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Decolonising Research Methods Showcase Event

Abstract

Using an intersectionality approach to explore the makings of health in island contexts: a case study of The Bahamas

Intersectionality has been popularized since the term's coinage in the early 1990s. Scholars often look to interrogate issues of powerlessness by contesting homogeneity and advancing notions of social justice. Yet, the concept of intersectionality is contested, and so is its origin story.

As islands were under colonial rule, scholars from Caribbean islands have long contested homogenous categorisations and sought to disrupt white male European rule. Meanwhile, the prevalence of ill health has been sustained in island states as the legacy of colonialism manifests, and the impact of globalisation disrupts the making of island identities.

This research examines intersectionality as concept and method by exploring the prevalence of obesity in The Bahamas as a case study.

First, it interrogates the story of intersectionality by questioning knowledge-making and the ivory tower and highlighting the need for scholarship from island communities.

Second, it highlights the importance of researcher-participant rapport in intersectionality approaches by allowing participants to own their individuality and researchers to understand their positionality.

Third, it speaks to the importance of intersectionality approaches being deliberate yet flexible by showcasing how the unexpected result of the crafting of a national identity (based on body size, race and gender) is an important factor when considering the prevalence of obesity in The Bahamas.

These results are based on an analysis of scholarly literature, policy documents and newspaper articles from colonial Bahamas to 2019, overt observations, and 40 semi-structured interviews conducted on three islands in The Bahamas with local policymakers, health workers, scholars and the public.