

Syllabus

Participatory Action Research

Instructor Information:

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Introduction:

On any given day researchers around campus are working hard to address concerns related to well-being. Research at Vanderbilt ranges in type and form and addresses myriad topics such as early childhood development, cancer treatment, obesity prevention, organizational change, and economic development. The methodology used by researchers also varies with some using qualitative or quantitative methods while others combine these methodologies in their protocols. Despite all the opportunities for variety amongst this research, I imagine there is one constant throughout most of it. The constant I am referring to is the person responsible for determining the research problem and the approach used to address the defined problem. This person, in most instances, is the researcher; although his/her research agenda is also dictated by funding mechanisms and the broader political context. How often do the people most affected by particular “problems” get to be involved in the research process? What would happen if low-income women, drug addicted men, high school youth, overweight adults, pregnant women, or refugees had the chance to define their concerns related to well-being? Would their concerns align with current research agendas?

The purpose of this course is to explore ways to include the community in the research process. Throughout the course we will address the following topics:

- Review the concept of participatory action research (PAR) and its epistemological underpinnings,
- Outline the PAR process and principles of PAR,
- Discuss skills needed to work as a PAR researcher,
- Investigate the role of power in the research process,
- Brainstorm methods for establishing and maintaining community-researcher partnerships,
- Analyze case studies focused on PAR,
- Explore various research methods conducive to PAR, and
- Discuss issues of quality and rigor in PAR.

Course Format:

The course will be taught in the spirit of participatory action research. Therefore, learning will be a process of mutual exchange. A variety of learning modalities will be utilized including student lead discussion, hands-on activities, review of case studies, meetings with “experts” (from the field and the academy), engagement with community groups, and personal and group reflection. We will meet as a group each week. Students will also be engaged with a community group throughout the course.

Text:

Minkler, M., & Wallerstein, N. (Eds). (2003). *Community-based participatory research for health*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Additional readings will be made available via a study class pack.

Assignments:

The following assignments are designed to guide your learning throughout this course. The grading rubric for each assignment is found in Appendix A.

1. Active participation

Participation and co-learning are important concepts in PAR, thus it is necessary that you attend and actively participate in class. Class participation includes activities such as speaking, listening, observing, sharing ideas, and reflecting. You are expected to attend all class sessions. If you cannot attend a class session due to extenuating circumstances, you must communicate with me prior to the missed session. You are also expected to read and reflect on all of the assigned articles prior to class and to review the relevant discussion questions prior to class.

2. Class facilitation

Pairs of students are required to facilitate class discussion and a group activity one time during the term. Student pairs are predetermined and the facilitation schedule is found on the syllabus. Student facilitators are required to complete the following tasks:

- Email the class discussion questions related to your readings on the Friday prior to your session
- Lead a group discussion on the readings (approximately one hour)
- Facilitate a learning activity related to the readings (approximately one hour)

3. Reflection

Reflection is an important concept in PAR. Reflection provides researchers with an opportunity to explore their thoughts and feelings throughout the research process. Journaling is one example of a reflection tool, and this tool will be used throughout the course. The format of your journal is not important – it may include written text, post-it notes, email dialogues, newspaper articles, pictures, quotes, comics, etc. The content of your journal, however, is crucial. Journal entries should critically analyze course materials and experiences. Your journal is a venue for you to *react to* and *integrate* your thoughts and ideas related to the course readings, your experience in the community, and the challenges you uncover throughout the course. In addition to your journal, we will spend about 45 minutes each class period on a reflection activity. Some activities will have a specific focus and others will be conducted in an open format.

To evaluate your reflective practice, you will meet with me two times during the term to discuss your journal. This session will be guided by you. You will share with me the key themes emerging in your reflections and any insights you may have uncovered. Each session will last approximately 30 minutes. You will also turn in a copy of your journal at the end of the term (due X).

4. Interact with the community

The purpose of this course is to explore ways to include communities in the research process. It is imperative that you interact with the community throughout the course. Interaction with the community may occur through two formats: (1) continue interaction with a community group you are already connected to, or (2) establish contact with a new community. In either instance, you are expected to regularly interact with the community by observing, listening, dialoging, and attending meetings. By regular interaction, I mean at least 4 face-to-face contacts with the community. You want to begin to understand the values, beliefs, and goals of this community. Throughout these interactions you will see some of the PAR principles come to life. You may also find your community experiences contradict some of the readings. Additionally, you will uncover how you see yourself working with and in the community. Reflections related to your community experience will be included in your journal.

5. Research orientation paper

It is important that you have an opportunity to synthesize the information gathered throughout this course. The research orientation paper will guide this synthesis, and it may even be applicable for the methodology section of your thesis or dissertation. The 10-15 page paper (double spaced) will address the following questions:

- What is the orientation of a PAR researcher?
- What is the history upon which PAR researchers stand?
- What are the principles and practices of PAR?
- How has PAR been used in your area of interest?
- Why would you choose to use or how would you justify a PAR approach?
- How does PAR fit with your own personal orientation to research and community involvement?

The paper must be written in APA format and is due **X**.

Evaluation Plan:

Active participation	15%
Course facilitation	20%
Reflection	20%
Interaction with the community	15%
Research orientation paper	30%

Session I: Course Introduction

Outline:

1. Introductions
2. Review syllabus
3. Create conceptual models of research
4. Share conceptual models with group
5. Operationalize definition of “research” based on group feedback.

Sessions II: What is PAR? (Part 1)

Outline

1. In small groups, outline answers to the following questions based on the readings:
 - What are the goals of PAR process and product?
 - What are key components of PAR?
 - Why is it important to conduct PAR?
 - How does your research orientation align with this perspective
2. Share information about each author’s perspective with class.
3. Introduction to reflection

Readings

Whyte, W., Greenwood, D., & Lazes, P. (1989). Participatory action research: Through practice to science in social research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 32(5), 513-551.

Fals-Borda, O. (1991). Some basic ingredients. In O. Fals-Borda & M.A. Rahman (Eds.), *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action research* (pp. 3-12). New York: Apex Press.

Rahman, M.A. (1991). The theoretical standpoint of PAR. In O. Fals-Borda & M.A. Rahman (Eds.), *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action research* (pp. 13-23). New York: Apex Press.

Reflection Topic: Small group interaction

- How did your group interact?
- Were there dominant members? Passive members? Why do you think this happened?
- Did conflict arise? How did you deal with conflict?
- Did group members take on implicit roles?
- What lessons did you learn from this interaction?

Sessions III: What is PAR? (Part 2)

Outline

1. In small groups, outline answers to the following questions based on the readings:
 - What are the goals of PAR process and product?
 - What are key components of PAR?
 - Why is it important to conduct PAR?

- How does your research orientation align with this perspective
2. Share information about each author's perspective with class.
 3. Synthesize various perspectives on PAR.

Readings

Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science Medicine*, 41, (12), 1667-1676.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory action research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Brown, L., & Tandon, R. (1983). Ideology and political economy in inquiry: Action research and participatory research. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 19(3), 277-294.

Reflection Topic: Listening

- How well did you listen during the small and large group activity?
- Were there voices that were easier or harder to listen to? Why?
- Why was it important for you to remain engaged as an active listener?
- When/why did you disengage from the activity?
- What can you do to remain accountable as a listener?

Session IV: Epistemological Underpinnings of PAR (Part 1)

Student Facilitators

Readings

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (Eds.) (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organisational analysis: Elements of sociology of corporate life*. London: Heinemann. – Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-37)

Maguire, P. (1987). *Doing participatory research: A feminist approach*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts. – Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 9-47)

Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The conceptual, historical & practice roots of CBPR and related participatory research traditions. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 27-52). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3), 257-277.

Reflection Topic: Open topic

Session V: Principles of PAR & Examples of PAR

Readings

Israel, B., Schulz, A., Parker, E., & Becker, A. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 19,

173-202.

*Bring a research article focused on participatory action research. Reflect on the following questions prior to class: What knowledge was produced? By whom? For whose interests and towards what ends?

Reflection Topic: Community interaction

- What community group are you working with?
- Why did you pick this group?
- How did you/will you establish contact with this group?
- What are your initial thoughts about interacting with the community?
- Are any principles of PAR coming to life in your community work?

Session VI: Addressing issues of race, class and gender

Student Facilitators

Readings

McIntosh, P. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peach and Freedom*, July/August, 10-12.

Chavez, V., Duran, B., Baker, Q.E, Avila, M.M., & Wallerstein, N. (2003). The dance of race and privilege in community based participatory research. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 81-97). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Williams, B.T., & Brydon-Miller, M. (2004). Changing directions: Participatory-action research, agency, and representation. In S. G. Brown and S. Dobrin (Eds.). *Ethnography unbound: From theory shock to critical praxis*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Roe, K.M., Minkler, M., & Saunders, F.F. (1995). Combining research, advocacy & education: The methods of the Grandparent Caregiving Study. *Health Education Quarterly*, 22(4), 458-475.

Reflection Topic: High/Low Activity

- What was a high point and low point that occurred in today's discussion?

Session VII: Community-Campus Partnerships

Student Facilitators

Readings

Stoecker, R. (1997). Are academics irrelevant? Roles for scholars in participatory research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 42, 840-854.

Evans, K.S. (1999). Negotiating roles in collaborative literacy research: Re-examining issues of power and equity. *Language Arts*, 77, 128-136.

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1993). Researching change and changing the researcher. *Harvard Educational Review*, 63, 389-411.

Nyden, P., & Wievel, W. (1992). Collaborative research: Harnessing the tensions between researcher and practitioner. *The American Sociologist*, 23, 43-55.

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health and the resources it provides (Available online at <http://www.ccph.info/>).

Reflection Topic: Mid-term Evaluation

Session VIII: University Barriers and Facilitators of CBPR

*Guest speakers: 2-3 faculty share their perspectives on PAR within the academy

Student Facilitators

Readings

Felt, L.F., Rowe, P.M., & Curlew, K. (2004, September). *Teaching academic dogs and cats new tricks: 'Re-tooling' senior academic researchers for collaborative community-based research*. Paper presented at the Researching the Voluntary Sector Conference, Sheffield, England. Retrieved April 25, 2005, from <http://www.envision.ca/pdf/cura/DogsCats.pdf>.

Couch, S.R. (2004). A tale of three discourses: Doing action research in a research methods class. *Social Problems*, 51, 146.

Campbell, D.T. (1969). Ethnocentrism of disciplines and the fish-scale model of omniscience. In M. Sherif and C.W. Sherif (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary relationships in the social sciences* (pp. 328-348). Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Ansley, F., & Gaventa, J. (1997). Researching for democracy and democratizing research. *Change*, 21(1), 46-53.

Reflection Topic: Community interaction

- What types of experiences are you having in the community?
- How is your community experience helping to inform your theoretical framework for PAR?

Session IX: Ethics in PAR

Outline

1. Group discussion on readings.
2. Small and large group discussion about case studies. (Appendix B)

Readings

Fadem, P., Minkler, M., Perry, M., Blum, K., Moore, L., & Rogers, J. (2003). Ethical challenges in community based participatory research. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 242-262). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Introduction to Research Ethics available online at <http://www.oztoxics.org/cmwg/community/research%20ethics.html>

Hagey, R.S. (1997). Guest editorial: The use and abuse of participatory action research. *Chronic Diseases in Canada, 18(1)*. Available online at http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/cdic-mcc/18-1/a_e.html

Community-based research ethics. Available online at <http://www.acewh.dal.ca/eng/reports/moving5.pdf>

Indigenous peoples and participatory research. Available online at http://www.who.int/ethics/indigenous_peoples/en/index12.html

Reflection Topic: Ethics

- How will you ensure your research is ethical?
- What practices do you want to adopt and implement to hold yourself accountable during the research process?

Assignment

Create a research ethics case study based on your experience. Include 3-5 questions related to the case study. Bring 2 copies of the case study to Session X.

Session X: Ethics in PAR: Examination of experiences

Outline

1. In pairs (with critical friend), review case studies and respond to questions.
2. In group generate ethical principles for PAR.

Readings

None

Reflection Topic: Open topic

Session XI: Data Gathering

Student Facilitators

Readings

Minkler, M., & Hancock, T. (2003). Community-driven asset identification and issue selection. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 135-154). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wang, C.C. (2003). Using photovoice as a participatory assessment and issue selection tool. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 179-196). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fetterman, D.M. (2002). Empowerment evaluation: Building communities of practice and a culture of learning. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(1), 89-102.

Harper, G.W., & Carver, L.J. (1999). "Out-of-the-mainstream" Youth as partners in collaborative research: Exploring the benefits and challenges. *Health Education & Behavior*, 26(2), 250-265.

Tricoglus, G. (2001). Living the theoretical principles of critical ethnography in education research. *Education Action Research*, 9(1), 135-147.

Luke, D.A. (2005). Getting the big picture in community science: Methods that capture context. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(3/4), 185-200.

Concepts to consider

- What do we want and need to know?
- Why do we want to know this?
- What do you we already know?
- Where are the answers to our questions? (people, books, observations, etc)
- Who do we need to ask? (specific people, document, etc)
- What do we need to ask?

Reflection Topic: Community interaction

- What role do you see yourself taking on in community research?
- What strategies facilitate or impede community interaction?

Session XII: Data Sharing: Dissemination, quality, and rigor

Student Facilitators

Readings

Miller, R.L., & Shinn, M. (2005). Learning from communities: Overcoming difficulties in dissemination of prevention and promotion efforts. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(3/4), 169-183.

Wainwright, D. (1997). Can sociological research be qualitative, critical, *and* valid? *The Qualitative Report*, 3(2), Available online at <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-2/wain.html>.

Bradbury, H., & Reason, P. (2003). Issues and choice points for improving quality of action research. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds). *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 201-220). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Reflection Topic: Data collection and sharing

How does your past, present, or future PAR work respond to the following questions (from Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p. 217)?

- Is the action research explicit in developing a praxis of relational participation?
- Is it guided by reflexive concern for pragmatic outcomes?
- Does it ensure conceptual and theoretical integrity?
- Does it include extended ways of knowing?
- Can it be considered significant?
- Does it lead toward a new and enduring infrastructure?

Assignment for Next Session:

Develop 2-3 questions to facilitate conversation with community leaders.

Session XIII: Community Roundtable

Community members will be invited to share their perspective on the following:

- Typical paradigm of research
- University-community relationships
- Ideas for collaborative, participatory research

Reflection: Process community roundtable

Session XIV: Wrap-up

Outline

1. Create revised conceptual models of research
2. Share conceptual models with group
3. Operationalize definition of “research” based on group feedback.

Reflection: Final evaluation

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- How can the course be revised?

Appendix A: Participatory Action Research Grading Rubric

There are a total of 100 points available for the class.

Assignment #1: Active Participation

This accounts for 15% of your grade. There are 14 weeks in the semester. Each week you will have an opportunity to earn one point for attendance and participation. All students will earn one point for overall participation.

Attendance: (0.5 points)

Participation: (0.5 points)

_____ Evidence of prior reflection on articles (ability to react to and integrate articles with each other and outside experiences)

_____ Engaged in class dialogue (speaking and active listening)

Assignment #2: Class Facilitation

This accounts for 20% of your grade. Points will be distributed according to the following rubric:

Discussion Questions: (5 points)

_____ Emailed to class by COB Friday

_____ Thoughtfulness of questions

Group Discussion: (5 points)

_____ Extent to which group dialogue was stimulated

_____ Extent to which discussion encouraged critical analysis of articles

Learning Activity: (10 points)

_____ Clear learning objective(s)

_____ Integration of course material into new learning modality

_____ Ability to carry out activity

Assignment #3: Reflection

This accounts for 20% of your grade. The points will be distributed between the two student-professor meetings and the final copy of your journal.

Student-professor Meetings: (10 points – 5 per meeting)

- _____ Timeliness
- _____ Preparedness of student to lead session
- _____ Ability to communicate reactions to course materials and experiences
- _____ Ability to integrate course materials and experiences

Journal: (10 points)

- _____ Submitted on-time
- _____ Well-organized
- _____ Evidence of critical analysis of course materials and experiences
- _____ Reflections on readings, experience in community, and personal challenges uncovered

Assignment #4: Interact with the community

This accounts for 15% of your grade. Community interaction will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

- _____ Evidence of at least 4 encounters with the community
- _____ Reflection of experience with community in class and in journal
- _____ Demonstrates understanding of community values, beliefs, and goals
- _____ Ability to integrate community experience with course materials
- _____ Review of role in community

Assignment #5: Research orientation paper

This accounts for 30% of your grade and will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- _____ Submitted on-time
- _____ Proper length
- _____ APA formatting
- _____ Includes response to each question
- _____ Synthesizes course materials

Case Studies

Case A

You are the director of a research project and feel strongly that a participatory research approach should be employed. Your boss, the lead investigator of the study, never questions your desire to use a participatory approach; however, as the research project progresses you begin to realize that you and your boss have very different views of participatory research. From your perspective, it is important to work *with* the community and engage the community in all parts of the research process. Your boss believes he is a participatory researcher but does not support the inclusion of research participants in discussions about intervention content and the evaluation plan, and if they are included in these discussions nothing is done to ensure their voice is heard. From his perspective, the study is participatory because you did initial focus groups with community participants and, therefore, you have already captured the voice of the community. As program development continues you become increasingly aware of the differences in your opinions about the key elements of participatory research and you're not sure how to address this discrepancy with your boss.

1. Why do you think this happened?
2. What are the ethical dilemmas or issues you face?
3. How would you respond to those dilemmas and issues?

Case B

You are asked by a Quechuan community in Ecuador to help them evaluate their educational system. The indigenous people have fought long and hard to have an educational system of their own, and feel that the ability to educate their community members in their language and based on their own values is essential to the livelihood of the Quechuan community and culture. You are excited by the project and agree to work with the community members to observe and evaluate the education system, develop plans for improvement, and attempt to contract outside funding sources for the expansion of the education system. Through the process of engaging with the community in the evaluation, you are strongly convinced that the Quechuan educational system is valuable, important to the sustainability of their community, and an effective method for education their children. However, you also notice that the beliefs about gender roles and ensuing expectations are resulting in (what seems to you) a great deal of discrimination and mistreatment of female students. For example, many of the text books have scenarios in which a Quechuan wife was beat by her husband for refusing to be obedient, and in classrooms where resources are scarce, female students are the first ones to go without (in classrooms with too few desks, the girls sit on the floor, etc.) When it comes time to analyze the results of the study and make suggestions for improvement, you respectfully approach the community with your observations and concerns about the treatment of female students. Although some members of the community are sympathetic to your concerns, many other respond that the “differentiation” of gender roles and expected behaviors are a very important part of Quechuan culture, and are beneficial to their way of life – that to change this treatment would jeopardize an important part of their community well-being.

1. How do you, the researcher, negotiate the conflicting values presented by the differential treatment of male and female students?
2. How does your understanding of “culture” (Is it static? dynamic? essential or non-essential to maintenance of the well-being of the community?) inform your negotiation?
3. How does your understanding of “good” or “justice” (Is it possible to make absolute claims? Or should all claims be culture/community specific? Who gets to decide what’s right? On what basis?) inform your approach to this situation?

Case C

You are involved in designing and facilitating a participatory action research project with employees of a government water authority. The authority is funding the research. They have stated that the funding is dependent upon at least 10 employees being involved in the research and that all the departments are represented. You understand that a critical element to any participatory action research approach is the voluntary and willing involvement of participants in the research. To ensure this element is considered you do a number of things. You include a statement in the Consent to Participate form that is part of your IRB ethics application, to the effect that if it is found that any participant has been forced to participate they will be excluded from the research. You also advertise broadly throughout the organization inviting participation and hold a briefing meeting to introduce yourself and the project. You avoid personal invitations or asking management to encourage staff to participate. You manage to attract 10 participants.

Four weeks into the research, as trust develops, you realize that two of the participants were encouraged strongly by their managers to be involved as no one had volunteered from their departments. You also find out that the coordinating department exerted internal pressure on departments and spoke directly with employees encouraging them to participate. At the same time you find you that the coordinating department is facing funding cuts and that they must perform well on this project to maintain funding levels. Personally, you recognize the need for the coordinating department to be present within the organization as they work for social and environmental justice, two goals you aspire to. This is also the first attempt in the organization to involve employees in a participatory approach to making internal organizational changes, which have external ramifications.

1. What are the ethical dilemmas or issues you face?
2. How would you respond to those dilemmas and issues?