

# Linking narratives: The role of social biography in critical dialogue and problem definition

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# Liberation Psychology & Democratizing Knowledge

- ◀ People as knowledge producers, including previously ignored
- ◀ Taking into account people's struggles, oppression, liberation, and aspirations
- ◀ Toward social transformation, using critical dialogue

Fals-Borda, 1985, 2001; Gaventa-Cornwall, 2008; Martín-Baró, 1994; Montero & Sonn 2001, 2002;

# Critical Dialogue

- ▶ Collectively Identifying and questioning social systems
- ▶ Reflecting on how one experiences the world
- ▶ Examining how problems are perpetuated by systemic inequities

Freire, 1970; Maton, 2008; Montero, 2009

# 5 whys activity

- ▶ Turning a problem into a “why” question
- ▶ To get to a root cause
- ▶ Facilitates structural analysis

Kohfeldt & Langhout, 2011

# Social Biography

- ▶ Filipinx students in Hawai'i collected stories
- ▶ Historical trauma and social forces shaped their lives
- ▶ “We cannot understand who we are nor the world we live in unless we understand how our life is intricately woven into the social fabric of reality” - Gordon Lee

Acido & Lee, 2012; Acido, Custudio, & Lee, 2017

# Research Question

How did adding social biography to the five whys activity facilitate broad critical dialogue in our program?

# Summer 2017

Photovoice

Social Biography

5 Whys

Problem Definition

Community strengths and what gets in the way

Family migration interview sharing stories

Started with “Why is it hard to be friends”

Holding “La Migra” accountable for their actions

# Social biography: How was it taken up by these children?

- **Liberatory Framing:** Story is put in relation to social, historical, political, economic, and/or geographical framing;
- **Struggle :** Suffering is framed in terms of struggle;
- **Individual to Collective:** Intersection of individual and collective is explored



# Social biography: Individual to Collective

- Individual to Collective: Intersection of individual and collective is explored
  - By displaying elements of each story, researchers were able to make connections to other stories of migration, like modes of migration and learning a new language

# Connecting Social Biography & Critical Dialogue: Theorizing from collective experience

Critical dialogue is about power and structures, but now rooted outside of the school (politics, family, social forces).

Critical dialogue is shared by wider group, not just students.

Student

# Implications

- ▶ Biographical methods in critical dialogue framework
- ▶ Critical tool for democratizing knowledge with youth
- ▶ “Revives spirit” and “open the gates of remembrances”

Smith, 1999; Montero, 2009

# Current steps

Artwork to tell their broader story

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