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Naming and Un-Naming a Research Study "Participatory"

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Abstract

In this article, we explore our own discomfort with naming our research studies participatory action research – at least during the initial stages of our work – and highlight several practices that we believe serve to create greater researcher reflexivity. Drawing upon two different research studies, we share three "lessons from practice" generated from an analysis of our fieldnotes and a series of interactive interviews. The lessons illustrate how we have come to name and un-name our research "participatory." We offer suggestions for other researchers committed to engaging in participatory action research.

Keywords

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In this article, we explore our own discomfort with naming our research studies participatory action research – at least during the initial stages of our work – and highlight several practices that we believe serve to create greater researcher reflexivity. Drawing upon two different research studies, we share three "lessons from practice" generated from an analysis of our fieldnotes and a series of interactive interviews. The lessons illustrate how we have come to name and un-name our research "participatory." We offer suggestions for other researchers committed to engaging in participatory action research. Keywords: Participatory Action Research, Action Research, Interactive Interviewing

Introduction

Building upon the traditions of action research, participatory action research (PAR) is a methodological approach that aims to identify a socially relevant problem within a community, and then develop and implement a plan of action. When employing PAR as a methodology, community members are positioned as co-researchers who not only identify and investigate community problems, but also take steps to address and possibly eradicate social inequities (Park, 1997; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; SooHoo, 1993). Hooley (2002) contended that research that is "truly participatory will challenge the current views of the research team with the data and interpretation of enquiry," ultimately impacting their "belief and value systems as analysis and interpretation continues" (p. 8). In PAR research, then, a participatory action researcher is an active participant within the research process, and works *with* people to identify relevant issues of concern and collaboratively research and address them. Such an approach, therefore, stands in contrasts to more traditional, researcher-driven approaches, in which research may be conducted *on* participants (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), rather than *with* participants. In many ways, PAR challenges the underlying assumptions that have historically undergirded how many social scientists have gone about doing research.

Positioned as "research of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Park, 1997, p. 8), PAR brings with it unique ethical dilemmas, which can arise at any point during the research process (Eikeland, 2006; Hilsen, 2006). Yet, while there is a vast body of literature describing how researchers might approach community members in responsive and thoughtful ways (e.g., Berryman, SooHoo, & Nevin, 2013), little attention has been given to the early moments of the participatory process, more specifically, how participatory action researchers go about naming their project PAR. Even though many researchers name their work and methodological approach PAR, few researchers share in detail how and when they came to name their work participatory (Goff, 2001; Hilsen, 2006). Quite often, the reader is told that a particular study used PAR. Thus, the reader is left wondering: who named the project PAR – the researchers, the participants, the community at large, all of the above – and how did this naming unfold?

As qualitative researchers who have taken up PAR methods (or so we initially hoped) in some of our work, we have become hesitant, and even a bit uncomfortable, with the haste in which we have named our own work PAR. Even while the technical definitions of PAR perhaps validated the participatory nature of some of our work, we have remained tentative in positioning our research as such, particularly during its early stages. Further, we have often wondered if it is even possible to name a project PAR prior to its very beginnings, particularly when the research design and research focus is being established. Over the course of one year, these musings and uncomfortable moments led us to ask one another: does the power of naming a research project PAR remain with the researchers, community members, or all of us? Can we name our work PAR prior to beginning work within the community?

In this article, then, we explore our own discomfort with naming our research studies PAR – at least during the initial stages of our work – and highlight several practices that we believe serve to create greater researcher reflexivity. Drawing upon two different research studies, we share three "lessons from practice" generated from an analysis of our fieldnotes from our individual research projects and a series of interactive interviews (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997). The "lessons from practice" illustrate how we have come to name and un-name our research "participatory." We first present a brief overview of how PAR and other related research approaches have come to be positioned within the broader literature around research methodology, and highlight the definitions and commitments that undergird this orientation to research. We then discuss our individual research studies, and share our approach to analyzing our interactive interviews. We conclude by sharing three "lessons learned," offering suggestions for other researchers committed to participatory approaches of engaging in research.

Positioning PAR in the Broader Literature

McIntyre (2003) described PAR as "an approach to research that challenges prospective educators to reframe what they know, and what they think they know about teaching, learning, and research" (p. 28). Montero (2000) positioned PAR as an approach that "…leads the people involved to develop, strengthen, and polish their resources to defend and exert their right to obtain other resources to negotiate with dignity in an assertive way with those in socially dominating positions" (p. 134). He further suggested that researchers must take up "active and participatory means and techniques" that engage community members in dialoging in reflective ways, ultimately resulting in "…a conscientisation process" (p. 138). PAR oriented research, then, pursues liberating and democratizing principles that hopefully lead to social action and potentially some kind of change (Kemmis & McTagger, 2005). It centers on people, with the researcher positioned in relationship to the community within which they work. Change of any kind is jointly pursued and collaboratively experienced and named.

One of the underlying beliefs of PAR is that the research process is always changing, as it "involves a continuing spiral of planning, acting (implementing plans), observing (systematically), reflecting and then re-planning" (Wadsworth, 1997, p. 79). Methodologically, PAR is a process that creates a cyclical journey from understanding that there is an issue to having inquisitive minds working together to identifying solutions to moving toward action. Throughout the process, the concerns, questions, plans, and steps taken to address social concerns become strengthened through the participation of community members. PAR research focuses on conducting research with community members as co-researchers (Smith, Rosenzweig, & Schmidt, 2010). For example, Walsh, Hewsen, Shier, and Morales (2008) conducted a community-based PAR project with a social service organization and 11 youth (ranging from 13 to 17 years of age) focused on a community issue that the

youth identified as important. Photovoice and reflective journaling were both used, with students given disposable cameras to take pictures of communal spaces of concern to them. After taking meaningful pictures, they reflected upon the photos, while being interviewed about their perspectives. Students transcribed the interviews, developed a plan to address the issues they identified as important, and presented their work to the community. Throughout, the students engaged within the research process at varied levels.

Certainly, the level of participatory engagement is always contextual and varies from study to study. Drawing upon Cornwall's (1996) continuum of participatory involvement, Herr and Anderson (2005) illustrated how the participation of members and/or co-researchers varies and does not remain static across the course of a given study. They provided a continuum of the researcher's positioning, which ranged from 1) insider to 2) insider in collaboration with other insiders to 3) insider in collaboration with outsiders to 4) reciprocal collaboration to 5) outsider who collaborates with insiders to 6) outsider who studies an insider. These positions shift as the participatory researcher works in varied contexts and participates in differing activities. The level of participation, for instance, may gradually change as the insiders or outsiders become comfortable with each other or the researcher's positionality shifts. While researchers taking up a PAR approach often discuss how they approached the city, agency, or community they desired to work within (Ozer, Ritterman, & Wanis, 2010; Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen, & Romero, 2010), few describe how and when they came to name their research PAR. Thus, we turn next to describing our research studies and then highlight the hesitancy we have experienced in naming our research PAR. In doing so, we call for other researchers to practice tentativeness in naming their work PAR away from the relationships they build with co-participants. We first share the methodological approach we took in coming to these understandings.

Our Methodological Approach Toward Understanding

Aware of one another's research projects and methodological commitments, over a one-year period, we began conversing around the meaning(s) of PAR and our own pursuits of it. With time, we came to question our own, as well as each other's research practices and the ease with which the words*, participatory action research*, moved across our lips. We came to believe that whether a project was "participatory" was not ours to name, only that which we could pursue and remain committed to. Thus, with a desire to share our unfolding understandings, we chose to engage in a series of interactive interviews (Ellis et al., 1997), which provided a framework to construct a layered understanding and description of our everyday experiences working within a participatory framework. In our case, we used interactive interviewing to get at our felt experiences as a CEO of a non-profit organization (Koo) and a university researcher (Lester). We shared with one another, sometimes with hesitation and other times with blunt openness, those "personal and social" (Ellis, et al., 1997, p. 121) experiences that shaped our understandings of PAR.

Interactive interviewing provided us with the opportunity to analyze the "understandings that emerged during interaction," a dialogue that required vulnerability, "emotional investment," and "reciprocal disclosure" (Ellis et al., 1997, p. 121). As we engaged in the interactive interviews, we asked each other what we felt was most salient in our understanding and pursuit of participatory approaches to research. In constructing the ideas shared here, we also returned to our individual fieldnotes and research journals in order to share striking excerpts with one another, particularly those excerpts related to our own struggles and questions around choosing to name (or not to name) our work participatory.

In total, we engaged in three interactive interviews, with each lasting approximately 60 minutes. Because we lived in different geographic regions, we used Skype to carry out the

interviews, audio-recording our conversations. Eventually, we transcribed and thematically analyzed our interactive interviews and fieldnotes, using both in-vivo and sociologically constructed codes (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Throughout the analysis process, we met bi-monthly to discuss emergent patterns and next analytic steps. More specifically, we carried out a seven-step analysis process, which included:

1) listening and re-listening to the recorded interviews, attending to salient portions of the interactive interviews;
2) transcribing the audio files;
3) independently memoing the transcripts, with a focus on ways of engaging participants and communities and naming work PAR;
4) engaging in collaborative in-vivo coding;
5) independently coding the data with both in-vivo and sociologically constructed codes;
6) meeting to merge and re-categorize codes and begin moving to a thematic level of understanding;
7) explaining and generating interpretations around our three thematic understandings, termed "lessons learned."

The three "lessons learned" included:

1) creating pathways of engagement;
2) working against research power; and
3) being willing to name and un-name research PAR.

To set the stage for our discussion of these "lessons learned," we first provide a brief overview of the two research studies that we drew upon in our conversations and subsequent analyses. Following this, we present the lessons, illustrating the messy and always unfolding nature of naming our research participatory. We conclude by discussing the implications for researchers engaged in participatory research.

Our Research Projects/Contexts

Nonprofit Organization and CEO

In 2010, I (Koo) established a nonprofit organization that formed a collaborative partnership with a predominately Latino city in the northwest region of the United States. The city hoped that our organization, which focuses on supporting low-income, minority students attend college, would provide college readiness programs to the Latino youth living in low-income housing areas. As a part of the program, students would become engaged in a leadership opportunity that aimed to cultivate voice and agency with youth who do not usually have decision-making power (see Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, for an example of this in practice). For instance, students who participated in the program chose how and when to meet, what they wanted to learn, and what city-wide events they wanted to provide for community members. They not only focused on their educational pathways to college, but also became civic leaders in their community by taking on action research projects (e.g., county-wide teen summit, college fairs, teen teaching, etc.) focused on educational issues within their community. I took an active role as the CEO of the organization, facilitator of the college readiness classes, researcher, and mentor. While the leadership and mentoring

program had elements of PAR, and data were being collected and analyzed, I did not initially name this research PAR.

University Researcher

Over a two-year period, I (Lester) was involved in an ethnographic study exploring the varied meanings and performances of dis/ability labels performed in and through the talk of therapists, parents of children with autism labels, and children labeled autistic (Lester, 2012). This study drew upon discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and focused specifically on the ways in which abnormality and normality are worked up in everyday interactions, in this case within the context of a therapeutic clinic. While this study was not originally positioned as being participatory in scope, over time, it became more and more defined by and directed in collaboration with my co-researchers (that is, the participants). The types of questions we began to ask and even data that was collected became centered on the needs of the therapists who worked with the young children with dis/ability labels.

With a commitment to engaging in social science as "an activity done in public for the public," which acts "to clarify, sometimes to intervene, sometimes to generate new perspectives" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 166), within this research project, I eventually worked closely with the participants as we analyzed data, generated and shared interpretations with others, and made decisions around our next steps. Currently, this work has developed into a series of joint research projects that are aimed at collectively exploring therapeutic challenges and concerns around inclusion within the community and school spaces for children with dis/ability labels.

"Lessons Learned" Around PAR

Drawing upon our interactive interviews, fieldnotes, and researcher journals, we share insights around our practices as researchers with commitments to participatory research. Indeed, what we share here is "always partial and positional," as the stories we tell are still unfolding (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004, p. 22). Our tellings are always already embedded within particular historical and cultural contexts. As such, we offer three lessons not as rigid requirements, rather as activities that call for reflexive practice on the part of the researcher. Further, throughout our discussion, we avoid offering step-wise suggestions for how to do PAR; rather, we position these "lessons" as invitations for other participatory researchers to engage in recursive reflexivity.

Lesson One: Creating Pathways of Engagement

The first lesson of PAR practice is *creating pathways of engagement*, which speaks to the importance of continuously entering and re-entering relationships with the members of the community in which a PAR project is being pursued. We have come to view meaningful engagement and relationship building as foundational to all other research efforts. This engagement, we suggest, often begins slowly, requires patience and persistence, and calls for a willingness to be responsive to the needs and expectations voiced, often over time, by the community. We consider relationship building, then, to be the first entry point or activity, which shapes how all other interactions unfold.

Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) described PAR as a "deliberate process through which people aim to transform their practices through a spiral of cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection" (p. 567). We use their phrase "deliberate process" to focus on the importance of these initial entry points. In other words, creating pathways of engagement

demands deliberate action on the part of the researcher. These beginnings might take place as unexpected "sidewalk conversations" about what matters most in a community or at meetings with students about their future hopes and dreams. Ideas and concerns emerge that allow both insiders and us (presumed outsiders) to investigate potential sociopolitical issues. For example, in Koo's work, school and city officials discussed the challenges they faced in getting their students prepared to graduate from high school and college. Yet, the city did not offer college readiness programs and the high schools only provided a college readiness program during school hours, which was tailored for select students. The problem the community identified resulted in multiple conversations with students and community leaders about what might be "done" to better support their youth. These early interactions created spaces to "start something," as the following quote from Koo's interactive interview highlights:

> We always enter and re-enter into relationships with the participants. Entry points are always happening. They don't stop after the first meeting; they are ongoing…I feel this is important because sometimes people may be aware of community issues but may not know how to start something. Through relationship building, we make sense of our next steps…even our first steps.

In examining how we each entered and re-entered conversations with the community, we began to recognize that we worked to create pathways of engagement – those pathways that unfolded during the course of our research, often in unexpected and "messy" ways. Throughout, we learned to remain conscientious of the community's needs and our own subjectivities (Peshkin, 1988). These deliberate actions established a platform for trust to be built, rapport to develop, and community members to begin sharing their thoughts and concerns. Being intentional allowed us to work alongside the community members and learn *from*, rather than impose our thoughts regarding the issues of focus.

Within these "participatory" opportunities, we found our early interactions to be embued with power, requiring us to unpack continuously our own positionalities (Sultana, 2007). As Lester noted in one of the interactive interviews:

> As a researcher, you want to do PAR but you can't do PAR unless you have patience and wait for the community relationship to unfold . . . trying to come into a community and establish an entry point . . . that's been of concern to me for a long while, because how we do research begins with entry points.

Perhaps, then, we can rest in knowing that PAR begins with the community and their intention to examine an issue that they orient to as critical to their community, while simultaneously being open to develop relationships with outsiders. These beginnings demand the pursuit of a relationship, over time, as this sets the foundation for any long-term participatory effort. Much like a courtship, engaging in "intentional" relationship building requires patience, openness, and a willingness to spend long hours building pathways of engagement. Through active listening and allowing community members to share what they envision and even need, we collectively learn to embark on meaningful and long-term engagement (Heffner, Zandee, & Schwander, 2003).

Lesson Two: Working against Researcher Power

The second lesson of PAR practice, *working against researcher power,* emerged as we both began to identify all of the ways in which our positions as researchers, one as a

university professor and the other as a community leader/mentor, allowed us to name our work participatory. Power in this section covers three aspects:

1) power shifts and the negotiation of positionalities,
2) the power found by those who name a project PAR, and
3) the interrogation of power through reflexivity.

As a university professor (Lester) who "needs" to research and publish, the power surrounding the ownership of research is an important concept to address. Lester understood that the research should center on community members and not a researcher who tends to be an outsider. Yet, for Lester, there were two challenges that emerged: 1) the need to gather data to publish, while also 2) pursuing meaningful participatory research. In the first example, Lester shared how she needed to research and publish as a university professor.

> …the thing is, from a research perspective parts of your career are being made off of the everyday practices of the people you're apparently researching with, which means that your income is going up, in the best of worlds, you're making advances. I own the research, at the end of the day. I could call it PAR, but truthfully, the institution calls me to "own" my research. Therein is my dilemma. This data is not mine alone.

The community leader/mentor (Koo) also committed to continuously negotiating and reflecting upon her positionality and power as a facilitator of the program and CEO of the organization. For example, she intentionally did not want her title to define who she was nor separate her from the students. By working against her title she sought to avoid creating power hierarchies, continually reminding herself that all students of all ages had the right to be valued. She hoped to create a space for students to be heard. In addition, she intentionally challenged her titled position by engaging and building relationships with students in order to gain rapport, as well as assist students with whatever needs they had. Koo and the students co-constructed decisions and collaboratively pursued community-based activities. For instance, they jointly launched city-wide, civic engagement projects, collaboratively deciding who would be responsible for certain tasks. Koo used her position to create opportunities for students to participate in leadership activities and develop their own community-based efforts, rather than using her power to *do* things to them. Power was also used to acquire resources, such as renting a van for travel for students, securing a venue for student-led events, providing educational and recreational activities, and buying food for the students and others who attended city-wide events. Overall, she believed PAR became "participatory" when the students claimed and named their journey as such.

As power is negotiated, it is equally important to address the power of who is allowed/invited to name the work PAR. Power and position become relevant as people begin to name the project PAR, which is something that often requires a researcher to share what PAR means. In other words, community members outside of academic contexts are not typically familiar with the concept of PAR, as this concept itself is part of the academic discourse. However, in PAR, community members have as much knowledge or more about their communal circumstances than the involved researchers. We suggest that by not naming a project PAR at the front end, we are perhaps more likely to share power, ideas, and resources with the participants. In an excerpt from Lester, the practical nuances of being participatory were highlighted: "They leaned into my expertise, I deferred to their expertise. We seem to dance this dance so often." She further shared her journey of learning to listen, chronicles in her research journal:

June 2011 (Lester)

I feel less powerful today - I'm making fewer decisions, driving fewer discussions. Listening, listening, listening - moving in, still tentative ways, but collaboratively. We are looking at each other - face-to-face. I'm not just an observer, maybe. I'm a committed member of this community - at least in part. I'm still scared to name it too early.

For the young students in the program with Koo, they knew quickly the setting was different from their school. Koo intentionally created a collaborative environment that would allow students to make decisions in the program regarding program structure, food choices, furniture layout design of the center, types of teaching methods they would utilize, and student recruitment strategies. This was the initial step to have them understand they had the decision-making power to create and execute. Although the word PAR was not mentioned, it was the hope that the students would come to know the process even without naming it. For Koo, PAR did not have meaning for the students until they were exposed to reading an article on PAR two years after the project began. Students became enlightened when they were able to *name* what they were doing. Thus, youth had the power to name the word PAR, which gave new significance to the project.

Recognizing that "the separation of scientific and personal biography is in fact never possible" (Seale, 1999, p. 25), we came to view our *researcher power* as something that we would likely never rid of, but must work against as we reflexively attended to our own positionality. It was thus vital for us to interrogate our own positioning by being continually reflexive. We had to maintain constant awareness of our own position, as well as the position of others through dialogue with community members and self-questioning (Walsh, Hewson, Shier, & Morales, 2008). For instance, as we carried out data collection and analysis, we learned (and still are learning) to interrogate our own power across structure, discourse, and practice (Pillow, 2003; Skeggs, 2002). Yet, while doing so, we have learned not to assume nor seek a reflexive space devoid of complexities. Instead, we have learned that taking up a reflexive space of inquiry does not necessarily lead to a "comfortable, transcendent end-point", but is often "messy" and leaves "us in the uncomfortable realities of doing engaged qualitative research" (Pillow, 2003, p. 193).

Lesson Three: Being Willing to Name and Un-name Research PAR

The final lesson we propose is, *being willing to name and un-name research PAR*. This particular lesson speaks to the felt challenge of naming any research study participatory, both prior to beginning the work and long after the work has begun. Across our research, we have remained hesitant to name (too quickly) our work participatory, being unsure whether we are the ones who should be doing the naming.

This hesitancy, coupled with the willingness to un-name what might have already been named participatory in haste, was displayed often in our research journals and discussed extensively during our interactive interviews. We questioned whether we were *truly* engaging in participatory methods, and, perhaps more importantly, whether we were the ones who should be doing the naming. In many ways, we struggled to find words that captured what it was that we were pursuing, though perhaps not achieving. We pursued participatory research efforts, yet we questioned whether it was our place to name our research PAR. Our hesitancy stemmed from our belief that the communities within which we worked should be a part of describing how they experience the research process. Did they view the research process as

participatory? Was their view in (dis)alignment with our own perspectives of the research process?

For Lester, the process of naming the work participatory was layered and imbued with a recognition that perhaps she was not the one who should do the naming. Gradually, as the research project proceeded, the process itself revealed the work to be more and more participatory, reflected in what Lester wrote in the research process:

February 2011 (Lester)

So it turned for me today. I realized that all of my ideas were being generated with, even in collaboration with the therapists and parents (and yet the children are not fully a part of the process yet). These ideas didn't simply come from my little over-thinking mind. Yet, still I can't name it participatory. Perhaps I'm not the one to do the naming.

Even though the process "turned" for Lester, she still hesitated naming the work participatory, moving to position others as "perhaps" being the one who is to do the naming. Further, she took note of the ways in which some of the participants (children) had yet to be positioned as collaborators. Koo also took note of this in her work with youth, stating in an early journal entry:

August 2011 (Koo)

I believe that naming PAR research should come from the community members, but as a CEO and a doctoral student who learned about PAR, I needed to provide avenues for students to understand the underlying principles of PAR without naming it. I need to help youth co-construct, problematize community issues, and conduct research.

For Koo, learning about PAR emerged from her doctoral studies and she wondered how youth might come to know and label the process they were involved with as PAR. Rather than naming PAR for students, she established a foundation of inquiry and reflection in her program during a two-year process. In its second year, Koo made the conscious decision to provide and discuss PAR and youth PAR articles (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009) as an opportunity to create dialogue regarding what the article was written about as well as to engage youth to ask questions about what they have been doing and experiencing in the college access program. Through group discussions, youth connected their experiences, such as taking action in community and school issues that resonated with them.

As we unpacked this issue of "naming" within the interactive interview, we wondered whether being participatory was (im)possible as long as the researcher was the one who maintained the authority to do the naming. This is illustrated in the following interchange drawn from the interactive interview:

Koo: I think PAR is named by researchers or those with particular knowledge of PAR…depending on which community you're coming from, they wouldn't necessarily be able to name it [PAR] unless someone already knows what PAR is. So naming PAR is difficult, right? I feel like there's a glitch in PAR. I think when the researcher comes in a community and since they have the knowledge of trying to name something that's happening…I think the

researcher just ends up naming it or telling the community members what PAR is.

Lester:…I'm never sure if the researcher should be the one to doing the naming, which is perhaps why there are times when I might write something as "we took up participatory methods" and then delete it because I'm really not sure that we did. Perhaps I'm just hoping that we did, therefore, I write it.

Koo: I think so. I think both of us don't want to name it PAR research because PAR needs to begin with the community members. They need to come up with this, but at the same time, the researcher is the one that names the project PAR. How would communities know that the project is PAR?

The above dialogue highlights the tensions around naming research PAR. The very language associated with participatory work is often housed within academic discourses, yet the practice of PAR is fundamentally located within the community. Thus, the tension between the doing and naming is felt and pushes, perhaps rightfully so, the researcher to remain reflexive about the process of naming research participatory. As we unpacked this issue within our interactive interviews, again and again, we spoke of our hesitancy in being the one who definitively determined that our research was participatory. Koo would often asked, "Do our participants feel this way?", while Lester continually mulled over the following:

Obviously, something is required in order for the work that you're doing to be named participatory, but it can't simply come from the moment when a researcher says, "I would like to do a participatory project," because method-wise there is something problematic about that. It is named participatory and who does the naming? What happens to the work, the process itself is at the entry point the researcher presumes that it is participatory without being really reflexive about it and questioning the very naming of something participatory? There is great power in naming it participatory. The power, fundamentally, is to be generated in community – they perhaps are the "namers" of the work.

Ultimately, we have both come to orient to the process of naming our research "participatory" as something to be done with and in the community, not as the sole act of the researcher. The very word "participatory" invites more than the researcher to identify whether there is a joint experience of participation. We have come, therefore, to rest in using caution when naming our work, practice patience when inviting others to share how they experience the research process, and give attention to who participates in framing our research practices. Language matters and always will. Perhaps, then, rather than saying "this is a PAR study or project," it is more accurate, even honoring, to say: "we sought to take up participatory methods." Then, as we move to ask the participants themselves how they would describe and name the work, we can collectively come to understand and name the research. In this way, the very practice of naming is positioned as participatory.

Concluding Thoughts

We suggest that the very meaning and potential impact of PAR is lost when researchers come in with their own agenda; that is, their own belief that indeed their project is already "participatory." Researchers should be cautious in positioning their research as participatory, and seek to consider and problematize whom it is that names the work "participatory." PAR, at its best, is a research approach that is developed fully from and with community members who seek to identify and solve a problem that needs collective support.

Those who are outside members (which researchers often are) should be willing to wait for the invitation to engage in a dialectical dialogue -- one that does not impede or impose viewpoints aimed at swaying towards a particular agenda.

Whether each step of the research process is *participatory* is up for negotiation and certainly requires the researcher and all of those involved to determine their level of participation. We suggest that in order to carefully and collaboratively name a research study participatory, community-oriented solidarity about the purpose and felt experience of being a part of the research needs to be considered. Coming to name one's research PAR requires consensus. We, therefore, call for caution, hesitancy, patience, and attention to language when pursuing and (eventually) naming research participatory. Within a research space in which we *seek out participatory research practices*, we are allowed to more ethically and perhaps even respectfully engage participants in naming and participating in the research process. Participants must have a say in naming the work. Perhaps, the lesson to be learned, then, is that there is value in waiting for the community to shape how we describe and name our work for others, as the very meaning of participatory implies participation within all elements of the research process, including the naming of the research.

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