

Critical Participatory Action Research in Higher Education

For Us By Us

Edited by Orkideh Mohajeri,
Roshanda L. Breeden and
Mia Ocean

First published 2026

ISBN: 978-1-032-74503-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-74339-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-46952-0 (ebk)

Chapter 2

Anti-Oppressive Critical Participatory Action Research and Ethics in US Postsecondary Education

*Mia Ocean, Orkideh Mohajeri, and
Roshanda Breeden*

(CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0

DOI: 10.4324/9781003469520-3

The Open Access version of Chapter 2 was funded by Mia Ocean.

CHAPTER 2

Anti-Oppressive Critical Participatory Action Research and Ethics in US Postsecondary Education

***Mia Ocean, Orkideh Mohajeri,
and Roshaunda Breedon***

Anti-oppressive Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) is a strengths-based, growth oriented, and capabilities-focused epistemology. Anti-oppressive CPAR coalitions prioritize power-sharing, relationships, and populations that society attempts to marginalize (Potts & Brown, 2005; Ray & Gilbert, 2021; Salazar et al., 2023). Being an anti-oppressive researcher signals a professional and personal commitment to participants and communities and an undertaking to challenge traditional research processes and outcomes that reproduce societal inequities (Potts & Brown, 2005).

Knowledge and its generation are political. Historically, knowledge has been produced by those with wealth and power for those with wealth and power (Wilder, 2013). Knowledge is socially constructed and can thus be oppressive, but anti-oppressive research can be used as a form of resistance (Potts & Brown, 2005). In anti-oppressive CPAR, research is not the only objective. It's part of a much larger story – a story of community that began before any individual study and one that extends beyond the conclusion of a singular project. Perhaps most importantly, anti-oppressive CPAR acknowledges it is necessary to violate normed research practices to generate new knowledge as a power-sharing collective (Brown & Strega, 2005). Anti-oppressive CPAR is an opportunity to engage in lifelong learning and equity-focused change. This includes conducting the research in a meaningful and intentional manner and incorporating flexibility and responsiveness as the applied research unfolds.

Anti-oppressive CPAR is a vehicle to share the research, responsibility, and control. No one person must be perfect or be an expert in all aspects of the study. Research coalitions following anti-oppressive CPAR create space for everyone to learn, teach, grow, and contribute to generalizable knowledge and equitable changes. This collaborative research mirrors democratic processes simultaneously respecting the individual and collective and incorporating multiple perspectives to build cooperative partnerships that produce more robust research findings (Berta-Ávila et al., 2021; Call-Cummings et al., 2024; Cammarota et al., 2021; Lenette, 2022). However, as discussed in subsequent chapters, researchers often contend with tensions between this ideal and the reality (e.g., time constraints, pressure to produce) in US higher education scholarship.

Within this chapter, we focus on orienting the reader to anti-oppressive CPAR, including the required mindset, terminology, and ethical considerations. Then, we explore the capabilities of anti-oppressive CPAR to help the reader concretely understand how to move it from an abstract epistemology into actionable work. We do not provide an exhaustive checklist. We simply share a few ideas that are important in this moment, and we simultaneously recognize that what is salient is constantly shifting within our socio-familial-political contexts. Further, we acknowledge that there is no one way to do anti-oppressive CPAR. We conclude this chapter with an acknowledgement of current structural limitations that can hinder this work. We document our ideas here for your consideration and with the hopes that equitable progress will quickly render these relics as you develop new ways to enact equity in research and successfully challenge the status quo.

REFRAMING OUR MINDSET

To begin anti-oppressive CPAR, a mindset shift is required. In the US, the overarching power frame is one of deficit that pits groups of people against each other to compete for dominance. The idea that we have a finite supply of rights to distribute to people is the prevailing narrative, but that is not the reality. We need to expand our view from a limited *either/or* perspective to one of abundant *both/and* thinking. We need to build research centering justice and opportunities for stakeholders across time. As anti-oppressive CPAR scholars develop research projects, they consider how scientific inquiries can be conducted in a respectful and accountable way that honors community ancestors, current community members, and the next seven generations (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). Therefore, we begin anti-oppressive CPAR from a place of responsibility that is not limited to the present moment. We understand everyone involved in anti-oppressive CPAR can work collaboratively to benefit

from the experience and outputs and that the cycle of scholarship and equity-enacted change is continuously evolving.

Anti-oppressive CPAR is bigger than one study and our actions need to reflect this committed longevity. This lifelong work for, with, and by our communities is part of an ever-ongoing cycle of growth and evaluation. One way to keep this work sustainable is by infusing joy into it. Conducting research on serious topics does not mean there will not be moments of laughter and joy. We can use humor to objectify the ridiculousness of normalized oppression and to take momentary pauses to enhance our well-being and reinforce our solidarity. We can celebrate the many small and large successes, the individual growth, and team accomplishments, as we work in partnership to conduct this vital participant-centered research. We can use any tools available and the ones that we invent to build community, conduct participatory research, and enact equitable change.

PEOPLE IN ANTI-OPPRESSIVE CPAR

Language related to people in anti-oppressive CPAR is limited because it is grounded in the assumptions of positivist research. As noted in the previous chapter, you will have an opportunity to review a variety of language throughout this text. To help orient you, here is a breakdown of some of the people involved in CPAR with related terminology.

Researcher: Most commonly faculty who hold PhDs and are based at Western universities (also referred to as principal investigator, university-based researcher, university-affiliated researcher).

Collaborator: Most commonly people who do not hold a PhD, fit the participant criteria, and will help conduct the research or serve on an advisory board (also referred to as consultant, co-researcher, collaborator, participant, participant researcher, community-based researcher).

Research Coalition: The team of researchers and collaborators working together to conduct anti-oppressive CPAR (also referred to as research alliance, team, or collective).

We seek to problematize the embedded beliefs in CPAR language and to expand how we conceptualize, describe, and conduct research following this anti-oppressive epistemological stance. We must continuously rethink how we arrive at this work and untangle our anti-oppressive processes from scientist-initiated, dehumanizing atrocities.

We must first acknowledge that university-based researchers could not magically conduct CPAR without participants, serving as

consultants or otherwise. While it can be argued that referring to collaborators as participants is demeaning and reinforces the hierarchy of researchers at the top and subjects at the bottom, it could also be argued that using the term “participants” related to collaborative research is a way of elevating participants’ status and acknowledging their pivotal role in the success of research. Truly, participant consultants have been studying the research phenomenon long before the study began, and they bring their specialized knowledge to the project like any research consultant does.

In fact, everyone on a CPAR project could be thought of as a consultant, all interconnected contributors to the study. There could be participant consultants, research consultants, and those whose identities, experiences, and knowledge overlap, participant and research consultants. This may present differently in each study, but it is important to acknowledge the salient value everyone brings to these partnerships. Moreover, by the end of a study, someone may have expanded from community member to include researcher or from researcher to include community member, and we need to acknowledge this fluidity. Our limited language does not adequately reflect our complex identities and experiences.

Whatever wording we use to describe research coalition members, ultimately CPAR can be an antidote for imposter syndrome. No singular expert has to carry the responsibility of the project alone. No one has to be an infallible superhero. We can share our struggles in communal space and be human beings on the earth rather than on pedestals (Phelps-Ward, 2020). Through anti-oppressive CPAR, we cultivate a community of learners. Everyone has an area of specialty, and the collective input, feedback, and approval of the alliance is needed to conduct comprehensive and rigorous research.

ACTION RESEARCH ORIENTATIONS: OPPRESSIVE TO ANTI-OPPRESSIVE

Given the diversity of those who conduct action research, it is important to think about researcher orientations, research alliance configurations, and power. Here, we detail five approaches which could be viewed on a continuum from oppressive to anti-oppressive. These are not discrete destinations, and they don’t occur in some mystical, faraway place. Within a single study, researchers may oscillate between more than one orientation. For instance, a researcher may begin with an anti-oppressive stance but succumb to the pressure to produce or the lure of power and later in a study, shift into a more hierarchical workstyle. We use extreme examples to make the orientations clear, but as in applied research, reality is complex and ever evolving.

The Western Expert Orientation

In this approach, the university-trained, Western-educated scholar temporarily spends a short amount of time in an undervalued community, often in a Global South context but sometimes in a marginalized community in the West. The researcher recruits participants in order to gather data, produce scholarship, and move their career forward, often inflicting harm on the community in the process. The expert orientation assumes a competitive mindset (i.e., winner takes all) and fortifies the *us versus them* positioning. In this approach, the researcher (conscious or not) takes up an opportunistic orientation, disregarding the community's well-being. The researcher's actions communicate, "I have greater intelligence than you. I am using you to elevate my own status".

The Savior Orientation

While certainly not limited to white researchers, the savior orientation is reflective of the conceptualization of white saviorism. Researchers engaging in this approach believe they are aiding the less fortunate or those who have not "seen the light" yet. In this approach, the researcher enters a community with what they deem to be correct answers and attempts to persuade, bully, and convert community members into adopting the researcher's understanding of solutions. Researchers engaging in the savior orientation develop a form of cognitive dissonance to the harm they are inflicting on others. By avoiding the time-intensive relationship building and unlearning of biases, the researcher remains in a self-appointed position of power *over* communities being researched.

The One-Off Orientation

The one-off orientation most frequently occurs when applied researchers feel forced to align with a recognized methodology or when a study is inaccurately labeled as CPAR. These watered-down versions of action research are frequently situated in the US and European K-12 public education systems and include a one-time rather than cyclical evaluation process with limited or no participant contributions. A one-off study may include research in one classroom that results in a one-time curriculum update or could include interviews and observations over a two-week period leading to practical recommendations that may or may not be implemented. These singular studies have value, and they should be labeled simply as applied research.

The Nothing Without Us! Approach

Ideally, the academy would be representative of its surrounding communities and society. However, this is not the current reality. Consequently,

the more commonly employed anti-oppressive CPAR is composed of a mixed membership research coalition of those who meet the participant criteria and those who would be considered active advocates. The updated slogan “Nothing without Us!” developed by disability leaders and activists at the 2022 Global Disability Summit aptly encapsulates this approach (National Democratic Institute, 2022). The Nothing without Us! approach encourages community integration in the research process (e.g., Salazar, Chapter 5 and Stewart, Chapter 6). However, this orientation requires more caution since outsider researchers who primarily benefit from the research and are not impacted by the results personally will have power on the project (Berta-Ávila et al., 2021). Ideally, relationships and trust have been built before the study begins allowing participants’ ideas to be easily incorporated from the outset and not rushing teams to form superficial bonds (Call-Cummings et al., 2024; Ray & Gilbert, 2021). Nothing without Us! anti-oppressive CPAR coalitions work towards horizontality, but if there is to be a hierarchy, it should prioritize the needs and well-being of participants and communities over postsecondary institutions and the researchers based at these institutions (Lenette, 2022).

The FUBU Approach

The Black American hip hop apparel company FUBU™ (For Us By Us) and the slogan they have propagated is a fitting descriptor of anti-oppressive CPAR that is conducted entirely by researchers and collaborators from the community of study. FUBU research coalitions upend the researcher-participant dichotomy, exposing it as false, and require community ownership of the research process, from generation, data collection and analysis, to action and evaluation. Researchers following the FUBU approach reject *power over* dynamics. Because ownership is by the community, for the community, *outside experts* are not present. The FUBU approach creates an opportunity to shift the protagonists in CPAR research while ultimately the research process and findings benefit society at large.

FUBU research coalitions center the voices, wisdom, and inquiry of minoritized and marginalized communities in a process of action-reflection. In an FUBU approach, communities are not waiting for saviors; they can identify the strengths and assets of their own rich worldviews, cultures, and histories. FUBU research coalitions further call on ancestral knowledge and cultural insights to work towards liberation and thriving. Simultaneously, the FUBU model is a tool that allows the community to hold up a mirror to itself and to majoritized actors, institutions, and systems reflecting critical insights and essential truths. In this effort, the work by FUBU research coalitions offers a critical reflection

to larger society, highlighting imbedded inaccuracies, normalized inequities, and abuses of power which some claim to be unaware of.

The FUBU approach asserts an acknowledgement that we are connected as people across human-created divides (i.e., nation-state borders, demographics) and with nature. Researchers following the FUBU orientation take a posture of respect for the sacred nature of coming together, solving problems together, and advancing together, knowing that we are a part of a larger whole. In the FUBU orientation, a study is a community project leading to communal thriving, for the benefit of humanity. We believe that the chapters in this volume (see Bazemore-James & Waterman, Chapter 3; Breeden et al., Chapter 4; Willis, Chapter 12, among others) illustrate initial steps towards FUBU CPAR.

WHOSE ETHICS?

Ethics are a salient aspect of anti-oppressive CPAR, but research ethics board approval does not signify that one is conducting ethical CPAR (Call-Cummings et al., 2024; Lenette, 2022; Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). Research oversight boards have the potential to protect research participants, but they can also commit harm and reinforce researchers' and universities' decision-making domination without allowing for community input (Call-Cummings et al., 2024; Lenette, 2022; Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). Research ethics boards were created by researchers and their conceptualization of harm is based on what researchers recognize as damaging; there is no federal (or other) regulation to understand harm as defined by participants (Limes-Taylor Henderson & Esposito, 2019). Moreover, the requirement to minimize harm is not sufficient. As anti-oppressive CPAR researchers, we must aspire to more than this bare minimum and do good (Call-Cummings et al., 2024).

Research ethics boards also do not assess the long-term consequences of research, and they are typically based in historically and predominantly white universities that operate on stolen land (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019). Despite study end dates as outlined in research protocols submitted to research oversight boards, anti-oppressive researchers' responsibility and accountability to the community do not cease at the conclusion of a study. It is imperative that we move away from the university as the central and definitive decision-maker on research ethics (Whetung & Wakefield, 2019).

Anti-oppressive CPAR is one way to conduct research with care, kindness, and nurturance. Researchers following anti-oppressive CPAR can incorporate a trauma-informed practice that goes beyond the avoidance of re-traumatization to healing. CPAR ethics include democratic knowledge generation, power-sharing, and challenging oppressive structures (Call-Cummings et al., 2024). Moreover, CPAR ethics require

prioritizing communities, their perspectives, experiences, and well-being above all else (Lenette, 2022). We can think about this another way. If we were working on an assembly line and someone was hurt, we would halt production until the harmed individual received help and we could ensure no further harm would come to additional team members. The same principle applies to anti-oppressive CPAR and requires more than an institutional liability focus.

Anti-oppressive CPAR does not exist without a focus on equity and enacting change. Researchers who follow a traditional science epistemology are situated as expert and primarily focused on knowledge generation to advance the discipline or sciences; whereas anti-oppressive CPAR is locally situated and the research coalition is focused on holistic knowledge generation of participants' full experiences to challenge injustice (Berta-Ávila et al., 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Again, this goes beyond research ethics boards' requirements.

Anti-oppressive CPAR keeps the ownership of knowledge, data, and findings with the community as a part of ethical practice (Lenette, 2022; Potts & Brown, 2005). We recommend as a baseline that communities are given the option to have access to the data at all times and to reserve the right to approve or disallow its use in any form at any time. Ultimately, it is up to collaborators to determine how they would like to approach this matter.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Growth and development are intrinsic to the human condition, both on an individual and communal level. CPAR is another opportunity for systematic, collaborative growth, and development. But such progression can be better directed and more fruitful when the tools of systematic inquiry and reflection are utilized. Thus, research coalitions who engage in anti-oppressive CPAR can focus on advancing the capabilities associated with such endeavors. Within this section, we will focus on four primary capabilities – building relationships, taking risks, sharing resources, and enacting equity-focused change. These are capabilities that can be developed by individuals, by the community, and even by postsecondary institutions themselves. These capabilities are essential to using CPAR for the betterment of society.

The Capacity to Build Relationships

Healthy relationships are essential to human thriving. Healthy relationships are a foundation for a thriving community. Relationships in research are no exception. They should include qualities of autonomy, empathy, communication, trust, power-sharing, and growth.

Relationship building is a capacity that can be advanced and grown over time, among a research coalition.

Empathy is a salient aspect to anti-oppressive CPAR because it is imperative to consider multiple perspectives and experiences. Dialogue is also an important component of collaboration, and decision-making is an opportunity to build community and engage research coalition members. Participant researchers should have the power to determine which aspects of the research they want to engage in (Lenette, 2022). Research coalitions can check in throughout the research process to learn everyone's perspective, and the team can adjust as needed to enhance the sense of belongingness and input. Additionally, research coalitions need to be responsive to what is occurring in the political sphere and everyone's lives, pausing the research to process and support each other as needed (Phelps-Ward, 2020; Salazar, 2022).

Relationship building within anti-oppressive CPAR is not limited to the research coalition. Relationship building needs to be a salient practice throughout all aspects of the research. This can include validating participants' experiences during interviews, being transparent with study participants (e.g., share the interview guide before they consent to the interview), and building community as part of the research (e.g., provide brief case management to connect participants with resources, share a 1–2 page overview of findings with research participants). Consent, again as in non-research relationships, is an ongoing process whether on the research coalition or during a research interview. We need to create on and off ramps for participants and collaborators to change their minds, to pause, or terminate their involvement (see Salazar, Chapter 5). This respects the continuing consent process and holds researchers accountable to the communities they purport to serve.

The Capacity to Take Measured Risks

Growth involves risk. Growth requires a measured decision to step outside of the comfort zone and experiment with new behaviors, mindsets, social justice, etc. – whether as an individual or as a community. But risk taking requires measured contemplation of consequences before action is taken, and not everyone can take the same risks at the same time.

To conduct emancipatory research in a space mired with traditional hierarchies requires a willingness to take risks as well as an awareness of who/what needs to be protected and safeguarded. It is important to acknowledge the risks everyone takes. Too often, it is framed that university researchers are taking a risk on the community, but this view removes the history and socio-political context of risk. It is pivotal for the research coalition to leverage everyone's strengths, privileges, and

resources to engage strategically in risks that may lead to higher levels of equity and challenge the status quo. Building relationships and trust over years can minimize risk across research coalitions and lead to greater gains as a united coalition (Ray & Gilbert, 2021). However, if university-affiliated researchers do not honor their commitment to collaborators and the community, this may require the research coalition to sabotage the project to stop the harm the researchers are causing (Mawhinney, 2016). One of the goals of anti-oppressive CPAR is for participants to have an active seat at the table. If they do not, the study or leadership needs to be modified before continuing the research. Insider researchers also take risks that can lead to disturbances in their communities as commonly held beliefs may be challenged and new truths and trauma may emerge (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). Together as a united CPAR coalition, the team can discuss everyone's risk tolerance, support each other, and determine necessary pivots, and the best path forward for the research.

The Capacity to Share Resources

Sometimes sharing resources is thought of as a transaction or exchange, but this is an oversimplification of complex and relational collaborations and is grounded in a skewed commitment to materialist assumptions. Many non-Western, non-white communities do not subscribe to such worldviews. Ubuntu is just one example of a worldview that argues for a recognition of the essential oneness of humanity. It is important to consider the present, past, and future as well as to stay in the mindset of abundance as we explore sharing power, financial compensation, and credit in anti-oppressive CPAR. Below, we focus on three resources that CPAR projects must thoughtfully share.

Power

Everyone comes to the research with different forms of power. Research coalitions need to speak directly about power rather than making assumptions or they risk reproducing normalized societal power inequities in the research, which can harm collaborators (Berta-Ávila et al., 2021; Fine & Torre, 2021; Lenette, 2022). When we challenge deeply entrenched traditions and larger social oppressions, pushback will occur. We need to normalize the messiness of change and intentionally create space for good troublemakers (Fine & Torre, 2021; Lenette, 2022). The anti-oppressive CPAR coalition is an opportunity to interrupt accepted power inequities and to distribute power across diverse stakeholders. All aspects of research and production should factor in equity and history to maximize power-sharing capabilities.

Depending on the study, different power configurations may make more or less sense. Some options that complement anti-oppressive CPAR and acknowledge the existing structural limitations (i.e., a PhD holding university-based faculty member is often required to be the principal investigator on a research grant) include distributive leadership (Ancona et al., 2015) or collective leadership (Raelin, 2018). Even with a power model and all of the right preliminary conversations, it is possible that as a study progresses, the research coalition may realize power needs to be renegotiated. During these times, it is pivotal to reinforce that people and relationships are the main priority, that research is secondary, and that decisions are made accordingly as a coalition.

Financial Compensation

When anti-oppressive CPAR studies are funded, historical inequities, present incomes, intergenerational wealth gaps, and future financial rewards of conducting the research should be factored into the budget formulation. Consider a faculty member who receives a course release, summer stipend, tenure, a \$10,000 raise for promotion, a graduate assistant to complete the work, paid speaking engagements, and future grant funding compared to participants who receive a stipend, hourly wage, or gift card and the knowledge that they have contributed to science (Limes-Taylor Henderson & Esposito, 2019). When developing budgets, research coalitions can follow a modified participatory budgeting framework (Baiocchi & Ganuza, 2014), and budgets should reflect the value that participants bring to the work, including their first-person knowledge of the phenomena being studied, access to communities, as well as their intellect and varied skillsets (e.g., see Breeden's Chapter 4 and Stewart's Chapter 6).

We encourage you to be creative when there are limited financial resources. For instance, explore the potential of assigning titles (e.g., Director of Community Engagement, Lead Participatory Analyst) that accurately describe the pivotal contributions and could lead to employment gains for research coalition members. Scaffolding the rotation of team members on and off the project can provide an opportunity for peer-to-peer mentoring and for team members to build supervisory experience, which could enhance their confidence, competence, and lead to increased income in future employment. This can also assist with the sustainability of anti-oppressive CPAR (see Phelps-Ward et al., Chapter 11).

Credit

In anti-oppressive CPAR, all research coalition members have the option to be named as co-authors and co-presenters, properly sharing the credit

and acknowledging the work would not be possible without everyone's valuable contributions (Breedon et al., 2023; Fine & Torre, 2021; Salazar, 2022). When the full research coalition is not involved at this stage of the research, this can render collaborators' contributions invisible, and this is unethical (Lenette, 2022). The dissemination of findings needs to be meaningful to the research coalition and the broader community, balancing opportunity with burden. This can include publishing in public outlets and academic journals or presenting to the community, at refereed conferences, and at artistic performances and events.

The Capacity to Enact Equity-Focused Change

Enacting equity-focused change is not a one-time activity that occurs at the completion of an anti-oppressive CPAR study. There is the short-term, immediate change that can occur throughout the research processes (i.e., building the coalition), as well as the opportunity to use research findings to advocate for long-term change (i.e., structural, systemic, policy). Both are needed and important.

We have more control over our own experiences as a research coalition than over long-term policy change. We can create opportunities for the coalition members to expand their skills (e.g., research, presenting, writing, working with diverse stakeholders), grow their credentials (e.g., complete professional development workshops, peer reviewed publications), and expand their knowledge (e.g., specific to the research inquiry and the epistemology). For many, working at a university, even in a contractor position, can enhance the legitimacy of their work experience. During coalition dialogues, it is important to explore what is meaningful to collaborators and creatively explore how to incorporate activities that will allow people to leave the project with more than they joined it with. Opening the door wider to academia is something every team can do, and this is part of the equity work that can be implemented immediately. This is not just our responsibility to the broader community but also the academic community. Currently, academia is not as strong as it could be because some of the brightest people are excluded. Anti-oppressive CPAR is one of many ways to course correct.

Simultaneously, anti-oppressive CPAR coalitions also focus on long-term change in the form of institutional, local, state, and federal policy change, adding to the generalizable knowledge, and building trust across sectors depending on the project and the interests of the research coalition. This can include developing policy briefs, collaborating with advocacy groups to share findings and expand coalitions, and meeting with elected officials. Moreover, all of these capacities stay with the community and continue to exert an influence in all aspects of community life and culture beyond the research study.

ANTI-OPPRESSIVE CPAR IN CONTEXT

When conducted in an anti-oppressive manner, CPAR can be used as a vehicle to build trust, mend relationships, and transfer money and resources from spaces and people with unearned privilege. To progress equitably forward, structural change is also needed.

Historically white and predominantly white institutions (HSIs, PWIs) must admit wrongdoings, solicit feedback, compensate communities for labor, and continue the ongoing work of relationship building (Breden et al., 2023). Postsecondary institutions have a responsibility to recruit potential scholars from undervalued communities to earn doctorates and expand doctoral education.

Grant funders similarly need to include participants as grant proposal reviewers and to incorporate equity rating criteria to encourage meaningful relationship building, risk taking, resource sharing, and equity-focus change across CPAR coalitions. For instance, we recommend removing the requirement for principal investigators to have a PhD so participants without this credential can retain ultimate control of a project. Ideally, funders would also include “equity” in their proposal evaluation criteria – equity in power-sharing, leadership, and budgets as defined by participants. Ultimately, research is a responsibility to communities (Breden et al., 2023; Dillard, 2006; Stewart, 2022), and we need to hold ourselves and each other accountable.

CONCLUSION

Ideally, anti-oppressive CPAR is an avenue to partner with others in a common goal of a power-sharing, relationship-centered, rigorous, systematic investigation that leads to immediate and long-term equitable change. Whatever language you use and whatever specific anti-oppressive CPAR frame you follow, we encourage you to go further than your predecessors did.

REFERENCES

- Ancona, D., Backman, E., & Isaacs, K. (2015). Two roads to green: A tale of bureaucratic versus distributed leadership models of change. In R. Henderson, R. Gulati, & M. Tushman (Eds.), *Leading Sustainable change: An organizational perspective* (pp. 224–249). Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198704072.003.0009>
- Baiocchi, G., & Ganuza, E. (2014). Participatory budgeting as if emancipation mattered. *Politics & Society*, 42(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329213512978>
- Berta-Ávila, M., Rivera, M., Ayala, J., & Cammarota, J. (2021). Living praxes and principles in PAR EntreMundos. In J. Cammarota (Ed.), *Liberatory practices for learning* (pp. 19–45). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56685-2_2

- Breeden, R. L., Smith, T. L., & Willis, A. L. (2023). "Strained relationships": A participatory action research study examining relationships between Black communities and historically White institutions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000482>
- Brown, L., & Strega, S. (2005). Transgressive possibilities. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 1–18). Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Call-Cummings, M., Dazzo, G. P., & Hauber-Özer, M. (2024). *Critical participatory inquiry: An interdisciplinary guide*. Sage.
- Cammarota, J., Ayala, J., Rivera, M., & Berta-Ávila, M. (2021). Conclusion: Dreaming between worlds. In J. Cammarota (Ed.), *Liberatory practices for learning* (pp. 139–151). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56685-2_2
- Dillard, C. B. (2006). *On spiritual strivings: Transforming an African American woman's academic life*. State University of New York Press.
- Fine, M., & Torre, M. E. (2021). *Essentials of critical participatory action research*. American Psychological Association.
- Lenette, C. (2022). *Participatory action research: Ethics and decolonization*. Oxford.
- Limes-Taylor Henderson K., & Esposito J. (2019). Using others in the nicest way possible: On colonial and academic practice(s), and an ethic of humility. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(9–10), 876–889.
- Mawhinney, L. (2016). Be catty and piss on your work: A cautionary tale of researching while Black. In E. R. Drame & D. J. Irby (Eds.), *Black participatory research: Power, identity, and the struggle for justice in education* (pp. 105–124). Palgrave Macmillan
- National Democratic Institute. (2022, March 28). *From "Nothing about us without us to "Nothing without us."* <https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/nothing-about-us-without-us-nothing-without-us>
- Phelps-Ward, R. (2020). Emancipatory research counter-spaces: Re-examining Black doctoral student socialization. In J. C. Weidman & L. DeAngelo (Eds.), *Socialization in higher education and the early career: Theory, research and application* (pp. 241–268). Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-33350-8>
- Potts, K., & Brown, L. (2005). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. In L. A. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 255–286). Canadian Scholar's Press.
- Ray, R., & Gilbert, K. (2021). *Learning from marginalized voices via community-based participatory research [Workshop]*. Qualitative Research Summer Intensive, virtual.
- Raelin, J. A. (2018). What are you afraid of: Collective leadership and its learning implications. *Management Learning*, 49(1), 59–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507617729974>
- Salazar, C. (2022). Participatory action research with and for undocumented college students: Ethical challenges and methodological opportunities. *Qualitative Research*, 22(3), 369–386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120985689>
- Salazar, C., Barahona, C., Romero Viruel, A., Velasco Zuñiga, J. D., Palma, B., Meza, K. J., & Moreno, R. (2023). Research collectives with, for, and by undocumented scholars: Creating counterspaces for revelation, validation, resistance, empowerment, and liberation in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 22(2), 161–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15381927221111869>

- Stewart, T. J. (2022). "I don't feel studied": Reflections on power-consciousness in action research with college student sex workers. *Action Research*, 20(2), 162–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14767503211023127>
- Thambinathan V., & Kinsella E. A. (2021). Decolonizing methodologies in qualitative research: Creating spaces for transformative praxis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211014766>
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (3rd ed.). Zed Books.
- Whetung, M., & Wakefield, S. (2019). Colonial conventions: Institutionalized research relationships and decolonizing research ethics. In L. T. Smith, E. Tuck, & W. Yang, *Indigenous and decolonizing studies in education: Mapping the long view* (pp. 146–158). Routledge.
- Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury.