



12-14-2015

A Review of Critical Quality Inquiry: Foundations and Futures

Daniel Cade Allen

Trinity Valley Community College, daniel.allen@tvcc.edu

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Recommended APA Citation

Allen, D. C. (2015). A Review of Critical Quality Inquiry: Foundations and Futures. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(12), 2010-2011. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2416>

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Abstract

In an age of growing concern over issues of social justice, Gaile S. Canella, Michelle Salazar Perez, and Penny A. Pasque offer a refreshing examination of the process and purpose of conducting Critical Qualitative inquiry. A series of essays from noted scholars examine the researcher paradigm in a novel paradigm: globalization and social justice. The reviewer examined the collection of essays as someone who has had little experience with this form of academic inquiry.

Keywords

Critical Qualitative Inquiry, Qualitative Research, Social Justice

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A Review of Critical Quality Inquiry: Foundations and Futures

Daniel C. Allen

Trinity Valley Community College, Athens, Texas, USA

In an age of growing concern over issues of social justice, Gaile S. Canella, Michelle Salazar Perez, and Penny A. Pasque offer a refreshing examination of the process and purpose of conducting Critical Qualitative inquiry. A series of essays from noted scholars examine the researcher paradigm in a novel paradigm: globalization and social justice. The reviewer examined the collection of essays as someone who has had little experience with this form of academic inquiry. Keywords: Critical Qualitative Inquiry, Qualitative Research, Social Justice

Researchers have long debated the utility of qualitative inquiry and its role in the academy. Qualitative research concerns itself with capturing the human voice and experience rather than applying quantitative analysis to an environment or situation. Yet, as higher education continues to produce researchers seeking to make their research applicable to their chosen discipline, it remains necessary to revisit the foundations of our work in order to reaffirm its purpose.

Critical Qualitative Inquiry (Canella, Salazar Perez, & Pasque, 2015) represents the attempt to reinvigorate the branch of qualitative research to meet the demands of contemporary society. The authors collected a series of essays by prominent researchers to shed light on the growing need for critical qualitative research. Gaile S. Cannella suggests, "We live in a difficult time for critical qualitative researchers" (p. 25). In this simple statement, she explains that the paradigm must be reinvigorated to meet the demands of society. Also, she suggests that future qualitative research must renew its commitment to applying their skills to solving critical social problems.

Divided into three sections, the authors provide a general overview of the history of critical qualitative scholarship, an introduction to the varieties of inquiry, and address the possible future of this research paradigm. Similar to many other recent publications highlighting a branch of qualitative research, Gaile S. Cannella, Michelle Salazar Perez, and Penny A. Pasque (2015) offer more than an introduction into this necessary form of qualitative research. Rather, they provide an in-depth analysis of the purposes and future of critical qualitative research.

The first section provides a foundation for the purpose and scope of critical qualitative research. The author suggests that contemporary society highlights how dire the near future could be unless academics can employ their craft to raise attention to alternative roads our nation could take. Norman Denzin proposes the union of critical and qualitative disciplines to remind ourselves of the need for social justice and the unity to rebut false claims of freedom.

Another series of chapters focus around the central theme of: how do researchers and practitioners envision the field of critical qualitative inquiry. More importantly, three chapters (Ch. 4-7) focus on the reaction of this paradigm in response to growing criticism that critical inquiry has produced little change. As such, another chapter (Ch. 7) seeks to link research with practice. Mark Nasagawa and Beth Swadener contend that establishing mentor-mentee relationships promote the intergenerational conduit for social change that researchers have failed to produce.

The last section of the book focuses on the future of critical qualitative inquiry. To challenge the future of the research paradigm, scholars ask important questions and encourage

future researchers to engage in this form of academic and social inquiry. Importantly, Yvonna Lincoln (Ch. 8) poses an interesting thought: does the “unlimited” Internet hold unused data that have long been avoided by traditionalist researchers who view online sources as biased or less valued? She proposes several emerging technologies and applications that will aid the qualitative researcher to employ the vast Internet as a rich source of qualitative data. Lastly, Harry Torrance (Ch. 11) elucidates the challenges facing critical qualitative inquiry in academia. He urges researchers to avoid the pitfalls of viewing their research within the framework of “value-for-money.”

Among the many strengths of this collection of essays is the breadth of its scope as well as the numerous reputable scholars contributing to its contents. Established scholars, such as Yvonna Lincoln and Norman K. Denzin, among others, confirm that critical qualitative inquiry is a vital component of an honorable research paradigm seeking to elucidate the human experience as well as “raising the alarm” to areas of injustice.

Any weaknesses of this edited study were largely overshadowed by its strengths. However, this reviewer did catalogue minor criticisms that should have been corrected. For example, the editors employed language meant to elucidate a phenomenon’s continuation. One such example, “Research is/has been acknowledged as a power oriented activity that always/already creates new power relations” (p. 16). Academic writing should flow in both content and language. The reviewer would have preferred these minor issues be reworded in order to maintain the “flow” of the sentence. However, this particular issue was contained to the “Introduction” alone.

In a time where questions about the utility of critical qualitative research abound in both higher education and society as a whole, the authors remind the reader that “the field abounds with people who are committed to more just ways of conceptualizing, performing, living in, and changing the world” (p. 25). It is a reminder that calls for researchers to embody not just their profession, but also our commitment to social justice, strengthening the bonds of community, and remember what drives us as a society.

References

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Author Note

Daniel C. Allen is a Professor of History at Trinity Valley Community College in Athens, TX. His area of expertise is Teacher Education, History and Philosophy of Education, and Rural Education. He teaches courses on American History and is conducting research in the field of Rural Education. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: Daniel C. Allen at, Daniel.allen@tvcc.edu.

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Article Citation

Allen, D. C. (2015). A review of critical qualitative inquiry: Foundations and futures. *The Qualitative Report*, 20(12), 2010-2011. <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss12/6>
