**Conducting Participatory Action Research**

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Tufts University

Workshop Instructor: Dr. Anjuli Fahlberg

Office Hours: On Zoom, upon request

Workshop Dates: June 27th to July 1st, 1-5pm

Location: <https://tufts.zoom.us/j/95505736153?pwd=SWQ4Y2lxVkY0TDI0SURSY2hDbGpBUT09>

**Workshop description**

As we work to address racial injustice and other inequities in the US and across the globe, we must establish ethical, inclusive, and democratic practices for collecting data on historically marginalized populations. In this workshop, participants will learn how to employ Participatory Action Research (PAR), an approach to data collection that emphasizes (a) the full participation and leadership of members of the research population in each stage of the research project; (b) education through co-learning between formal researchers and community members; and (c) collaborative social action that improves the well-being of the research population. In this workshop, we will engage with different theories about how knowledge is created, learn about the principles of PAR and how to apply them in a range of research projects, and work in small groups to workshop the application of PAR in participants’ own projects. Participants will leave the workshop with a foundational understanding of Participatory Action Research and a concrete plan to apply PAR principles in their research and organizations. Researchers of all kinds are welcome, including social science researchers and graduate students in academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and public agencies. Upper-level undergraduate students planning to engage in human subjects research may also join.

**Workshop Objectives**

This workshop will equip participants with the theoretical and practical knowledge needed to employ a Participatory Action Research approach in their own work. By the end of the workshop, students will be able to:

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* Identify the major tenets of PAR
* Describe the value of different forms of knowledge
* Reflect on how their own social location informs their knowledge and those of others
* Analyze and discuss a variety of approaches to PAR
* List strategies to expand participation, education and action in their research projects
* Troubleshoot potential challenges to employing PAR in their projects
* Consult with colleagues from the course to expand and improve on their ideas for their projects

**Participatory Action Research**

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to collecting data that has, at its core, three objectives:

1. *Participation*: To involve research subjects in each step of the research process as decision-makers and knowledge producers, alongside “formal” researchers;
2. *Education:* To promote shared learning by encouraging dialogue and exchange of information and ideas between researchers and participants;
3. *Action:* To more equitably distribute the direct benefits of the study while also promoting broader social and political change.

**Benefits of Participatory Action Research**

Data collected through a PAR methodology has several practical benefits as well:

1. The PAR process **fosters collaboration, dialogue, and exchange** between groups that are often divided based on institutional roles (i.e. provider vs client or researcher vs. subject). Through collaborative knowledge construction, we all learn more about each other—and about ourselves!
2. PAR gives **greater voice to historically marginalized populations** who are invited to teach “outsiders” (i.e. those who are not from the population being studied) about their experiences, interests, and concerns. Through PAR, these groups may be more willing to share their perspectives and needs than through more traditional avenues.
3. It promotes creation of **new, innovative, and interesting ideas**. While academics often collect data that is interesting to their disciplinary field, and NGO researchers collect the data that funders or administrators want, the research population may have entirely new, different, and creative ideas about what types of data could be collected and what stories this data might help to tell.
4. Data and findings can help to **promote positive social change**, strengthen grant proposals, design and justify new programming, re-assess priorities and resource distribution, and lead to new questions, concepts, approaches, and solutions to problems.

**Policies for a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment**

**Respect and Inclusivity in the Classroom**

**Classrooms (and “Zoom-rooms”) are spaces for learning. For this to happen, we must first and foremost respect the humanity of all participants, instructors, and anyone else in the classroom. Therefore, no discriminatory remarks towards members of any individual based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc will be tolerated. Participants are encouraged to treat the classroom as a space for learning about and working through multiple perspectives, and are encouraged to reflect critically on their own views and experiences and the dynamics that engender alternative perspectives.**

**All participants are welcome and encouraged to participate regularly in class discussions by critically engaging with the material and with key concepts, themes, and stories. Questions or comments that challenge traditional assumptions or normative values are encouraged, though these should always be provided in a thoughtful and respectful manner. Any participant who does not feel comfortable in the large-group or small-group sessions should speak to me or Selomi ASAP so any issues can be addressed.**

**Diversity and Accessibility**

The diversity of participants’ experiences, perspectives, and abilities is essential to an informed and holistic classroom learning environment. Participants with unique learning needs or who require special accommodations should speak to me at the beginning of the semester so provisions can be made accordingly. If there is anything I can do to promote learning for unique needs, please let me know as soon as possible and I will be happy to make accommodations.

**Communication**

**Please email me or speak to me after class for any questions or concerns or to talk further about the course material. I will be happy to provide you additional ideas and resources relevant to your areas of interest.**

**Participants who wish to discuss their projects with me at greater length should email me to find a time for us to meet. I am happy to meet during the week of our workshops or in the following weeks.**

**Certificate Requirements**

**In order to earn a certificate of completion, participants must attend every class.**

**There are no official assignments for this course. However, participants are encouraged to take notes and to keep a running Google doc with their research plan and list of questions and answers. Participants may also be asked to present components of their projects to the larger group and may wish to create simple Powerpoint presentations for this.**

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| **Day 1, 6/27** | **What is PAR?** |
|  | Introductions  An Intro to PAR: Getting a lay of the land   * What are the benefits of research in addressing inequality? * What are the problems in traditional research? * Two-eyed seeing: a dialogue between Western and Indigenous knowledge * What is PAR? What is it not? * Different types of PAR (CPAR, YPAR, CBPR) |
| **Day 1b** | **Positionalities: The researchers & the “community”** |
|  | Sociological perspectives on positionality, power & inequality   * Activity: Mapping your positionality & personal power * How do you “signal” your power and privilege?   Defining the “Community”   * Activity: Mapping the research community |
|  | **Recommended Readings:**  Fine, Michelle & María Elena Torre. 2021. The Essentials of Conducting Participatory Action Research. Chapter 1.  Nina Wallerstein, Bonnie Duran, John G. Oetzel, Meredith Minkler. 2018. *Community-Based Participatory Research for Health: Advancing Social and Health Equity.* Wiley. Chapters 1 & 3.  Tara J. Yosso. 2005. “Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory  discussion of community cultural wealth.” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8:1, 69-91.  Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. “The Right to Research.” *Globalization, Societies and Education*. (4) 2: 167-177.  Iwama, Marilyn, Murdena Marshall, Albert Marshall, and Cheryl Bartlett. 2009. "Two-eyed seeing and the language of healing in community-based research." Canadian Journal of Native Education 32, No. 2, Vol 3. |

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| **Day 2a, 6/28** | **Promoting Participation** |
|  | What counts as “participation”?  Examples from the field  Planning for Participation   * What are the phases/components of your project? * Who has been included so far (directly and indirectly)? Who hasn’t? * How can you meaningfully include different members of the research population in each step of your project? * How can you promote trust? Relationships? Safety to speak? |
| **Day 2b** | **Education and Co-Learning: Practicing Dialogical Reflexivity** |
|  | Epistemology: How do you know what you know?  Defining terms:   * Situated knowledge * Strong objectivity * Dialogical reflexivity   Activity: What you know and what you don’t know   * What assumptions do you have about your research population and your project? * What limits your knowledge? |
|  | **Recommended Readings:**  Mary Goitom. 2019. “‘Legitimate Knowledge’: An Auto-Ethnographical Account of an African Writing Past the White Gaze in Academia,” *Social Epistemology,* 33:3, 193-204.  Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2012. “Dialogical Epistemology—An Intersectional Resistance to the "Oppression Olympics.” (26)1: 46-54.  Harding, Sandra. 1991. “’Strong Objectivity’ and Social Situated Knowledge,” in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?.* Cornell University Press.  Ganat, Bill. 2009. “Building emergent situated knowledges in participatory action research.” *Action Research*. (7)1: 101-105. |
| **Day 3a, 6/29** | **Planning for Co-Learning** |
|  | Planning for Co-Learning   * What knowledge do you have to offer? What knowledge do others have to offer? * How can you promote co-learning in each step of the project? * What challenges might impede these goals? How can you address them? |
| **Day 3b** | **Guest Speaker: Professor Hugo Kamya, Simmons University School of Social Work** |
|  | * Conducting PAR in African communities * PAR with ACEDONE, Roxbury MA |
|  | **Recommended Readings:**  Peltier C. 2018. An application of two-eyed seeing: Indigenous research methods with participatory action research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*, 1-12.  Souto-Manning, Mariana. 2010. Freire, teaching, and learning: Culture circles across contexts. Vol. 350. Peter Lang.  Select two readings from uploaded Case Studies or [*The SAGE Handbook of Action Research Participative Inquiry and Practice.*](http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/9-%20The%20SAGE%20Handbook%20of%20Action%20Research_%20Participative%20Inquiry%20and%20Practice.pdf#page=622)  Kemmis, Stephen, Robin McTaggart & Rhonda Nixon. 2014. *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research. Springer.* Ch 5: “Doing Critical Participatory Action Research: The ‘Planner’ Part” and “Resources 1-4.” |

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| **Day 4a, 6/30** | **Planning for Action** |
|  | From research to action   * Resources: Thinking broadly and creatively * Political opportunity structures * The micropolitics of PAR   Identifying opportunities and resources   * What can you offer? * What can your organization offer? * How can the project help promote the needs of group members? * How can the project promote the needs of the broader community? |
| **Day 4b** | **Addressing Constraints: Proactive Planning & Troubleshooting** |
|  | Constraints: Avoidable, Addressable or Inherent?  Planning for Problems: Creating a space of trust, dialogue, and room for failure  Identifying barriers:   * What are some of the barriers that might occur? * Which of these can you address? How? * Which ones cannot be “fixed”? What do you do about them? |
|  | **Recommended Readings:**  Smith, Laura, et al. 2010. "Between idealism and reality: Meeting the challenges of participatory action research." Action research 8(4): 407-425.  Jill Grant, Geoffrey Nelson and Terry Mitchell. 2008. “Negotiating the Challenges of Participatory Action Research: Relationships, Power, Participation, Change and Credibility.” *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research Participative Inquiry and Practice.*  David R. Buchanan, Franklin G. Miller & Nina Wallerstein. 2006. “Ethical Issues in Community-Based Participatory Research: Balancing Rigorous  Research With Community Participation in Community Intervention Studies.” Johns Hopkins Press.  Lake, Danielle, and Joel Wendland. 2018. "Practical, epistemological, and ethical challenges of participatory action research: A cross-disciplinary review of the literature." Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement 22(3): 11-42. |

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| **Day 5, 7/1** | **Q&A and Discussion** |
|  | Brief Review: The Essentials of PAR   * Respect * Safety * Curiosity * Pragmatism   What questions/concerns do you have?  What have we learned that you have found useful? |
| **Day 5b** | Project Presentations |
|  | 4-5 minute presentations on employing PAR in your research/organization   * The steps of the project: What you know, what you don’t know yet * Ideas for how you will incorporate Participation, Education and Action * Questions or challenges you want to brainstorm with the group |