



Black Applied Behavior Analysts

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Heuristic Inquiry: Bridging Research with Living Experience as a Framework for Healing

Abstract

Heuristic inquiry is a qualitative research method that was originally developed in 1990 by Clark Moustakas, in the seminal publication, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*. In 2019, Nevine Sultan refined these components to meet the needs of the 21st century researcher. In 2020, Natalie Williams partnered with five co-researchers and used heuristic inquiry as a tool to illuminate the experiences of six women of color in an asynchronous, app-based group. All group members had relationships with mental health, either as “helpers” or recipients of care, or both. As a researcher, self-identified helper, and recipient of care, Natalie found the processes and phases of heuristic inquiry to be liberating and enlightening. As a person who has experienced several major incidents (e.g., unemployment, homelessness, suicidal ideation), as a direct result of traumatic experiences in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) work settings, Natalie has been curious about the experiences of others in the field, including from those in entry-level positions to doctoral-level certificants. A heuristic inquiry centered on ABA clinicians’ experiences of trauma in the workplace is currently underway and findings will be presented during the proposed workshop. Workshop participants will leave equipped with a fundamental understanding of heuristic inquiry, and will have an opportunity to apply some of the processes and phases to a topic of their choice. Participants will learn how the process of conducting research in this way can be cathartic for all members of the research team. Recommendations for reform within the field of ABA will be provided.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will learn the fundamental concepts related to qualitative research.
2. Participants will learn the basic tenets of heuristic inquiry, and will be able to compare and contrast heuristic inquiry with other qualitative methods.
3. Participants will apply the basic tenets of heuristic inquiry to a topic of their choice. Throughout the presentation, participants will engage in experiential activities, derived from the basic tenets of heuristic inquiry (e.g., exploring the labyrinth, exploring other ways of being and knowing, self-dialogue, etc.)
4. Participants will learn how heuristic inquiry has been used to help ABA practitioners (RBTs and BCBAs) heal from trauma they have experienced in the workplace.
5. Participants will provide feedback on the results and recommendations from a recent study that used heuristic inquiry as a framework for healing for ABA practitioners.



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