

Speaking back: Participatory action research as a pedagogy of citizenship



“Knowledge truly is power. Historically, the winner of the war has determined the telling of its own history and that of the loser. Those of us that have been living under the thumb of oppression have mainly suffered from a lack of information, a lack of access, and a lack of inspiration; we are not taught to ask “Why?” - we are not allowed to ask the questions that lead to a stronger mind.

Participatory action research is one of the most potent weapons against oppression, it offers an opportunity to gain both skills and knowledge, to conduct an investigation that roots out both the questions and the answers that expose injustice. In the process of simply learning how to ask questions, a researcher is able to find themselves at the heart of those questions.”

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Involves the conventionally 'researched' in the research process
- Values knowledge created through collaboration and in action
- Starts with social concerns and personal experiences
- Forefronts contextualized knowledge
- Reconsiders the value of research as a vehicle for social change
- Education and action are important outcomes

Critical Turning Points

Emotional motivation

**The politicization of personal
experience**

Speaking back

Urban environments are typically characterized and described using aggressive terms, such as “loud, violent, dark, and ghetto”, and more often than not little attention is paid to the womyn who inhabit the city, influencing the very fiber of urban environments as **mothers, grandmothers, daughters, sisters, wives, and granddaughters**. This project was specifically designed to emphasize the everyday lives of young womyn to make the voice that is so often ignored the central perspective through which our community, the Lower East Side, is viewed.



Makes Me Mad!

Stereotypes of young urban womyn of color



- 1. What is the relationship between the lack of resources (for ex. education) and stereotypes of young urban womyn of color? In what ways does stereotyping affect young womyn's well-being?
- 2. How does reinforcing stereotypes lead to the way you explain/characterize/understand yourself and others? How does this then affect negatively the community?

I have become more aware of the happenings in my environment and the world.

...

While engaged in a deep discussion about what has become of the Lower East Side of our childhood we spoke of how little boutiques and trendy bars were popping up all over the place of the small businesses that used to be owned by locals. I shared that since this had been happening, the building where I lived had come under new management and every few months my mother was forced to pay a higher rent. Suddenly I hear one of girls say the word gentrification. I had never heard the word before in my life, so naturally I asked 'what's that mean?' She explains to me that these yuppie ass, money having, culture seeking, white people are buying us poor people out of our neighborhood in part because they want a taste of our culture rich environment and the more of them who came in, the more of us are forced to leave because we can longer afford to live here.

Oh! My! God! That's what was
happening to me! ...



“Most advertisements seen on public transportation and around the city are discriminatory and sexist, so what we created is something mocking those ads but instead of selling you sex, we’re making you think. Those of you who have spotted them must be wondering exactly what our motive is with these "Stereotype Stickers". That’s simple. We are looking to plant a seed in the minds of society. We wanted our stickers to upset you to the point of inspiration. We want our beautiful, young, urban womyn of color to realize what it is we have against us and we hope it will give you all the motivation to go against the grain; to prove everyone wrong. “

Challenges for the classroom?

- Creating safe space for dialogue
- Student-teacher-school relationship baggage
- Time constraints
- Putting race on the table
- Working collectively
- Facilitating ownership/big personalities