

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

What is Participatory Action Research?

What is research? Who researches? Who is researched?

These are some of the questions rarely asked about research - and yet how researchers answer these questions can have enormous consequences.

In **Participatory Action Research (PAR)**, research is a process of generating and legitimizing knowledge that can support social change. The researcher is a team of stakeholders, or people who have a personal stake in the issue being researched. The research subjects are often their peers.

Participatory Action Research brings people together to define for themselves what problems they face in their community, find solutions through talking with and gathering data from their peers, and then implementing those solutions through strategic and informed actions. It's a model of community organizing that builds the capacity of people on the front-line of a problem to take leadership in creating the change they want. The organizer, or facilitator can support a group of stakeholders through a cyclical process that starts with personal and collective reflection, and ends in taking action together to address the issues reflected on.



PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH IS A CYCLICAL PROCESS



KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PAR AND “NORMAL RESEARCH”

“NORMAL” RESEARCH	PAR
Led by outside individual “expert”	Led by a team of people who experience the issue first-hand
Is for the expert’s peers, personal career, supervisor, academic institution or foundation	Is for the community that is experiencing an issue first-hand
Results in a report	Results in a report AND action - and the process itself often results in community dialogues and organizing or mobilizing
The research subjects or sample provide data and may never hear about the results	The sample includes peers of the research team, who hear about the results and how they can take action
Mostly quantitative - some qualitative	Quantitative or qualitative, sometimes in combination
Holds that participatory research is too bias, therefore potentially invalid. Works to minimize and sometimes “hide” own bias.	Holds that researchers from the outside may not ask the right questions, or get accurate responses from interviewees, recognizes that all research is biased, names bias.

While to say the true word- which is work, which is praxis- is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone - nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.” ~ Paulo Freire

