on disrupting socioeconomic distinctions in research, PAR had continually marginalized women’s perspectives. In line with feminist theories, Maguire’s framework centers gender in the participatory inquiry process, acknowledging that gender is a socially constructed

and oppressive system that forces women's knowledge and expertise to the periphery. In the years since, feminist PAR literature has expanded, incorporating feminist theory into the paradigm to more fully acknowledge and contest gendered forms of oppression (Reid & Gillberg, 2014). Reid and Frisby (2008) proposed a nine-part framework for feminist PAR that builds on Maguire's earlier work and incorporates the issues of intersectionality and representation. Feminist PAR has been used to document the experiences of adolescent South African girls after their parents' divorce (Botha & Hay, 2016) and to expose predatory lending practices of U.S. banks toward low-income people (Houh & Kalsem, 2015). Feminist PAR is not only concerned with women's experiences but seeks to highlight the role of gender in PAR more generally; for example, Singh et al. (2013) developed a set of strategies for feminist PAR with transgender communities.

Although Bain and Payne (2016) contend that "PAR and feminist and queer research are approaches to research that share similar values and practical concerns" (p. 332), they also illustrate how power dynamics in the co-creation of scholarly knowledge can lead to "dynamics of de-participation and exclusion that can erode the progressive, inclusive politics of feminist participatory methodologies" (p. 331). By reflecting on their experience of collaborating with participants from a queer youth program in Toronto, they detail how feminist participatory methodologies directed them toward more equitable power relations, but that their attempts at scholarly co-creation were met with queer de-participation during analysis, reporting, and publication. In reframing their research as queer PAR, they note the importance of work that originates in their own lived experiences and those of the participants in the queer youth program. Bain and Payne (2016) adeptly note that when they reframe feminist PAR through the term *queer*: "we do so to emphasize the disruptive potentialities of queerness as lived experience that subverts gender and sexual normative value systems and rationalities and allows us to consciously negotiate multiple situated positionalities" (p. 332).

These disruptive potentialities can be further seen in the "Restoring our Roots" PAR project, which sought to engage Indigenous youth who identify as Two-Spirit, non-binary, and/or LGBTQIA+ (2SLGBTQIA+) in land-based teaching (Fast et al., 2021). In this project, Elizabeth Fast, a Métis researcher, worked alongside graduate students and Indigenous members of their youth advisory committee to explore the impacts that land-based teaching and learning have for Indigenous youth, their families, Elders, and communities, especially those in urban settings who have been excluded from ritual. By working alongside 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youth, Fast et al. (2021) show how their work has a disruptive potentiality in that colonial influences have led to violence, discrimination, and isolation for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth even though the oral histories of many Indigenous groups respect those who identify as Two-Spirit. Through this project, the documentation of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous youths' experiences in land-based teaching and ritual, Fast et al. (2021) demonstrate that opportunities to disrupt through a praxis of inclusion, decolonization, and queering also lead to generative possibilities: "Decolonizing, queering, and creating non-binary inclusive spaces for land-based teaching where Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ youth feel safer are essential to the youths' overall self-esteem" (p. 134).

YPAR

As its name indicates, youth participatory action research engages youth as co-researchers in inquiry, enacting PAR epistemology that individuals of any background or status are experts on their lives (Schensul, 2014). The definition of participation ranges widely in such projects, from authentic involvement of youth in identification of a topic, selection of methods, collection and analysis of data, and sharing of findings to more tokenistic involvement (see Chapter 2 for more about types of participation). Because school is a significant part of youth lives, it is not surprising that much of YPAR occurs in schools or focuses on educational issues. For example, Cammarota (2011) uses PAR as a pedagogical model for urban youth, and Bertrand (2018) finds that YPAR can develop leadership skills among students of color. YPAR is used to document youth perspectives on educational barriers (Bhabha et al., 2017), teacher education (Brown & Rodríguez, 2017), and community life (Burke & Greene, 2015). YPAR also engages youth in inquiry on other issues that affect their lives, such as marginalization due to race, ethnicity, or migration status (Boutwell, 2015; Call-Cummings & Martinez, 2017). As we have found in our own YPAR work, this strand presents unique ethical quandaries and logistical challenges, particularly when done in school settings (Brion-Meisels & Alter, 2018).

CBPR

Community-based participatory research (CBPR or sometimes CBPAR) is often distinguished by partnerships between university researchers, organizations, and community members formed to tackle community-identified problems (Hacker, 2013; Vesely et al., 2019). As in PAR more generally, CBPR is typically rooted in Lewin's social action research and Freire's critical pedagogy, and community members are seen as holders of knowledge alongside professional practitioners and researchers (Hacker, 2013). CBPR epistemology emphasizes respectful relationships with participants, sharing of power over research objectives and methods, and an orientation toward action (Vesely et al., 2019). It is well established in the field of public health (Israel et al., 2005; Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). There are several handbooks and edited volumes illustrating CBPR in various disciplines. Our colleagues at George Mason University, Colleen Vesely, Bethany Letiecq, and Rachael Goodman, have used CBPR to understand resilience among immigrant families in the United States in light of structural and social barriers they face. The Appendix includes a more extended description of their work.

Disciplines

You might have noticed that these strands or epistemological perspectives intersect with multiple disciplines. Indeed, CPI is inherently interdisciplinary. Our attraction to the approach, given our varied interests and backgrounds in political science, public policy, international development, linguistics, human rights, conflict resolution, and migration might offer a useful illustration of this interdisciplinarity. But because we know it can be useful to see how it and its various strands have been adopted and adapted within specific disciplines, we offer here an overview of the use of participatory and action-oriented inquiry in various academic and professional disciplines, which might spark some ideas about how you could use it in the future. As

you peruse this section, try to think about how or to what extent the ontology and epistemology behind some of these applications might align with the CPI perspective we outlined previously.

Education

It would probably be safe to say that participatory inquiry approaches have infiltrated the discipline of education more than others, and work in this field has in some ways encouraged adoption in other areas. Educational researchers seem to dominate many professional organizations and journals dedicated to AR/PAR. So, we will start our description of CPI's so-called family tree with education because of the influential role of this discipline in the spread of the approach and, arguably, in its shift away from some of its most foundational principles.

Critical participatory and action-oriented forms of inquiry have been used in a variety of ways within the field of education. For example, Cammarota and Fine (2008) have used PAR and YPAR as a form of emancipation for and with marginalized students. Silver-Pacuilla (2004) engaged feminist PAR with women with disabilities in an adult education program focused on literacy in the Southwestern United States. Torre (2009) engaged CPAR as a way of documenting unjust and unequal opportunity in New York City. Guerrero and Tinkler (2010) used participatory photography with refugee and displaced youth in the United States and Colombia as a socioemotional intervention. Brown and Rodríguez (2017), among many others, used PAR as a method of teacher education. Ní Sheanáin (2016) recruited her own primary school students in Ireland to help build an intercultural pedagogy among her teacher peers and to develop intercultural understandings among their students. We have used participatory inquiry in a variety of ways with students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and other educational stakeholders. Through those experiences we have noticed the difficulty—almost impossibility—of working within institutional structures of schooling, typically marked by hierarchical relationships among students, teachers, and administrators and rigid roles and procedures that make authentic power sharing extremely difficult. We will discuss these constraints and possible strategies later in the book.

Health

Perhaps surprisingly for a “hard” science, a number of scholars and practitioners in the health sciences have also embraced CBPR and PAR in recent years, for purposes ranging from nursing education to public health interventions. For example, Beatriz et al. (2018) engaged in YPAR to evaluate a healthy relationships workshop series for middle school students (11–14 years old) aimed at preventing teen dating violence in Boston, Massachusetts (U.S.). Peer researchers (14–18 years old) who had previously taken the workshops participated in all stages of the evaluation, including developing the pre- and postprogram survey and collecting and analyzing data. Also in Boston, Binet et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal PAR study examining community health in relation to neighborhood conditions and change; 45 adult residents helped with the design of methods and instruments as well as carrying out data collection and collaborative analysis.

The health fields abound with examples of using participatory inquiry approaches, especially with Native, First Nations, and Indigenous populations in the United States, Canada, Australia, and beyond. For example, Cueva et al. (2018) used CBPAR to develop culturally

relevant online cancer education modules about cancer for rural Alaska Native peoples with Community Health Aides and Practitioners, who were members of the target groups. The authors draw on Freire's popular education and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, which they describe incorporating into the modules through cultural values, teachings, and storytelling. Zubrzycki and colleagues (2017) explored cross-cultural collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health workers in rural Southeastern Australia by engaging 41 health workers in participatory data collection and analysis around the issue of cancer services. The authors explicitly address the roles of colonialism, racism, and socioeconomic inequality in health outcomes among Indigenous Australians, the compatibility of PAR with an Indigenous paradigm, and their use of an Aboriginal theoretical framework and research protocols.

While examples of participatory inquiry abound in the United States, there are also numerous cases of participatory work being done all over the globe in the health fields. For example, Asirifi (2019) reports on her doctoral dissertation study using CBPR to build leadership capacity among undergraduate nursing students in Ghana through a collaborative, egalitarian problem-solving process based on power sharing with marginalized community members. Another example is from Devine et al. (2017), who report on a three-year PAR study to address barriers to sexual and reproductive health among women with disabilities in the Philippines, reporting positive outcomes like increased knowledge of and access to services. The process consisted of 10 meetings each of five Participatory Action Groups made up of women with disabilities and facilitated by co-researchers who were also women with disabilities, as well as interviews with group members. Lems et al. (2020) aimed to understand the perspectives of adolescent girls in Amsterdam from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds on health behavior and to develop materials promoting healthy lifestyles using PAR. The authors portray an engaging, dialogic, collaborative, creative, and reflective process and describe participant contributions as "valuable" and "deep insights" (p. 206). Finally, Olumide et al. (2016) used photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), a photography-based PAR method that we describe in detail in Chapter 8, with 11 adolescents in Nigeria to define health and well-being and document threats in their community, part of an international project including sites in the United States, South Africa, India, and China.

Development

Participatory research has gained significant traction in the field of development as well, often crossing disciplinary boundaries with education, health, social work, human rights, migration, and so on. For example, Boedecker et al. (2019) integrated a CBPR approach with more traditional survey methods to improve food biodiversity and nutrition in Western Kenya and paired locations using CBPR with control locations receiving no intervention. One hundred eighty participants in the CBPR locations participated in a series of workshops to identify, plan, and implement farming procedures and educational activities to increase dietary diversity and nutrition in their communities while outside researchers measured effects of the intervention using baseline and end-line surveys and statistical analysis.

In rural Kenya, Beh and colleagues (2013) use a CBPAR approach to engage marginalized populations near conservation areas in photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) to elicit

community input and strategize approaches for resource management. They emphasize the importance of community ownership, reciprocal knowledge creation, and change-focused outcomes in CBPAR. Campos et al. (2016) describe two PAR projects in Portugal in which community members participated in creating or implementing action plans for a local climate change-related problem. In India, Nix et al. (2019) used PAR to develop interdisciplinary solutions for sustainable low-income housing with local residents, who participated in problem identification, solution design, implementation, and evaluation. And in Haiti, Pyles (2015) reflects on ethical tensions in using PAR in development settings, focusing on earthquake recovery efforts with peasants, particularly the meaning of participation, power, race, class, and gender. She encourages practitioners to practice self-critique throughout the process.

Social Work

The field of social work has also historically led in its use of participatory methods and approaches. For example, Payne and Bryant (2018) report on their use of “street PAR,” an explicitly critical, anti-racist “comprehensive research-activist program” (p. 450) that they designed, as part of a higher education intervention for incarcerated persons in Delaware (U.S.). Particularly in work with this population, the authors “advocate for the most aggressive definition of PAR” (p. 451) in terms of involving participants authentically in all aspects of the research. Another example comes from Johnston-Goodstar (2013), who worked with Native American youth to develop a definition of social justice for social work with Indigenous communities, drawing on Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies in a YPAR process.

Often, as you will see in later chapters, participatory methods include the use of arts-based inquiry approaches. For example, Van Katwyk and Seko (2019) take a critical, emancipatory stance toward YPAR, employing participatory arts-based methods with youth (ages 16–29) in both urban and rural locations in Ontario, Canada, to understand their definitions, perceptions, and experiences of resilience. Trained youth researchers planned and facilitated the arts workshops; artwork was displayed at a public gallery; and the authors conducted thematic data analysis of research memos, participant descriptions of their artwork, and group discussions.

Migration

Participatory inquiry has become prevalent in research about immigrants and refugees, who in many cases experience intersectional marginalization in terms of race and ethnicity, legal and socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic knowledge, access to educational and healthcare services, and other factors. Some migration scholars tout participatory inquiry as a solution to logistical and ethical challenges, while others—us included—stress the need for increased attention to power relations and ethics in research with these populations (see Hauber-Özer & Call-Cummings, 2020 for a full discussion of ethics in visual participatory inquiry). Migration studies as a field is inherently interdisciplinary, so you will notice that the handful of examples we include here cross into other disciplines. Letiecq et al. (2014) use CBPR to document causes of high rates of depression among Mexican men working in

Montana (U.S.) and recommend mental health interventions for this population that take into account the stressors of family separation, economic and legal concerns, and discrimination. The authors note the need for increased caution due to the risk of deportation for undocumented participants. Baird et al. (2015) partnered with South Sudanese refugee women in Kansas (U.S.) to examine and develop action plans for health challenges experienced during resettlement.

Arts-based participatory methods, in particular, are seen as valuable means to facilitate expression for migrants who are not yet proficient in the dominant language of their society (Call-Cummings et al., 2019). Sloane and Wallin (2013) report on the potential of participatory theater to improve engagement of refugee families in Manitoba, Canada, in school planning at the local and national levels. The authors also tied theater-based participatory inquiry to the larger goal of transformative democracy. Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; see Chapter 8) has become especially popular with migrant groups. In the field of social work, Kim et al. (2015) describe the use of photovoice as part of a study examining the experiences of 10 North Korean adolescent and young adult refugees living in South Korea. Despite the two countries' shared language and history and settlement support systems, participants expressed themes of loss, exclusion, and a mismatch of cultural values. During her ethnographic dissertation study, Miled (2020) employed the photovoice method with 10 refugee-background Muslim girls in a Canadian high school as an alternative to interviews. Miled reports that the girls found this multimedia method to be a valuable opportunity to overcome language and confidence barriers and express their identities and experiences of displacement and resettlement. Melissa also incorporated photovoice into her dissertation study as a means of challenging public perceptions of refugees in Turkey (see Chapter 8 for an example).

Conflict Resolution, Human Rights, and Peace Studies

Critical forms of inquiry, especially CPI, are a natural fit for studies focused on human rights, conflict resolution, and peace studies. Many of the same principles followed in CPI—inclusion, dialogue, participation—are espoused within frameworks focusing on rights, peace, and justice (Dazzo, 2016), such as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. One instance of how participatory methods and emancipatory goals have been used is documented in the work of Arstein-Kerslake et al. (2019), to ensure that individuals with cognitive disabilities received a fair assessment of their fitness to stand trial in Australia's criminal justice system. The research team—comprised of academics, legal practitioners, and individuals with cognitive disabilities—blended principles from participatory research and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) to guide their methodology; these principles included community participation, emancipation and reform, equal recognition and nondiscrimination, and community accessibility to research outputs. Through this participatory project, Arstein-Kerslake et al. (2019) were able to produce evidence and tangible change, showing that community legal centers were more effective in ensuring equality, fairness, and nondiscrimination than the status quo (i.e., court determination of unfitness).

CO-OPTATION AND APPROPRIATION OF PARTICIPATORY METHODS

We hope that this excursion through the use of participatory inquiry in various strands and disciplines has sparked inspiration and questions about how and why you could use the approach in your own work. The examples above illustrate that these academic disciplines are successfully developing and using participatory inquiry methods in many contexts and with diverse populations. However, in many instances, we see participatory methods used without grounding the entire project in a participatory ontology and epistemology. In fact, we note in too many instances that participatory methods are used in a depoliticized way that is completely divorced from CPI's critical, democratic, decolonial roots. Often due to deep-seated colonial, neoliberal, globalizing forces, habits, and assumptions, CPI and associated methodologies are used in ways that in fact reproduce the very inequities and injustices they supposedly seek to address. This is done in both subtle and overt ways. For example, often researchers that engage PAR, CBPR, CBPAR, or AR identify an area of concern to be studied, rather than allowing community members to do that. This takes away a community's power in exercising their judgment about what is important and what is necessary. They are told what is wrong and that they (or some aspect of their lives or experiences) are a problem and that the researchers have shown up to "help fix" the problem. This is the epitome of a deficit perspective and feeds into a colonial mentality.

Another concern we have is that some of the studies described above, while engaging "target" populations in data collection, may not have included these co-researchers in data analysis, often relying on more traditional statistical approaches rather than on local understandings. This amounts to essentially using community members to extract data from their friends, neighbors, or peers but then disregarding them as outside "experts" attempt to make sense of that same data. Analysis approaches are often described as thematic analysis or traditional approaches to coding. We have experienced this approach as particularly violent and deeply colonial.

In addition, while many of the authors cited above tout the potential for participatory approaches to encourage trust among university- and community-based co-researchers, they often do not explicitly grapple with power dynamics or issues of positionality. Readers are left to wonder how or if these were addressed. Failing to identify one's positionality can be an honest mistake on the part of university-based researchers, yet we see this failure as profoundly problematic, as it is often a White person who commits this mistake because they see themselves as the norm and the practice of naming one's identities as unnecessary. Indeed, we, the authors, have made this mistake previously and have learned that, while we may think of it as a "simple" oversight, in actuality it is an act of racist, colonial violence.

When distanced from its critical epistemological foundations, participatory inquiry can "reproduce traditional, taken-for-granted power structures that are meant to be challenged and disrupted" (Call-Cummings et al., 2019, p. 402; citing Call-Cummings & Martinez, 2016; Evans-Agnew & Rosemberg, 2016). These practices take away from the democratic approaches taught and used by early participatory inquirers like Freire and Fals-Borda and reduce a potentially powerful, emancipatory experience to another tool in a researcher's toolbox to be wielded

when they want or need to claim that their work was somehow inclusive. We do not fault the researchers themselves, for the most part, because often participatory research is taught and understood as a method, as opposed to what we hope we you will start to see it as: an epistemological stance and a way of life.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 1.1: REVISITING REFLEXIVITY

Return to your responses for the introductory positionality activity, as part of the Focus Activity: Who Am I? at the start of this chapter. What might you add or change? As a critical participatory inquirer, it is important to continuously revisit these statements to understand how changes in your position and environment affect how and why you conduct CPI. Before you begin your own CPI project, make sure to revisit your positionality statement. Make sure you are doing more than just checking a box or employing a method. Be ready to engage in a reflexivity of discomfort (Pillow, 2003).

CONCLUSION

We have covered a lot of ground in this first chapter and hope this journey has sparked some reflection on the definition of knowledge, how it is created, and what the purpose of research is and should be. The fact that you are reading this book means you likely had some interest in “alternative” or collaborative methods of research, but by now you will have realized that what we are describing is more than an approach or method. We are describing an entirely different—but not new—paradigm about research, its purposes, and its practices. We are inviting you to join this global movement committed to democratizing and decolonizing knowledge.

In the following chapter we will get more into the “nuts and bolts” of CPI, including the meaning of participation, sharing ownership and decision making with community members, and what transformative outcomes can look like. However, we cannot overemphasize the importance of grounding any future use of CPI in an understanding of your positionality, ontology, epistemology as well as the radical, anti-oppressive paradigm out of which it was born.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- CPI requires a reconsideration of the definition of knowledge and whose knowledge counts.
- Positionality refers to an individual’s relationships with the world resulting from identities, experiences, social, political, and economical positions, socialization, privilege,

biases, and so on. Understanding one's positionality is essential to doing critical inquiry with communities.

- Ontology is one's concept of reality or what can be known while epistemology is one's theory of knowledge or understanding of how we come to know. The traditional approach to research, often known as the scientific method, depends on tangible evidence, but CPI values other ways of knowing about reality. CPI draws on Indigenous knowledge(s), Marxist and feminist thought, and critical race theory and seeks to counter epistemicide—efforts to erase subordinated forms of knowledge—through knowledge democratization.
- CPI developed through Indigenous inquiry, action research, which originally aimed to solve social problems in the Global North, and participatory action research, a form of anti-colonial activism in the Global South.
- Participatory inquiry has evolved into various strands, most notably critical, feminist, youth, and community-based forms, and has been adopted into numerous academic disciplines, including education, health sciences, development, social work, migration, human rights, conflict resolution, and peace studies.
- This expansion of participatory inquiry has, in some cases, led to distancing from the critical, political nature of the approach and even cooptation of participation for a traditional research paradigm.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE 1.2: REVISITING KNOWLEDGE

Journal about how you were socialized to think about knowledge. Think about your own (existing or future) CPI project and reflect on how the following questions would affect your project and how you engage with community members as co-researchers:

- What constitutes knowledge?
- How is knowledge created?
- Who creates knowledge?
- How do you know something is true?
- What counts as evidence?
- How are your ideas starting to change?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a picture of a researcher or find one on the internet or in one of your textbooks. What does this person look like? What are they doing, and where? How does this image differ from what you might have drawn before reading this chapter?

2. Choose a study cited in the “Strands and Disciplines” section of this chapter that interested you. Read it and note how (if at all) the authors address their positionality, what they count as evidence, what kind of change (if any) they are working toward, and how they describe working with community members through the process.
3. Create your own cycle of reflexivity mind map. Notice where you get stuck. What needs more thought? Continue to add to this as you read more in the book.

KEY TERMS

action research
 community-based participatory research
conscientização
 epistemicide
 epistemology
 intersectionality
 knowledge creation

knowledge democratization
 ontology
 participatory action research
 positionality
 reflexivity
vivencia

ENDNOTE

1. While we are aware that there are vastly different traditions seen or labeled as “Indigenous,” it is generally accepted as the most common and inclusive term that encompasses First Nations, Aboriginal, and Native. Therefore, we use “Indigenous” throughout this text.

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