About the Public Science Project

Participatory Action Research As Public Science — We believe social science can play an important role in the struggle for social justice. Participatory Action Research (PAR) provides a critical framework for making science – systematic inquiry and analysis – a public enterprise. Allied with feminist, critical race, and indigenous theory, PAR is an approach to research that values the significant knowledge people hold about their lives and experiences. PAR positions those most intimately impacted by research as leaders in shaping research questions, framing interpretations, and designing meaningful research products and actions. With these commitments, The Public Science Project collaborates with academics, community organizations, schools, prisons, and public institutions to design, conduct, and support research and practice aimed at interrupting injustice.

Past projects include:

• studying privilege and constructions of “merit” in racially integrated suburban schools;
• investigating the subjectivities and hetero-normative violence of white elite masculinities within exclusive private all-boys schools (see Brett Stoudt);
• documenting the material and psychological consequences of opportunity gaps in wealthy desegregated schools (Echoes of Brown: Youths Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education);
• developing school-based internships in which students in small progressive public schools investigate finance inequity and college access (see Janice Bloom and Lori Chajet);
• collaborating with mothers and youth in varied communities of the Bronx organizing for educational justice (see Family-to-Family: The Guide to the Schools of Hope http://www.lehman.edu/deanedu/thebronx institute/Media_ And_Publications/ENLACE_Family-to-Family_Guide.pdf)
• mobilizing with youth pushed out of their high schools, researching the politics of the GED, the subjectivities of educational desire and meritocracy (see Eve Tuck, this website)
• facilitating research as queer youth document the sexuality climates and hetero-normativity in schools and beyond (see Darla Linville, this website)
• researching, in a longitudinal design, with urban youth, educators and parents in the midst of school restructuring (see Anne Galletta and Jennifer Ayala, this website)
• developing, with urban youth who are the beneficiaries of the Abbott v. Burke finance equity lawsuit, research projects to document the persistent inequities in their schools and communities and the power and possibilities of state-funded secondary reform (see Jennifer Ayala, Tia Burns, Stan Karp, Yasser Payne)

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Public Science Project (PSP)

Stakeholder(s):

María Elena Torre:  
*Director and Co-Founder*

Michelle Fine:  
*Co-Founder*

Brett Stoudt:  
*Associate Director*

Madeline Fox:  
*Associate Director of Institutes*

Public Science Project Researchers:  
*Researchers active in current Public Science Projects include:*

Paul Bartley
Kimberly Belmonte
Evan Bissell
Fawn Bracy
Emerson Brisbon
Pricilla Bustamante
Allison Cabana
Caitlin Cahill
Loren Cahill
Jennifer Chmielewski
Hillary Caldwell
Slema Djokovic
Anthony Downs
Michelle Fine
Madeline Fox
David Frost
Andrew Cory Greene
Prakriti Hassan
Gaurav Jashnani
Jose Lopez

Einat Manoff
Amanda Matles
Cristina Onea
Adilka Pimentel
Melissa Rivera
Sonia Sánchez
Talia Sandwick
Nadine Sheppard
Brett Stoudt
María Elena Torre
Darian X
Jacqueline Yates
Diane Yoong
Sarah Zeller-Berkman
Rachel Leibert:  
*Public Science Project Post-Doctoral Fellow*

Public Science Project Collaborators:  
*Recent community collaborators include:*

BreakOUT
Center for Constitutional Rights
Communities United for Police Reform
Gender Justice LA
Girls for Gender Equity
H.O.L.L.A
Make the Road New York
New York Civil Liberties Union
Red Hook Initiative
Streetwise and Safe

— continued next page
Stakeholders (continued)

Tucson Youth Poetry Slam
The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY):
A Brief History of the Public Science Project — The Public Science Project has grown out of more than a decade’s worth of participatory action research (PAR) at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY).

The PAR Collective:
First organized The PAR Collective, we began our work as a coalition of activists, researchers, youth, elders, lawyers, prisoners, and educators, launching projects on educational injustice, lives under surveillance, and the collateral damage of mass incarceration.

Schools:
Most of our projects have been situated in schools and/or community-based organizations struggling for quality education, economic opportunities, and human rights.

Community-Based Organizations

Knowledge-Sharing Research Camps:
Knowledge-sharing research camps set the stage for most of our research, designed to bring together differently positioned people around a common table to design and implement the research:

Youth

Educators

Young People:
who have been pushed out of schools

Mothers:
organizing for quality education in communities under siege

Prisoners

Organizers

Academics

Advisory Boards:
Most projects have vibrant advisory boards of youth, community elders, educators and/or activists to shape the work and hold us accountable to the needs and desires of local communities.

Research Collectives:
Research collectives of young people studying the long arms of Foucault’s Panopticon – the experience of surveillance, stereotyping, commodification and resistance on the streets... We have also designed and supported research collectives of young people studying the long arms of Foucault’s Panopticon – the experience of surveillance, stereotyping, commodification and resistance on the streets for youth, men who lead a street life, young women living on the Lower East Side of New York City and, most recently, for Muslim-American women living in post-9/11 and post-Patriot Act New York City... Some of these projects have been designed for geographic and local depth, while others trace the sprawl of domination and resistance across geography and scale (Cahill, 2004; Fine, Tuck & Zeller Berkman, 2006; Katz, 2004). All of these projects dig deep at the fractures of social ideology and oppression, and the reservoirs of human resilience and collective resistance.

Street Life Project:
The Street Life Project, a systematic historic, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the “streets” as a site of resiliency for young men of African descent (see Yasser Payne, this website)

Fed Up Honeys:
The Fed Up Honeys, with young women from the Lower East Side of New York ‘fed up’ with the stereotypes that spew across their neighborhoods (see Caitlin Cahill, this site);

Corporate Disease Promotion Project:
The Corporate Disease Promotion project, in which youth from elite and neglected communities document the promotion of disease by corporations selling alcohol, tobacco and low-nutrition foods (see Jessica Ruglis and Nick Freudenberg, this site)

Policing Survey:
“Anything can happen with the police around” is a quantitative survey, produced, disseminated and interpreted by youth researchers, completed by over 900 young people on the streets of New York City, documenting their experience of police surveillance, including sexual harassment by police (see Fine, Freudenberg, Payne, Smith and Waltzer)

Hyphen Project:
The “Weight of the Hyphen” is a study of Muslim-American young women living in post-9/11 and post-“homeland security” New York City and negotiating surveillance by the State, media, community, family and self (see Mayida Zaal, Tahani Salah and Michelle Fine).

Incarceration Project:
Projects to document, assess and resist the collateral damage provoked by mass incarceration of people of color and we have designed a series of projects to document, assess and resist the collateral damage provoked by mass incarceration of people of color: in a women’s prison in New York State, documenting the impact of college on women in prison, the prison environment and on the women’s post-release outcomes; (see Fine, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, Missy, Rivera, Roberts, Smart, Torre and Upegui, 2001; www.changingminds.ws) with the children of women in prison (see Kathy Boudin; see Sarah Zeller-Berkman, this website) with women and men who have served long sentences in prison for violent crimes (see Carla Marquez and the ALUMNI group, this website)

Youth:
Participatory action research with, by and for youth — Youth PAR projects typically center around issues of intimate, structural violence: educational justice, access to quality healthcare, the criminalization of youth, gang violence, police brutality, race/gender/sexuality oppression, gentrification and environmental issues. The goals extend from the exposition of local inequities with contextual specificity, to broader coalition-building with similarly situated youth nationally and...
globally. A methodological stance rooted in the belief that valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action, PAR recognizes that those “studied” harbor critical social knowledge and must be repositioned as subjects and architects of research (Fals-Borda, 1979; Fine & Torre, 2004; Martin-Baro, 1994; Torre, 2005). Based largely on the theory and practice of Latin American activist scholars, PAR scholars draw from neo-Marxist, feminist, queer and critical race theorists (Anzaldúa, 1987; Apple, 2001; Crenshaw, 1995; Weis & Fine, 2004; Lykes, 2001; Matsuda, 1995; Williams, 1998) to articulate methods and ethics that have local integrity and stretch topographically to sight/cite global patterns of domination and resistance (Katz, 2004). Enabling youth to interrogate and de-naturalize the conditions of their everyday oppression inspires a process of community and knowledge building. As Paulo Freire (1982) eloquently argued, “the silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the events in their world. In this context research becomes a means of moving them beyond silence into a quest to proclaim the world.” Repositioning youth as researchers rather than the “researched” shifts the practice of researching “on youth” to “with youth”—a position that stands in sharp contrast to the current neo-liberal constructions of youth as dangerous, disengaged, blind consumers who lack any type of connection. Frustrated, alienated and angry survivors of discrimination mature into active policy critics and agents engaged in conversation, confrontation and reform. Legitimating democratic inquiry within institutions as well as outside, PAR excavates knowledge “at the bottom” and “at the margins” (Matsuda, 1995), and signifies youths’ fundamental right to ask, investigate and contest policies that enforce injustice (see ). With this website we offer up the intimate details of the Participation, the Action and the Research, undertaken in difficult social institutions.

Vision
The needs and desires of local communities are addressed

Mission
To hold us accountable

Values
Principles: The following principles and commitments guide our collaborations, in the hope of maximizing participation within our PAR projects. Across our work we agree:

Knowledges: To value knowledges that have been historically marginalized and delegitimized (i.e., youth, prisoner, immigrant) alongside traditionally recognized knowledges (i.e., scholarly).

Sharing: To share the various knowledges and resources held by individual members of the research collective, across the collective, so members can participate as equally as possible.

Participation
Equality
**Collaboration:** To collaboratively decide appropriate research questions, design, methods and analysis as well as useful research products.

**Multiplicity:** To create a research space where individuals and the collective can express their multiplicity and use this multiplicity to inform research questions, design and analyses.

**Risk-Taking:** To encourage creative risk-taking in the interest of generating new knowledge (i.e., understanding individuals and the collective to be “under construction” with ideas and opinions that are in formation, expected to grow, etc.).

**Creativity**

**Power:** To attend theoretically and practically to issues of power and vulnerability within the collective and created by the research. To strategically work the power within the group when necessary to benefit both individual and collective needs/agendas

**Vulnerability**

**Disagreements:** To excavate and explore disagreements rather than smooth them over in the interest of consensus (as they often provide insight into larger social/political dynamics that are informing the data).

**Dynamics**

**Insight**

**Interconnection:** To use a variety of methods to enable interconnected analyses at the individual, social, cultural, and institutional levels.

**Action:** To conceive of action on multiple levels over the course of the PAR project.

**Consequences:** To think through consequences of research and actions.

**Negotiation:** To an ongoing negotiation of conditions of collaboration;

**Relationships:** building research relationships over-time.

**Research:** The Practice of Research -- In each setting, a series of “methods camps”/seminars are launched so that we can learn, together, the local history of struggle and develop a shared critical language of social theory, feminist theory, critical race theory and methodology. Depending on age, immediate struggles, and the nature of the research, we immerse ourselves in the writings and teachings of social psychology, critical race theory, queer scholarship, critical theory, feminist thought and indigenous knowledges, e.g. of Patricia Hill Collins, Fannie Lou Hamer, Paolo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, Sandra Harding, Stuart Hall, Ignacio Martin-Baro, Nancy Hartsock, Morton Deutsch, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and others, and we listen to hip hop, review magazine and policy representations of youth, study civil rights histories and local campaigns. Together, we craft the research questions, challenge each other to assure that varied standpoints are represented in the original framing of the question, work through the specifics of design, data collection, analysis and products ‘of use.’ With varied methods, including both qualitative and quantitative tools of inquiry, an array of differences at the table, a loose-always-fragile democratic spirit holding us, and an eye on action, we raise up significant challenges to existing structural hierarchies that have been naturalized as if inevitable, and we imagine how to interrupt and re-create conditions toward justice (we draw from and are allied with “sister projects” e.g. Anand, Fine, Surrey and Perkins, 2001; Brydon-Miller, 2001; Cahill, 2004; Cammarota & Ginwright, 2002; Chawla, Chanchet-Cohen, Cosceo, Driskell, Kruger, Malone, Moore and Percy-Smith, 2005; Fals-Borda, 1984; Fine, Bloom, Burns, Chajet, Guishard, Payne and Torre, 2005; Freire, 1982; Ghuathakurta, 2006; Hart, 1997; NLERAP, see also Pedro Pedraza at El Centro, 2002; Ormond, 2004; Rahman, 1985; Smith, 2005). Our methods include: Participatory surveys, participant observation, intercept interviews, photo-voice, focus groups, identity maps, individual interviews, list stories, shelter surveys, archival and historic reviews, policy analyses, slam books, problem identification webs, “cold calls” to institutions, web-based research, and more. A sampling of our IRB forms is available on this website (which represent only a small sliver of how we conceptualize and practice ethical deliberations).
1. Research

Conduct and support participatory action research.

The Public Science Project conducts and supports participatory action research with a commitment to the significant knowledge people hold about their lives and experiences and a belief that those most intimately impacted by research should take the lead in shaping research questions, framing interpretations, and designing meaningful products and actions. We collaborate with community organizations, schools, prisons, and public institutions to design research and practice aimed at interrupting justice.

1.1. Questions

Shape research questions.

1.2. Interpretations

Frame interpretations.

1.3. Products & Actions

Design meaningful products and actions.

1.4. Justice

Interrupt justice.

We collaborate with community organizations, schools, prisons, and public institutions to design research and practice aimed at interrupting justice.

Stakeholder(s):
Community Organizations
Schools
Prisons
Public Institutions
2. Workshops & Trainings

*Engage radical participatory pedagogy to redistribute knowledge across communities.*

The Public Science Project engages a radical participatory pedagogy to redistribute knowledge across communities. We hold workshops, trainings, institutes, and salons on theories, methods, and ethics of PAR.
3. PAR

Provide training on the history, theory, and ethics of the Participatory Action Research approach.

**Stakeholder(s)**
- PAR Institute
- Community Members
- Graduate Students
- Academics

The Critical PAR Institute — An annual 5-day intensive PAR training covering the history, theory, and ethics of the approach, as well as in-depth discussions of participatory methods, conditions for meaningful community collaborations, and examples of effective research designs. The Institute is open to community members, graduate students, and academics. Participants receive a certificate upon completion.
4. Workshops

Conduct workshops.

Methods for the People — A workshop series open to community members, graduate students, and academics. Featuring modules on: statistics, qualitative data, mapping, photovoice, participatory digital media, collaborative analysis, embodied analyses, participatory ethics.

4.1. Statistics

Conduct workshops on statistics.

4.2. Qualitative Data

Conduct workshops on qualitative data.

4.3. Mapping

Conduct workshops on mapping.

4.4. Photovoice

Conduct workshops on photovoice.

4.5. Digital Media

Conduct workshops on participatory digital media.

4.6. Collaborative Analysis

Conduct workshops on collaborative analysis.

4.7. Embodied Analyses

Conduct workshops on embodied analyses.

4.8. Ethics

Conduct workshops on participatory ethics.
5. Specialized Trainings

*Provide custom designed trainings in PAR methodologies and approaches.*

Specialized PAR Trainings — Custom designed trainings in PAR methodologies and approaches created in collaboration with foundations, community, school and/or university groups. Specialized trainings are available upon request.
6. Salons & Roundtables

Engage informal dialogues across fields, institutions, and disciplines.

Informal dialogues across fields, institutions, and disciplines designed to build solidarity, knowledge, research, and policy.
7. Consulting

Offer consulting services.

The Public Science Project offers individual and ongoing consulting services on research, evaluation, participatory practice, and policy design.