

APPLYING CRITICAL THEORY TO QUAL

Let's think through Kincheloe's article on CT's relevance to qual research:

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2011). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research. In K. Hayes, S. R. Steinberg, & K. Tobin (Eds.), *Key Works in Critical Pedagogy* (pp. 285–326). SensePublishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-397-6_23

All questions are derived by me (Lori) from the Kincheloe & McLaren article and their discussions on the relevance of 21st century Critical Theory to qualitative research. Questions are sometimes mine and sometimes theirs. Go read the article for full context.

Questions about your study design and for you as researcher

PEOPLE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR METHODS

Am I missing the point by focusing on the *rational* or the *factual*?

CRITICAL IMMANENCE

Does my research offer levers of change or is it just “contemplative”?
Have I connected beyond the familiar?

CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS: all information is *interpreted*

Facts cannot “speak” for themselves, so....

Am I aware, as researcher, of what ideas, values, assumptions underlie my perception of my research data? And of my interpretation of my data?

What is my purpose in interpreting?

What are my methods?

How can I help my readers understand the larger hermeneutic context and history here?

Questions about your study context and participants

CRITICAL ENLIGHTENMENT

Who are the winners and losers here?

Whom does the status quo benefit?

CRITICAL EMANCIPATION

Who controls decision-making power?

What hinders agency and self-determination?

Are non-dominant voices present and given a place?

OPPRESSION STEMS FROM MORE THAN ECONOMICS

What are the economics of the situation?

What forces beyond the economics are involved in oppression? (racism, classism, sexism, gender, neurodivergence, etc)



POWER: OPPRESSION, PRODUCTION

Who is empowered in this situation?

Who is disempowered?

Why? (Structures, forces, systems)

HEGEMONY making people complicit in their own oppression (Gramsci)

What seems inevitable or unchangeable?

What challenges these fixtures?

IDEOLOGY: cultural consent mechanisms

What dominant ideas, practices, discourses are shaping complex behavior?

What ideas challenge these cultural forces?

LINGUISTIC: words create reality

How are words constructing reality?

What are the tacit rules controlling who speaks, and when, and how?

Who's "in" vs who's "out"?

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN POWER, CULTURE, AND DOMINATION

Who controls the production of knowledge?

Who controls the dissemination of knowledge?

Whose culture gets to be dominant (visible, celebrated) and determines value and meaning?

Consider the 21st century "**hyperreality**" with its new time structures, liminal and digital spaces, and broken ties with the natural world. *(Go read the article for explanation)*

Consider semiotics:

How are power, culture, language interrelated in this context?

How are people, ideas, values represented and linked to political or cultural power?

What are the effects on people of all identities?

CULTURAL PEDAGOGY: CULTURE SHAPES AND TEACHES

Who has the power or resources to control the narrative here?

Is Western corporate power influencing the dynamics or discourse?