SAGE researchmethods cases

Critical Action Research: How Do Graduate Students in an Introductory Research Class Conceptualize "Research"?

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Abstract

Action research design blurs the traditional distinction between researchers and practitioners, and effectively shortens the distance of the transformation from academic findings to daily practices. This research case features a critical action research project that focused on understanding graduate students' perception of and how they position themselves in relation to "research." We demonstrate how this research design manifests in the form of collaboration among four co-researchers/practitioners and highlights methodological and practical insights and challenges that we face at the intersection of action research and collaborative research. Findings from the study reveal the tension between the way students conceptualize research and the way they perceive themselves in relation to the research process, which we describe as "pragmatic fissures." Our findings provide an opportunity for expanding pedagogical approaches to course delivery as well as developing innovative methodology textbook designs, echoing the emphasis of praxis in action research.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to

- Understand what constitutes a critical action research project and how it manifests itself in the methodological decisions and the research process undertaken in one concrete research example
- Articulate the challenges and benefits of conducting collaborative research and apply this learning in their own collaborative research endeavors
- Be familiar with general analytical processes in qualitative research and understand the distinction between semantic and pragmatic analysis

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Project Overview and Context

This study is rooted in the experiences of four collaborators teaching a graduate-level introductory research methods class at Indiana University Bloomington. The course is required for all Masters-level graduate students enrolled in the School of Education and enrolls students from a variety of fields including teaching, instructional technology, counseling, language education, and higher education administration. This course is offered both in a face-to-face and in an online format, and we each have been the primary instructor teaching in one or both formats of the course.

Through collective reflection on our teaching experiences, it became clear to us that our students' conceptions of "research" and how they relate to the research process play a central

role in their levels of engagement in this course. For example, many of our students came to the class with preconceived images of “research” as “experiments,” “numbers,” “statistics,” “math,” or “research articles,” which they didn’t find pertinent to their practice as teachers, counselors, or administrators—the very passion that brought them to graduate school initially. Many of them consider research as something academic experts do and not something they themselves might engage in through their daily professional and personal practices. Such perceptions coupled with associated negative feelings voiced by our students about “research” made it challenging for us to cultivate students’ intrinsic motivation in learning.

Our discussions about this challenge served as the starting point for this study, which was also fueled by a genuine desire as scholars to explore and understand student perspectives on research. From our review of existing scholarship, we found very little on the conceptualization of “research,” especially by graduate students, or on how student conceptions intersect with the pedagogical dynamics of teaching research methodology courses. These gaps and our teaching challenges led us to this long-term, collaborative critical action study: “Researching Research.” The project focuses on one key question: How do graduate students in an introductory research methods course conceptualize the notion of “research”? As an action research project, it is designed so that the findings can help us improve our approach to teaching research methodology.

Research Design

Critical Action Research

We designed this study as a critical action research project (Fine et al., 2003) with the intention of enriching the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) (Cerbin, 2013; Huber & Hutchings, 2005). In this study, we take on dual roles as instructors and researchers, which provide constant opportunities to integrate our teaching practices and research. Thus, the design blurs the traditional distinction between researchers and practitioners, and shortens the distance of transformation from academic findings to daily practices (Fine et al., 2003).

We consider the research design “critical” in the sense that we do not take concepts such as “knowledge” and “research” for granted as if they have a fixed meaning. Instead, we consider it important to question assumptions embedded in their use. In this project specifically, we worked to make students’ and our own assumptions about research more explicit through a reflective research process in which we examined possible implicit or even negative effects of those assumptions on students’ learning and our teaching. The integration of this critical orientation with our action research approach led to our overall research design as a critical action research project. In this design, the typical linear sequence between research process

and the outcome is interrupted. Instead, the transformation of our teaching practice occurs throughout the research process and is further enhanced by our research findings.

This research design is characterized by ongoing dialogues and collective reflection among the researchers, as well as by data analysis that questions and illuminates previously implicit assumptions and their impact. In line with this research design, we applied Carspecken's (1996) critical qualitative research methodology to guide our research practice. We offer a brief discussion on how critical qualitative methodology is applied during data analysis in a later section. It is worth noting that given the scope of this case study, we refrain from a detailed elaboration of the philosophies and methodological theories associated with this methodology. Interested readers may refer to Carspecken (1996, 2012) and Dennis (2013) for detailed discussions.

Research Practicalities

Researcher's Reflexivity

In congruence with the spirit of critical action research, we began this project with a series of deliberate reflective practices to help us become aware of how our own philosophical stances, pedagogical assumptions, and past experiences have influenced our conceptualization of and approach to research. We first wrote self-reflections independently to explore our assumptions and experiences about "research," as well as our roles as researchers. We also examined our pedagogical approaches, including how we set up learning objectives for students, organize teaching activities, and assess learning outcomes. We then shared and commented upon these self-reflections as a group. Through verbal and written dialogues with one another, our reflection continued to expand and reflect back on itself, creating new layers of reflection and understanding through the research process. This collective reflection helped us to simultaneously ground and transcend our ideas about how to go about teaching the class and designing the project. A new pedagogical design and an action research plan simultaneously began to emerge. To give readers a concrete example of this reflective process, here, we include excerpts from a thread of emails among us prior to formally launching the research project back in September 2012. In this discussion, we drew on each other's reflections to facilitate our own exploration as researchers as well as our pedagogical intention in teaching the course:

> Pengfei: I think probably we need to further elaborate on some of the background that motivates us to do the research.
>
> Karen: As Pengfei wrote in her notes I think our own experiences are important to

somehow include as an active part of this project and as we work with our students. It is worth thinking about how to do this—I share my thoughts somewhat with students at the start of the semester (I introduce myself on the forums the same way my students do) but not to the degree that I have here.

Peiwei: Right. This can be a bit tricky. I guess it would be helpful to think more about this. For example, what is the impact of our sharing? Do we try to model to students how research can closely link our experience and sense of the self? Do we want to facilitate equal dialogue with students by participating in discussions on a more equal term?

After a series of written dialogues like this, we not only collectively made our assumptions explicit about teaching and research but also generated a drastically different pedagogical design for our courses. With this new approach, we systematically attended to the close alignment between learning objectives that were intended to broaden students' conceptualization of research and link class content and assessment to students' identity as learners. As a parallel process, we also affirmed the need to engage in a formal research project that would allow us to better understand students' perception of research.

Participants and Data Collection

To answer the question of how our students conceptualize research, we decided to use students' work in class (e.g., assignments, online postings, and artifacts) as our primary data source, along with our ongoing collective reflection on our teaching and research practices. We submitted an Internal Review Board (IRB) application to Indiana University and received approval prior to data collection, which occurred during the Spring semester of 2012. A total of 92 students from four different sections of the class (three online sections and one face-to-face section) gave us permission to use their assignments and artifacts from the class. Four students chose to opt out of the study. At the end of the Spring 2012 semester, we compiled students' work and removed all identifiable information.

For this particular study, we focus on a subset of the data—the students' first reflective essay on their understanding of research/inquiry, assigned as part of the first week's work. Students were simply asked to respond to the prompt "What is research?" The length of student essays was approximately 350-500 words. This essay directly addressed students' perceptions of research and its connection to their past experiences and their identity.

Data Analysis

Our analysis relied on *reconstructive* and emergent coding guided by critical qualitative

methodology (Carspecken, 1996, 2008, 2009). The reconstructive analysis draws on insights of a critical theorist from the Frankfurt school, Jürgen Habermas, and best fits our dialogical and communicative conception of knowledge and meaning: we believe that reconstructing the meaning of student texts is the best way to articulate the rich and complex meaning involved in the writings. Reconstructing stands in contrast to the idea of "representing" meaning through a correspondence between a code and an element of the meaning. Instead, reconstruction involves making explicit a range of possible, often implicit meanings that actors and their communication partners might presume to share.

The analytical process also involves *hermeneutic* interpretation, which is characterized by trying to see things from the perspectives of our research participants and reflecting on conditions such as social norms in terms of how they influence such perspectives. We then use this interpretative impression as the basis for further reflection and modification (Carspecken, 1996). In other words, a hermeneutic, reconstructive approach to research is an iterative process that enables our interpretations to approximate more and more closely what our research participants themselves mean by what they say and write.

Our analytical approach focused on reconstructing the meaning of student texts through dialogues among the researchers. We used the qualitative data analysis software platform Dedoose (SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC.) to coordinate and organize our coding process and outcomes. Our collaboration provided a scaffold during the analysis process because through it we explicitly engaged in dialogue about the meaning of the texts we were analyzing and our own theoretical ruminations. We discuss the analytical process and our findings more below.

"Method" in Action

Data Analysis Process

In the early stage of our analysis, we focused on generating an initial coding scheme focusing on emergent themes related to students' understanding of research, how this understanding evolved (prior to the course), and in what sense students connected this understanding to their educational practice and their own identity. As mentioned previously, we utilized the online data analysis software Dedoose, which enabled us to access and edit the same set of coding schemes simultaneously. But soon we realized that Dedoose had largely shaped our analytical practice toward generating a set of shared codes, in other words, focusing on the code as our research product and putting less emphasis on the coding process itself. Focusing on codes as products is common in data analysis, but within this approach is an embedded assumption that coding is a rather linear and mechanistic procedure, accompanied by consensus formation

among multiple researchers that results in creating a shared coding book. In our experience, this process flattened the rich meaning of the original data by fixing it on mostly semantic content. Moreover, this approach failed to capture the dynamic process of data analysis resulting from our ongoing reflection and dialogues as research collaborators—dialogues that can lead to a total reconceptualization of the analytic framework itself. To address this issue, we decided to shift away from a sole focus on generating a set of shared codes and also attend to our communication and collaborative reflection, which featured a process of reaching consensus and discussing disagreement. This process was assisted by technology such as Skype, emails, and the memo function embedded in Dedoose.

For instance, in the early stage of the coding process, we each generated codes related to different types of conceptualization of “research” from our students (e.g., “research as a systematic process to answer a question,” “research as proving hypothesis,” “research as scientific inquiry,” and “research as something experts do”). As we tried to make sense of this subset of emerging themes through coding, we felt unsettled as we noticed that there were other threads inferred from the data, which could not be easily captured by this kind of thematic analysis alone, on the semantic level. For example, here is an excerpt from our data that is coded under the sub-code, “research as something experts do”:

> I think of research as something that scientists, people in thinktanks, or people with PhDs do. The process of research has always seemed incredibly dull to me; I’ve rarely met a research project that I liked--merely tolerated. So the word possesses some negative connotations for me. I have so rarely done intensive research that the concept still seems a bit foreign to me, a bit undefined. I have had the occasional research paper, but these are so few and far between that I had never been made to get into the habit of “doing research” for any extended period of time.

For our analysis, we could have simply stated that this is one way students conceptualize “research,” which would stay on the content level. However, when we considered this statement as a speech act that involves the speaker’s intention and positionality, it seemed to imply that the student holding this view also positioned herself or himself as an outsider to research, and we also inferred from this and similar data points an underlying feeling of alienation from the enterprise of doing research. Our sense of this positionality and feeling of alienation challenged us to collectively reflect upon the limitations of an approach to coding that focused primarily on thematic analysis and the intention to create a shared coding scheme.

As we continued to communicate about our discontent and suggest possible alternatives, we decided that a thematic approach would likely limit our ability to draw out complexity and to

capture our holistic understanding of meaning as illustrated in the above example. Plus, this approach would lead us to work under a relatively closed and fixed interpretive structure, even though disagreements on codes could be raised and discussed. We realized that capturing meaning holistically meant that we had to go beyond thematic coding and attend to the more implicit, pragmatic aspects of the data by treating students' responses not just as texts but as speech acts that carry intentions, a specific audience in mind, and certain narrative forms of expression.

This is an example of a phenomenon we experienced during various times of our data analysis process: the need to break the linear mode of coding in "bottleneck" moments and foster a more organic process of consensus formation going beyond codes. By "bottleneck" moments, we mean those times when we noticed that the current interpretive approach failed to capture a more complex or nuanced meaning in data, guiding us to revisit our previous analytic decisions and readjust or even totally transform our existing approach. In retrospect, these "bottleneck" moments were essential during the process of our data analysis. Those moments of collective reflection and consensus re-formation led to a significant shift in how we approach data analysis and helped us to more intentionally move from thematic coding to pragmatic analysis. In fact, the pragmatic aspects of data analysis are always present although they can be implicit. When thematic codes with implicit pragmatics are articulated, and especially when they are challenged, then pragmatic aspects become more salient and must be articulated. Articulating these pragmatic aspects of student speech acts enabled us to better engage in reconstructive analysis of students' narratives and gain insights into how perspectives about research were related to identity structure, as both explicitly and implicitly articulated by students. It also enabled us to incorporate elements such as intention, intended audience, tone in writing, and so on into our overall interpretation.

The new analytical vision made it possible for us to systematically examine the underlying tension between students' identity claims (e.g., outsider to the research community) and their feelings of alienation, or the disconnection between students' conceptualization of research (e.g., completely formal and third person) and the narrative form they used to describe the sources of this conceptualization (e.g., personal narratives). These analyses led to the development of a new analytical concept that we call "pragmatic fissures," those spaces or tensions at the intersection between how students described their conceptions of research (e.g., what constitutes legitimate research, and what constitutes valid ways of discussing research), and how they positioned themselves in relation to research.

From Research Findings to Actions

A Brief Summary of Findings

Through our analysis, we identified four major student conceptions of research, including: research as a means of problem solving, as a form of expertise, as science, and as situated practice. In this section, we will briefly summarize each type of conception and discuss possible "pragmatic fissures" that could arise between students' conception of research and their identity. We will then describe how we used these findings to inform practice, highlighting the unique feature of action research that integrates research and practice.

Research as a Means of Problem-Solving

For many students, research was presented as a way to "solve a problem," to "answer a question," or to "gather information." In students' descriptions, research was defined as an act or intervention carried out by a researcher, and a means of discovering, accumulating, and evaluating knowledge. Research perceived in this way was also linked by students (in their essay responses) to a process with "a series of steps to be completed," or structured procedures toward achieving an intended goal. With this conception in mind, students often positioned themselves as problem solvers in the context of doing research.

Research as a Form of Expertise

The second conceptualization of research was as a form of expertise requiring specialized knowledge and skills. Students who described research in this way perceived researchers to be experts who receive specific training in reading literature, writing academic papers, and with knowledge of statistics. For instance, one student noted that research was a "serious" endeavor with "more opportunities to mess things up." In this way, research becomes a "profession" for the experts in the academic domain. Graduate school training provides the opportunity for individuals to develop necessary levels of "expertise" and to be socialized into this profession. Students who conceptualized research in this way tended to position themselves as outsiders in relation to the profession, or at least novices standing at the edge of the professional boundary. With this positionality, many students expressed feelings of "intimidation," cynicism, or alienation toward the identity of being an expert.

Research as Science

A third conceptualization is one in which students equated research with science and presented research as a process of testing hypotheses, or acquiring evidence to prove or disprove certain beliefs. Such a conception of research is solely based on a scientific worldview and rationality, in which the researcher always takes a universal third-person position to examine the truthfulness of a claim about a phenomenon. This conceptualization may be

thought of as a specialized form of the conceptualization of “research as expertise,” with an emphasis on a specific type of knowledge. Students who conceptualized research in this way often focused on the position of a scientist in relation to research. Their conceptualizations emphasized notions of “objectivity,” “scientific methods,” “numbers,” “experimentations,” quantitative methods, and statistics.

Research as a Situated Practice

Finally, a very few number of students discussed research in terms of it being a practice situated in a community of researchers (i.e., the process of peer review and critique in the public domain). For these students, research entails a communicative action that involves more than one actor and is based on certain norms and standards created by a community of researchers. In contrast with the other conceptualizations, this perspective on research is one that places less of a focus on an outcome or on technical knowledge required for research engagement, but rather one that brings the researcher toward the center of the research practice and requires an ability to reflect on the practice itself. Students who conceptualized research in this way positioned themselves as part of the community, even if they viewed themselves at its periphery in this stage of their lives as novice researchers.

“Pragmatic Fissures”

A “pragmatic fissure” occurs when there is a lack of alignment among three elements of student responses: (1) what the student states that constitutes legitimate research, (2) what constitutes valid ways of discussing research in her writing, and (3) how the student positions herself in relation to research. The latter two elements mainly manifested on a pragmatic level beyond what was being said. For example, in the excerpt demonstrated previously, the student wrote, “I think of research as something that scientists, people in think tanks, or people with PhDs do.” This constitutes a claim about what constitutes research, on the content level. Yet there is a disjuncture between this statement and the student’s continued response, “I have so rarely done intensive research that the concept still seems a bit foreign to me, a bit undefined.”

This tension is present in two ways. First, in the content, the student’s continued response indicates that she does not think of herself as belonging to the group of people doing research. Second, it is present in the nature of language utilized in the narrative: whereas the initial statement is declarative and formal, presented with certainty, the student’s later comment suggests uncertainty through the use of terms such as “a bit” and “undefined” and is delivered through informal language. The linguistic differences between the first and second statement signify the substantive difference between how the student defines researchers and how she positions herself in relation to them. This reflects a tension between the student’s conception of

research and his or her own sense of identity in relation to it. These tensions constitute "pragmatic fissures," characterized by a lack of alignment of the three elements mentioned above.

Implications for Pedagogical Action

In our analysis, we saw not only "pragmatic fissures" but also continuity and complementarity. However, we found it important to focus on tensions and fissures due to the pedagogical insights these disjunctures can provide. We also found it helpful to understand "pragmatic fissures" as a pedagogical opportunity, instead of a problem. In other words, identifying these fissures is an important first step that can provide insights into our students' experiences and thought processes, and therefore opportunities for us to make pedagogical changes that improve the effectiveness of research methodology instruction. It provides us, as instructors, with a conceptual platform where we might be able to integrate students' identity claims into the content and structure of research methodology courses rather than distancing or further alienating them. In other words, we can create spaces that show respect for student identities, but ideally also allow them to develop broader conceptualizations of research, which are more congruent with their positionality toward research.

Overall, the research process and finding provided us opportunities to re-conceptualize the focus and approach in our teaching. What does this look like concretely? One example is our continuous emphasis throughout the semester on the importance of practitioner-focused and non-traditional forms of research, alongside but not replacing discussions that focus on specific research techniques or steps in the research process. In other words, we try to help students find elements of the research process with which they can identify. We do not discount the importance and relevance of specific skills, but we try to help students understand that research can extend beyond what they often think of as research when they enter our classrooms. We believe that doing so can not only facilitate mutual understanding between instructors and students but also enable pedagogical and theoretical reflections that can improve the relevance of research methodology courses for professionally oriented students.

For instance, for some students, limiting what is considered valid research to a rigid scientist realm impedes them from seeing the use of narrative mode in qualitative studies; on the other hand, employing the narrative mode in their essays, they consistently identify themselves as practitioners/outsiders of research. Thus, there is an implicit connection between excluding narrative modes from research and employing these same narrative modes in their own outsiders' writing about research. To support these students, instructors can highlight how narrative is widely used in ethnographic, discursive, and other types of studies, broadening

students' horizons and simultaneously facilitating reflections on their positionality in relation to research.

Being engaged in critical action research has allowed us to both formally and practically reflect on implicit assumptions and pedagogical conceptions related to our teaching, which have been even further enhanced through our collaboration and ongoing dialogues. The research process itself has already raised our awareness to more subtle pragmatic and structural processes and simultaneously transformed how we teach. This process also didn't stop at the conclusion of data analysis. We continue to ride the wave of the transformative force that emerged from our action research as we design, refine, and teach existing and new research methodology courses. For example, we intentionally attend to how "pragmatic fissures" may manifest in specific groups of students given their salient identity, background, and professional goals. This helps us to design each course in a way that best remediates the possible "pragmatic fissures," and monitor and revise our pedagogical design of the course throughout the semester once we get to know the students better.

Scholarship in Action

Beyond our own instruction, we suggest that the concept of "pragmatic fissures" can help to improve the teaching of research methodology in university settings as a whole. It is significant not only for pedagogical techniques but also in relation to methodology texts. The focus of many existing textbooks is on discussions of research methods with only minimal attention to the philosophical and theoretical foundations of research methodology. Even when these foundational elements are included, they are often discussed as separate or additional bits of information rather than as inherent components of research methodology. The unfortunate outcome of this is a common reduction of research to a set of procedures or techniques to which valid research more or less adheres. As such, existing texts reinforce a certain conception of research that might disengage students whose own conceptions do not align with what is written in the textbook; the way research is presented in these texts can also reinforce a sense of alienation or exclusion from the research process.

The present state of affairs in texts serves a strong impetus for us to develop a radically different research textbook that centers learner's conception of research and their identity position, and re-conceptualize research as a broader inquiry process that has intrinsic connection to underlying assumptions about knowing and knowledge, and connection to ethics and human identity. To accomplish this goal, we submitted and have received a generous grant from SoTL at Indiana University, allowing us to organize writing retreats for the development of a book proposal and the textbook itself. We hope to make this text available in the next couple

of years and stir up conversations and reflections on the conception of “research” and how one should teach research methodology with broader audiences in mind.

Practical Lessons Learned

Navigating IRB Application for Action Research

As a non-traditional research design, action research projects often encounter particular challenges when it comes to the IRB application. IRB follows a set of ethics modeled after traditional research where research participants are positioned as “subjects” who are vulnerable to exploration and potential harm as a result of their participation. Based on this conceptualization, researchers need to minimize such risks by retaining an “objective” stance and eliminating any influence on the participants besides data collection. Embedded in this stance is an underlying assumption that research is a linear process and researchers should relate to participants from the perspective of aloof data collectors. This approach follows the medical research model, which emphasizes objectivity in researchers’ interaction with research participants (Stark, 2011). It does not adequately take into account the transformative aspect that is the hallmark of action research. In action research, the boundary between researchers and participants becomes porous, and the research process is not simply a means to research findings. Instead, the transformations of the participants and researchers perhaps are the most important intended outcomes.

This means that IRB review process may not yet be well equipped to appropriately address ethical concerns that are unique to action research. In our project, since we didn’t directly involve our students in the research process as co-researchers (as might occur in other types of action research such as participatory action research, PAR; Torre & Fine, 2011), we didn’t encounter the challenge of justifying the relational concerns about researcher-participant relationships that are often raised in IRB applications for PAR. However, since we conducted research involving our own students, we needed to carefully consider undue influence and power differential resulting from our role as instructors to these students.

For instance, students could potentially feel uncomfortable refusing to participate in the study, worrying that this choice could impact the instructors’ perception of them as students as well as their grades. To ensure true voluntary participation, we proposed a few measures in our IRB application: (1) inform students that their participation would have no impact on the instructor’s evaluation of their performance in class, (2) we would only start data analysis after grades were turned in, and finally, (3) all communication about the research project would be carried out by a researcher who was not the instructor for a particular class section. With those considerations, we successfully obtained IRB approval for our study.

Navigating Relationships as Co-Researchers

Developing an egalitarian and collaborative relationship among the co-researchers was crucial to this project, especially given the fact that we were geographically separated for most of the duration of the project. Therefore, being able to transparently discuss workload and negotiate authorship when it comes to conference presentations and journal publications has been another important element of maintaining a sustainable collaboration. During each step of the research process, we had explicit conversations on how we ought to divide tasks with the intention of striving for equity among us. Often, this meant trying to share tasks equally among us; at other times, it meant attending to the unique situation and needs of a particular member of our team (e.g., illness, traveling, and family situations).

When it came to authorship, a touchy area for research collaboration, we always discussed the order of authors transparently based on the amount of time and commitment that each member could contribute for a given project. Meanwhile, we took turns being the lead author and rotated our roles as second, third, and fourth authors for different presentations and publications. We were particularly mindful of the influence of potential power differentials among us due to our status as professor and students, especially since initially, the team consisted of three graduate students and one professor. We were able to mitigate role-based power dynamics by explicitly acknowledging its potential influence and taking it into consideration during our decision-making process. At this point, two of us have moved out of the student phase and become professors ourselves, and we continue to monitor and discuss our relationship dynamics throughout this ongoing collaboration.

Conclusion

In this case illustration, we demonstrated how critical action research was applied in the context of teaching reflection and pedagogical innovation. We shared with readers how we approached this project from its conception to its “post-completion” development. In a way, action research is infinite—initial reflective practice brings more cycles of reflection and action—and has ongoing potential for awareness raising and transformation. This reflective process is at the heart of praxis, the intimate connection between theory and practice, between conception and action. In praxis, we found the voices of our students as well as those of our own, while blurring our identities as teachers and researchers. This process helped us develop insight to transform our practice and the very notion of “research” within and beyond our immediate teaching context.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. What are your own assumptions behind your understanding of "research" and "inquiry"? How do they (not) fit with the patterns we saw from our study?
2. What distinguishes action research from traditional research?
3. What are some unique opportunities and challenges facing action research and action researchers?
4. What makes critical inquiry "critical"?
5. Do you feel the approach we described (e.g., pragmatic analysis) can help move analysis beyond thematic coding?
6. What does the concept of "pragmatic fissure" mean to you? Do you think it added to your understanding of the research presented in this case, and if so, how? Can you think of examples in your own learning?
7. What in your view or experience makes research collaborations successful?
8. Do you see any potential for using action research in your professional practice? If so, how?

Further Reading

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Web Resources

Center for Collaborative Action Research: http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html

Intro to action research: http://web.net/robrien/papers/arfinal.html

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and organizational change: https://participaction.wordpress.com

Examples of recent PAR projects/initiatives:

- CUNY's Public Science Project: http://www.publicscienceproject.org
- Fed Up Honeys: http://www.fed-up-honeys.org/
- Polling for Justice: http://publicscienceproject.org/polling_for_justice/
- Morris Justice Project: http://publicscienceproject.org/research/projects/the-morris-justice-project/
- The People's Report: http://www.thepeoplesreport.com/

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