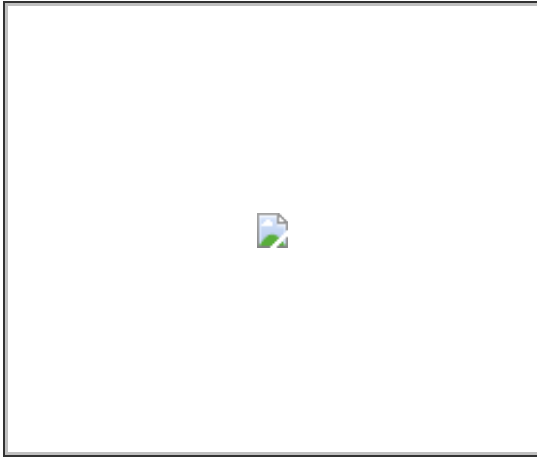


Overview of PAR Tools for Research, Communication, and Empowerment (handout)

Most of the tools used for research and communication in PAR projects are very "hands-on." Tools such as maps, diagrams, and skits are more participatory than many traditional research tools. They support the principles of PAR because they are easily used and empowering. Tools that allow people *themselves* to identify problems, assets, trends, desired changes, etc. allow people to "own" their data and their analysis. Tools are also used to communicate findings to others. Some PAR tools are especially well adapted to people with limited reading and writing skills or without access to computers, paper, etc. The visual and interactive aspects of PAR tools permit research participation by people of all ages; they are inclusive of children in ways that many research tools are not.



Participatory research with tools such as those described below allows stakeholders to become immersed in questioning and learning. A positive aspect is that many PAR tools strike people in our society as unusual, interesting, and somewhat playful. People may be drawn into researching and analyzing their situations more enthusiastically than is common with questionnaires and interviews. A negative aspect is that many people in our society (especially those who are not children) may feel there is something childish in using such hands-on techniques as drawing and skit performance, and they may even feel self-conscious about using such tools. As a facilitator you may need to encourage and reassure people that they can be effective in representing their views in ways to which they may be unaccustomed. They don't have to be "good" at

drawing, photographing, mapping, etc. to effectively convey what they think and know.

Educators inform us that typically, one remembers 20 percent of what one hears; 40 percent of what one hears and sees; and 80 percent when hearing, seeing, and doing are all involved. Since PAR involves learning through research and analysis, it makes sense to guide research and analysis to be as participatory for ALL participants as possible. Visual tools also encourage "right brain thinking" which is associated with creativity and innovative problem solving.

Many of the PAR tools listed below will be introduced more fully and practiced during class time. They are introduced now so that if you think particular tools might work well in the various PAR research situations in which you will participate, you can ask about them and get more information without waiting until they are taught in class. All these tools can be modified and some can be combined. They can also be used in *all* stages of the PAR process: planning, researching, evaluating, and communicating findings.

Historical timelines: Individuals and/or groups can draw timelines, marking significant events with symbols and words that indicate important historical aspects that have impacted the current situation. **Future timelines** are also helpful in envisioning plans.

Daily, monthly, yearly schedules: Individuals and/or groups may find that visually detailing schedules can point out strengths, conflicts, etc. in routines.

Trend analysis: Visually creating a record of significant events, preferences, etc. over time that are important to a research question may serve to make trends more apparent, leading to insights and information for creating change.

Photo-elicitation: participants take still or moving images of situations, events, areas and discuss with one another to discover and analyze. Photo-elicitation can also utilize images previously created from past projects, etc.

"Graffiti Wall": A place to draw pictures, symbols, and to write words and phrases about issues, concerns, things people appreciate. It allows people to express what is "on their minds" with respect to a research question.

Mapping: Maps of all kinds can help individuals and groups visualize interrelationships, important aspects of a situation, the context of various conditions, etc.

Body mapping - for health concerns, for understanding of bodily functions, etc.

Community mapping, transect walks- involves people walking through important local areas such as neighborhoods to make maps and notes (with symbols, words) about features, characteristics, desired changes, etc. As people walk through they observe, ask questions, point and discuss what is being seen such as community service centers, schools, parks, vacant lots, stores, kinds of living structures (apartments, single family residences, etc.). A transect usually cuts through a community and seeks to document and create questions and observations about all major social stratification, ecological, and consumer/production zones. Different community members may notice different things depending on their foci and needs. Interconnections among parts of the community, differences in perceptions of what is important in the community, what should be in the community, etc. can be learned.

Drawings of Ideas, Emotions, Before and After pictures, Self-portraits: All these can be used to "draw out" feelings, reactions, thoughts about a question, possible approaches, solutions, etc.

A Quilt of Personal Resources: Individuals in a group may draw a quilt square that expresses who each is and what she or he is bringing to a group. All the squares can be "stitched together" with tape or glue to show the group's collective identity.

Fish and Boulders: A visual device to identify assets (cut out or drawn forms of fish) and obstacles (cut out or drawn boulders) to attaining desired goals.

Growing Trees: A visual device of drawing the roots, trunk, branches,

leaves of a tree to identify different parts of a process such as creating a project. The roots may represent strengths that individuals can draw upon from their backgrounds; the trunk of the tree may be their common goal or identified challenge; the branches may be the methods they hope to pursue in creating change; the leaves may be what they imagine for the future or hope for.

Matrices: Grid patterns created by participants to facilitate enumerating trends, desired changes, etc.

Priorities can be listed and "voted" upon.

Uses of various resources can be identified and quantified as important, desirable, necessary, etc.

Desired changes can be listed and prioritized by people "casting votes."

Many other uses

Community Mapping Exercise



Fish and Boulders Exercise



Flow Charts: These are a visual means of showing how various actions, conditions, etc. impact one another and are interrelated.

Venn Diagrams: Visual identification of the relative importance of different aspects of a situation, parts of an organization, etc. can be expressed through overlapping circles of various sizes.

Skits, Storytelling, and other Performances:

Performative modes of expression can visually, verbally, and sometimes tactilely communicate what people want to draw attention to, change, and celebrate.

Appreciative Inquiry: As an approach this tool (visual and/or verbal) is a way of eliciting assets and building on "what works" rather than focusing on what isn't working.

Testimonies: Collected and recorded visually (video) or on paper, testimonies are personal statements about why things are as they are and can be used to identify themes, positive influences, difficulties, etc. that bear on a research question.

Auto Diagnostic: Four sessions with trained community members facilitating individual sessions: 1) Introductory meeting- creating group identity 2) Cognitive mapping 3) Presentations and Analysis of Group's Reality and Resources 4) Closure- What's Next, Decision Making or Possibilities

Focus groups: Group discussion and analysis of situations, questions, visions facilitated by co-researcher is often very productive in identifying and working on topics of concern to participants.

Energizers and Share the Talk Tools: These strategies serve to support participants and facilitate good listening skills in a democratic process.

Growing Trees Exercise



Temperature Gauge Exercise



Temperature Gauge: Lines drawn in reference to high and low points over time (the past week, the past year, etc.) and then explained to others can be used to measure satisfaction in group process, for gauging attitudes about changes in a community, etc.

Don't be afraid to make up new tools with others!

In some ways not as participatory, the following research approaches can, nevertheless, be used in PAR:

Semi-structured and Informal Interviews: Individual input about situations, conditions, desired changes elicited by participants and/or facilitator is a well understood and often very effective method of research.

Surveys, Questionnaires: If these tools are created by co-researchers to elicit information they will be more effective than if created by an outsider and administered "top down." Findings may also be communicated through imaginative and relevant symbols.

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