Participatory Action Research with Students: Listening to and Responding to their College Reports

TPSID Project Director’s Meeting
July 9 2013
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Agenda

• Brief rationale for PAR
• Emerging themes
• Think College PAR activities in 4 states
• Planning processes, including IRB
• Supporting technologies
• Outcomes
• Next steps
Participatory Action Research

• Community-based researchers use action research methods that value what individuals want to share about their lives and experiences and, more importantly, value the telling of the story (Ferguson et al., 1992).

• PAR is a flexible process that does not dictate one particular strategy, only that the strategies employed promote the personal involvement of those affected by the research endeavor (Valade, 2008).

• PAR is an emancipatory and cyclical form of research that promotes collaboration between researchers and participants.
Brief rationale for PAR
A call for change

• Growing interest in hearing from students themselves about new opportunity to attend college

• Self Advocates/ ADD/ Inclusive research facilitators call for authentic research methods that include individuals with ID as co-researchers

• Move from non-disabled ‘experts’ taking up the cause (advocates, researches, parents, teachers, community providers)
Recommendations

• Identify what PAR is and is not in terms of your focus/project
• Teach participants the research process
• Develop easy to understand approaches to seek consent
• Use multiple and intensive data collection strategies
• Presume participants’ credibility
• Use plain language
• Produce dissemination materials that are universally accessible and meaningful
Emerging themes
* NY, MA, NC used PAR as a way to evaluate postsecondary education initiatives they were involved in

* VT taught an undergraduate UVM inclusive PAR research course
Common Themes from Students

- Many college experiences were to prepare for obtaining gainful employment, but *most students were not getting paid jobs*.
- Students feel that options within their program are lacking for employment preparation.
- Volunteer positions impeded their ability to be seen as potential employees.

Love (2013) and Mock & Love (2010)
## (NC) Preliminary analysis

### THEMES
- Making & having friends
- Supports: bonding and bridging
- Connected; fit in; included; like everyone else

### ADVICE
- Join clubs & interest groups
- Work hard then play hard
- Stay active

### SUGGESTIONS
- Fewer top-down activities (sex ed; rec therapy; independent leisure)
- More scheduling flexibility
- More independence
- Adapt independent leisure
Massachusetts

Adjusting to new expectations

New identity/
Feeling free

Campus life

Access to different classes

Working with educational coaches

Using public transportation
Themes produced by PAR researchers based upon RQ, collecting (observations, interviews, document analysis, surveys), coding & analyzing data
### (VT) Students’ Research Themes

#### The College Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UVM STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS REGARDING FOOD:</th>
<th>HOME CULTURE VS UVM CULTURE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Food is too expensive</td>
<td>UVM claims to be an open and accepting culture, but there is a disconnect between this claim and the experiences of some UVM students</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Students are making food choices based on money not nutrition: “salads eat up all my points”</td>
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(VT) Themes Related to Students w/ ID/DD as PAR researchers

- Able to grasp the concepts of research questions, methods, data collection & analysis
- Were initially hesitant to conduct interviews
- Used iMovie to represent findings (liked using music and graphics to highlight research results)
- Built confidence, independence, divergent and convergent thinking skills
- Increased sense of pride in their ability to hold their own in an inclusive class
Think College PAR activities in 4 states
Purposes for TC PAR/Photovoice

- New York
  - Share their college experiences and become agents of change in program planning

- North Carolina:
  - Students define & evaluate social inclusion then disseminate findings

- Vermont (EDSP 200)
  - Teach students PAR process within the context of the college experience (NOT TPSID related; however students with and without ID/developmental disabilities were included)

- Massachusetts
  - Gain authentic evaluation of postsecondary education experience; improve training and technical assistance materials
Planning processes, including IRB
AN INVITATION

Would you be interested in documenting your college experience? Would you like to use tools such as a digital camera, video camera, or digital recorder to record your experience? If you answered yes, staff from ThinkCollege invite you to join a participatory action research group made up of students participating in college activities.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

- First hand reports about college
- A commitment to meet with staff 1-2 times a month this semester
- Discussions about what's going well and what should improve
- A willingness to share your work with other students
- Contributions for the ThinkCollege website that come from students' work—podcasts, digital stories, or video clips

HOW YOU WILL BENEFIT

- Learn about action research
- Have the opportunity to use new technology
- Meet other students like you who are participating in college activities
- Have the opportunity to discuss the benefits of college and brainstorm solutions for things that make college hard

TO LEARN MORE

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ThinkCollege is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. It is funded by a cooperative agreement (H900W02186) from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services.
UVM Professor obtained IRB approval for students to conduct research

Students took and passed the UVM IRB on-line tutorial

Students received training & lecture on protection of human rights

Students used consent forms when conducting their research (e.g., interviews)

Orientation to PAR

THE IRB PERMISSION SLIP

Food Services and Systems Available at the University of Vermont for Students with Nutritional, Dietary and Eating Disorder-Related Issues.

Principal Investigators: Taylor Terry, Beth Sweatt, Alexandra Karambelas
Faculty Sponsor: Susan Ryan, Susan Yuan

You are being invited to participate in this study because you have information that is helpful for the nutritional, dietary, and eating disorder-related issues present at the University of Vermont.

Why is this research being conducted?
The purpose of this research is to find out if the food services and systems of the University of Vermont are meeting the needs of students with nutritional, dietary or eating related issues.

How many people will take part in this study?
10 for nutritional branch
5 for eating disorder branch
10 for dietary restrictions branch

What is involved in this study?
In the area of dietary restrictions, we will interview staff of Sodexo, Living Well, and the Student Health Center. We will also administer a survey to students.

To see how students with eating disorders are supported, participants will have a choice of either meeting in person to speak, or sending their own account of their experiences working with people with eating disorders through email. We would like to talk to you for half an hour to one hour. These meetings can take place in your own personal office or home, or at a private conference room found on campus.
(NC)Photovoice Training

- Trainings
  - Project overview
  - Research terms
  - Storytelling
  - Subjects/objects
  - Action shots/posed shots
  - Photography tips
  - Photo ethics
  - Who signs photo release forms?

- IRB
  - Picture-based consent forms
  - Copy rights
(NY) Planning the Research

- Began from a conversation with students about their sexual and reproductive rights/responsibilities

- **NEXT STEPS**
  1. Brainstorming with students on methods
  2. Generating focus group questions with staff
  3. Navigating IRB (working through the definition of guardianship and consent)
  4. Consent process (prioritizing student choice)

Love (2013) and Mock & Love (2010)
Methods and strategies
(NY) Methods and Strategies

Research Project Included:

1. Student focus groups
2. Concept maps of projects
3. Technical training of iPads
4. Used iPads to capture experiences
5. Used MovieStudio to format and publish projects
6. Student and staff organized event to premiere projects
(VT) Brainstorming/Choosing PAR Research Topics related to the “UVM College Experience”
## Methods Used Including Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection included</th>
<th>Technology Used to Collect Data:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Interviews</td>
<td>- iPhones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participant Observations</td>
<td>- flip cameras</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Surveys</td>
<td>- Canon digital cameras</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Document Analysis</td>
<td>- on line surveys</td>
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(1/1 meetings with instructors, small research groups, large group instruction, on line instruction, assignments broken down in small incremental steps culminating in the research project)
(NC) Social Inclusion in the Campus Community

- Photography
  - Mobile phones
  - iPads
  - Cameras
- Picture interviews
- Support focus groups
Massachusetts: Using graphics to describe the research process
SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGIES
Using Technology to Enhance Student Participation

Love (2013) and Mock & Love (2010)
(NY) Using Technology to Enhance Student Participation

Lori Cooney, Think College, facilitated 2 webinars for students on 4 campuses on using iPads for academics (organization, time management, file sharing)

Apps shared with students:

1. Google DRIVE
2. ShowME
3. Skitch
4. Time Station
5. Talkatone

You can find the first webinar recording at:
http://connectpro97884399.adobeconnect.com/p8skzq
(VT) Technology Used to Promote Participation

• Blackboard supplement in class work
• iPads in class used to record lectures, take notes, download materials; Skype to link national/international PAR researchers w UVM students
• Final project: UDL multiple ways of representing research (e.g., iMovie, Wiki, or written 10 page paper)
(VT) PAR RESEARCHERS USING UVM MEDIA LAB TO CREATE IMOVIE of FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT
Connecting student researchers through VoiceThread

Massachusetts Inclusive College Partnerships

- Westfield State University
- Chicopee Public Schools
- Ludlow Public Schools
- Palmer Public Schools
- Amherst-Pelham Regional School District
- Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District

- UMass Amherst
  - Amherst-Pelham Regional High School (Amherst)
  - Greenfield High School (Greenfield)
  - Collaborative for Education Services (Northampton)
  - Frontier Regional and Union #38 (South Deerfield)
  - Hadley Public Schools (Hadley)

- Bunker Hill Community College
  - Bozeman Public Schools
  - Quincy Public Schools
  - Chelsea Public Schools

- Roxbury Community College
  - Boston Public Schools
  - Revere Public Schools

- UMass Boston
  - Boston Public Schools
  - Braintree Public Schools

- Holyoke Community College
  - Agawam Public Schools
  - Monson Public Schools
  - Northampton Public Schools
  - South Hadley Public Schools
  - Ware Public Schools
  - Westfield Public Schools

- MassBay Community College (Wellesley Hills Campus)
  - Boston Public Schools
  - Newton Public Schools
  - Cambridge Public Schools

- Bridgewater State University
  - Bridgewater Public Schools
  - Career Public Schools
  - Cohasset Public Schools
  - Dighton-Rehoboth Regional
  - Easton Public Schools
  - Mansfield Public Schools
  - North Attleboro Public Schools
  - Pembroke Public Schools
  - Southeastern Regional
  - Weymouth Public Schools

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(NY) Student Recommendations

1. The goal should be to get paid employment while at college.
2. The *role* of mentors should be addressed.
3. Schedules should reflect student interests.

As a result of student input, many changes have occurred…
(VT) PAR researcher presenting at UVM research symposium
Students’ findings contribute to Think College briefs and training adjustments
Limitations
PAR isn’t easy

• Remember that PAR is a flexible process
• Consider how data will be analyzed before it is collected
• It takes lots of time—both yours and the students’
• If students need support to do this research, it will be important to train support staff as well
• College students have very busy schedules
• Students with ID may need support to collect data, seek permission
(NY) Limitations of Research

- Students were not fully engaged in the development of the research agenda
- It was not always a natural encounter to take a picture or video on campus
- Mentors and staff assisted students, students may not have shared all of their perceptions with them
(NC) Improving Photovoice

- Improve photo release form training
- SHOWeD was helpful but limiting, yielded similar responses
- Adapt for those with communication barriers
- Increase student dissemination
Next steps
New questions

- Who does(n’t) participate in ‘PAR’? How do we avoid traditional traps in data collection and analysis processes?
- In what ways are students’ experiences the same as other first year college students?
- How might students with ID/DD be part of a PAR project that is not disability or self focused?
- What does and does not constitute PAR?
THANK YOU