

Creating Safety for IBPOC Youth & Moving Towards Anti-Racism in Research: Implementing Learnings From Community-Based Research

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Introduction

Academic research has often excluded the voices of Indigenous, Black, and/or People of Colour (IBPOC), centering the experiences of white, and western, educated, rich, industrial, and developed (WEIRD) population (Wilson, 2008). When research has incorporated the participation of racialized individuals, it has often been done in an unsafe manner, where data have been weaponized against racialized communities, especially Indigenous communities. Additionally, the impacts of colonialism and racism are often not explicitly acknowledged in research, leaving racialized individuals only having access to academic research that is dismissive of their experiences (Bourabain & Verhaeghe, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the lack of intentional and safe inclusion of IBPOC individuals. However, with greater emphasis placed on community-based research, it has allowed for documenting the authentic experiences of inequity of racialized youth, while prioritizing the safety of racialized individuals (Friskie & Minhas, 2021)

Objectives

Illustrate how the history of racism and exclusion of IBPOC individuals in WEIRD research continues to impact youth in youth mental health research. Identify research practices that allow for the meaningful inclusion of racialized individuals within integrated youth service research.

Approach/Methods

We established safety practices from the teaching of Indigenous research practices from Research Is Ceremony by Shawn Wilson, along with academic and community-based literature on racism and the lack of safe inclusion of IBPOC youth in research. Additionally, we consulted with IBPOC youth involved in Foundry central office youth committees to gather greater insight on the way in which racialized youth experience a lack of safety in youth mental health research. We assessed internal practices at Foundry Central, on implementing safety when engaging with IBPOC youth in research.

Results

The findings will be shared to inform the current practices in supporting the engagement of IBPOC people in research, allowing for the authentic experiences of racialized individuals being heard. This will support the dialogue of illustrating the various ways safety can be established for IBPOC individuals while allowing for dynamic change.

Conclusion

The focus of WEIRD research has historically and currently continues to exclude the experiences of racialized communities. Without intentional inclusion and engagement of racialized individuals in research, research continues to engage with racialized youth in a harmful and racist manner. However, with the shift in researchers drawing from community-based principles and becoming willing to implement alternative ways of engaging with racialized individuals in academic research, such as through Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles to conduct safer research with Indigenous communities, research can allow for racialized individuals being seen, heard, and authentically represented.

