Dissertation Abstract

Aeta Indigenous Women Healers in the Philippines: Lessons and Implications

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ABSTRACT: This study is aimed at providing historical evidence of the healing power of Aeta women healers in the Philippines and how they use their healing practices as a form of resistance against imperialism. The talking circle has been used as a methodological tool in this study. A talking circle is a qualitative narrative research methodology. Twelve Aeta women healers took part in this study. The study investigates two central research problems: What are the healing practices of Aeta women? What are the implications of the healing practices of Aeta women in the academic discourse? This inquiry is important for the following reasons: (a) it focuses a reconsidered gaze and empirical lens on the healing practices of Aeta women healers as well as the lessons, insights and perspectives which may have been previously missed; (b) the research attempts not to be 'neutral' but instead to be an exercise in participatory action research and as such, hopefully brings a new space of decolonization by documenting Aeta women healers' contributions in the political and academic arena; and (c) it is an original contribution to postcolonial (Spivak 1996, Bhabha 1994, Young 2001), anti-colonial (Dei 2006, Fanon 1963, Memmi 1965, wa Thiongo 1986) and Indigenous feminist theories (Smith 1999, Green 2007), particularly through its demonstration of the utility of these theories in understanding the health of Indigenous peoples and global health.

This study is significant in grounding both the anti-colonial, post-colonial, and Indigenous feminist theories and the qualitative research methodology (Chilisa 2012, Chase 2003, Creswell 2013) while comparatively evaluating
Western discourses calibrated against the benchmark of the actual narratives of Aeta women healers. The results of this study subsequently categorized my findings into three themes: namely, identity (Bhabha 1994, Dei 2007), agency (Smith 1999, Spivak 1996) and representation (Spivak 1996). This work is also important in illustrating the Indigenous communities’ commonalities on resistance, accommodation, evolution and devolution of social institutions and leadership (Dei 2006) through empirical example. The work also sheds light on how the members of our Circle and their communities’ experiences with outsider intrusion and imposed changes – intentionally structured to dominate them as Indigenous people – altered our participants and their communities. Though the reactions of the Aeta were and are unique in this adaptive process, they join a growing comparative scholarly discussion on how contexts for colonization were the same or different. This dissertation therefore joins a growing comparative educational literature on the contextual variations among global experiences with colonization. This is important since Indigenous Peoples' experiences are almost always portrayed as unique or “exotic.” I can now understand through comparison, that many of the processes – from military to pedagogical impositions – bore striking similarities across various colonial, geographical and cultural locations.
References


Author Biography

Dr. Rose Ann Torres has a PhD in Sociology of Education and Women and Gender Studies at OISE/University of Toronto. She has been teaching in the Sociology Department at Ryerson University and Trent University, and in the department of Women and Gender Studies at Brock University. Her research and teaching interests are in the areas of Community engaged research theory and methodology, Indigenous studies, inequities, critical anti-racism, gender variance, politics of resistance, inclusive education, post-colonial theory, anti-colonial theory, feminist theory, transnational studies, and sociology of knowledge. She is currently conducting community-engaged research on “The Diasporic Resiliency, Agency and Resistance of Filipino Women: Roles, Influences, and Experiences.”