

Action research helps people make positive changes

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Certain kinds of research can help improve social problems, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Participatory action research is the subject of the study by authors Julie L. Ozanne and Bige Saatcioglu (Virginia Tech).

According to the authors, this type of research actively seeks to change the behavior or situation of the consumer. "This article introduces the participatory action research paradigm, which is based upon the goal of helping people and employs methodologies that are different from traditional consumer research," explain the authors.

The new study provides insight into the history and process of action research. The authors' analyses reveal important benefits of this type of research and provide ideas about how to improve it.

In the study, the researchers examined three categories of participatory action research: action research, community action research, and participatory rural appraisal. They examined the history of the three types of research.

According to the authors, action research was first described by Kurt Lewin in 1946 and focused on issues of workplace democracy. Community action research began with Brazilian educator Paolo Freire, who used innovative methods to teach literacy to peasants in Brazil and Chile. Participatory rural appraisal began with studies by Robert Chambers, which were designed to improve the lives of subsistence

farmers.

"Consumer researchers interested in building a transformative research agenda can use these exemplars to better define their relationship with the people whose life they hope to change, explicate a theory of social change to guide their research efforts, and inspire creative methods of data collection," write the authors.

According to the authors, researchers can do much more than observe the behavior of consumers; they can transform society. "For those of us who are fortunate enough to possess these considerable resources, it is time to move away from the comfort of the sidelines, step onto the field, and charge into the important work of solving our pressing social problems," the authors conclude.

Source: University of Chicago Press Journals

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