



PATRICIA H. HINCHEY,  
EDITOR

A  
**critical  
action  
research**  
READER

Since its inception, action research has been the subject of confusion and controversy. Can something be research if it doesn't "prove" anything? Can something be *action research* if it's a project run by an expert who does not consider participants co-researchers? Questions multiply when the general term is limited to critical action research. What makes *critical action research* different from *action research* generally? Can the action research project of a classroom teacher intended to raise standardized test scores properly be considered *critical*? Is there a role for advocacy in any enterprise calling itself *research*? If *critical action research* is distinct from traditional empirical research, then what formats make sense for sharing results?

This highly diverse collection of previously unpublished and published works offers a sampling of opinions on key theoretical and methodological questions, complemented by a wide range of critical action research reports illustrating what various theories look like in practice. The book provides a sketch of the topography of critical action research terrain and illuminates some diverse paths through it.

**Patricia H. Hinchey** is Professor of Education at Penn State and a Research Fellow at the National Education Policy Center (NEPC) at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She holds a doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University, and has authored numerous articles as well as several books on topics including critical theory, education for civic engagement, action research, and teacher assessment. Dr. Hinchey is also a former director of a professional development unit for faculty on Penn State's regional campuses.

[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

ISBN 978-1-4331-1760-2



433



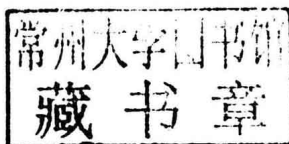
# critical action research READER

HIMCHEY



A  
**critical  
action  
research**  
READER

**PATRICIA H. HINCHEY,  
EDITOR**



PETER LANG  
New York • Bern • Frankfurt • Berlin  
Brussels • Vienna • Oxford • Warsaw

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A critical action research reader / edited by Patricia H. Hinchey.  
pages cm. — (Counterpoints: studies in the postmodern theory of education; v. 433)

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Action research in education. I. Hinchey, Patricia H.

LB1028.24.C74 370.72—dc23 2015014328

ISBN 978-1-4331-1759-6 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-1-4331-1760-2 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-4539-1621-6 (e-book)

ISSN 1058-1634

Bibliographic information published by **Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**.

**Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the "Deutsche Nationalbibliografie"; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de/>.

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability  
of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity  
of the Council of Library Resources.



© 2016 Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York  
29 Broadway, 18th floor, New York, NY 10006  
[www.peterlang.com](http://www.peterlang.com)

All rights reserved.

Reprint or reproduction, even partially, in all forms such as microfilm,  
xerography, microfiche, microcard, and offset strictly prohibited.

Printed in the United States of America

A  
**critical  
action  
research**  
READER



# **Studies in the Postmodern Theory of Education**

Shirley R. Steinberg  
*General Editor*

Vol. 433

---

The Counterpoints series is part of the Peter Lang Education list.  
Every volume is peer reviewed and meets  
the highest quality standards for content and production.

---



PETER LANG  
New York • Bern • Frankfurt • Berlin  
Brussels • Vienna • Oxford • Warsaw

To the classroom teachers who generously contributed their work to this book and so patiently waited for its publication—Jessica Blanchard, Rachel Klimke, Lisa Sibbett, Nien N. Tran, Inga Wilder, and Jennifer Zapata—and to all teachers working toward a better world.





---

# Preface

All words are pegs to hang ideas on.—Henry Ward Beecher

While the title of this book may suggest that it's about critical action research ... it's not. Instead, this book is about *ideas about* critical action research. And it offers examples of what some ideas about critical action research have looked like when someone, or a pair or group of someones, translated them into practice.

Any reader with the most rudimentary familiarity with the term *action research* already understands that those particular words have been used so many ways to mean so many things that the phrase has become no more than a holograph, a shadow that seems real but that fades at a firm grasp toward its meaning. A tool to leverage change, action research has been used to name such disparate efforts as doggedly driving eight-year-olds toward higher standardized test scores and helping urban youth name and devise ways to resist stereotyping in their neighborhoods. Individual classroom teachers have used it to explore how their classrooms and schools might be made more democratic and relevant; teacher educators have used it to explore how to awaken their students to the effects of institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia; university researchers have partnered with communities to identify important community concerns and to work toward new and better policies.

Over time, as a way to signal important differences among such varied versions of action research, theorists have added adjectives to breathe new life into what has become an empty descriptor, so that we now talk of *educational action research*, *participatory action research (PAR)*, *youth participatory action research (YPAR)*, and *socially critical action research (SCAR)*. Or they've relied on other phrases entirely to detail meaning: *teacher inquiry* or *practitioner inquiry* or *teacher research*. Meanings refuse to stay pinned down, however: one person's *research* is another person's *inquiry*, and attempts at better definitions merely beget more theoretical wrangling and more words that mean different things to different people.

Such wrangling is a good thing. As theorists and practitioners work toward greater clarity about what exactly it is they want to do and how they think it should be done, practice expands and improves. That is, as we get better at thinking about and explaining what we do, we get better at doing it. This description of the fairly chaotic field is not an indictment. Rather, it is an alert to readers that, although I have worked hard to herd a comprehensive sampling of readings into thematic sections that help make sense of the chaos, the organization I've imposed is inevitably fairly arbitrary. Like all experience, each reading has more than one meaning: a piece written by an individual classroom teacher about working with Latino students to confront racism might have appeared in a thematic group centered on teacher research or as an example of the intersection of critical action research and borderlands scholarship or as an example of youth participatory action research. Or I might have used entirely different themes, resulting in very different groupings. I urge readers to bear this point about arbitrariness in mind and to look for resonance among examples across thematic groupings.

What is consistent in these selections is their commitment to critical action research: research in the interest of creating a more just world, peopled by citizens with the skills to name oppression and to take practical action to resist it. Perhaps even more important, what is consistent in these selections is the authors' faith that educators can help effect significant change in people, institutions, and policies. Readers currently discouraged by a dehumanized educational and political environment where high stakes testing has become an effective whip to drive teachers and students into numbing, meaningless routines are likely to take from this body of work a precious gift: hope.

My own hope is that each reader will take heart in realizing that those of us engaged in this struggle for freedom and dignity are not alone—and we can indeed make a difference, as our colleagues teach us in the following pages.

---

# Acknowledgments

## Part 1. Toward an Understanding of Critical Action Research

- Chapter 1: Reprinted from Boog, B. W. M. (2003). The emancipatory character of action research, its history and the present state of the art. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13(6), 426–438.
- Chapter 2: Reprinted from Cannella, G. S. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2012). Deploying qualitative methods for critical social purposes. In S. R. Steinberg & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical qualitative research reader* (pp. 104–113). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 3: Reprinted from Kinsler, K. (2010). The utility of educational action research for emancipatory change. *Action Research*, 8(2), 171–189. doi: 10.1177/1476750309351357
- Chapter 4: Reprinted from Brennan, M. & Noffke, S. (2001). Uses of data in action research. In T. R. Carson & D. J. Sumara (Eds.), *Action research as a living practice* (23–43). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 5: Reprinted from Shields, C. M. (2012). Critical advocacy research: An approach whose time has come. In S. R. Steinberg & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical qualitative research reader* (pp. 2–13). New York: Peter Lang.

## Part 2. Critical Teacher Research in Urban Contexts

- Chapter 7: Reprinted from Esposito, E., & Evans-Winters, V. (2007). Contextualizing critical action research: Lessons from urban educators. *Educational Action Research*, 15(2), 221–237.

## Part 3. Participatory Action Research (PAR)

- Chapter 13: Reprinted from Cahill, Caitlin. (2007). Doing Research with Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 297–312. doi: 10.1080/14733280701445895

- Chapter 14: Reprinted from Fox, M. & Fine, M. (2012). Circulating critical research: Reflections on performance and moving inquiry into action. In S. R. Steinberg & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical qualitative research reader* (pp. 153–165). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 15: Reprinted from Muñoz Proto, C. (2012). In search of critical knowledge: Tracing inheritance in the landscape of incarceration. In S. R. Steinberg & G. S. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical qualitative research reader* (pp. 479–490). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 16: reprinted from Ayala, J. (2009). Split scenes, converging visions: The ethical terrains where PAR and borderlands scholarship meet. *Urban Review*, 41, 66–84.

#### Part 4. New Bottles for New Wine—Report Formats

- Chapter 17: Reprinted from Canagarajah, A. S. (1996). From critical research practice to critical research reporting. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30(2), 321–331.
- Chapter 18: Reprinted from Fisher, K., & Phelps, R. (2006). Recipe or performing art?: Challenging conventions for writing action research theses. *Action Research*, 4(2), 143–164. doi: 10.1177/1476750306063989
- Chapter 21: Reprinted from Luce-Kapler, R. Reverberating the action research text. In T. R. Carson & D. J. Sumara (Eds.), *Action research as a living practice* (pp. 187–197). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 22: Reprinted from Olberg, A., Collins, C., Ferguson, C., Freeman, D., Levitz, R., McCaskell, M. L. & Walters, B. Sojourning: Locating ourselves in the landscape. In T. R. Carson & D. J. Sumara (Eds.), *Action research as a living practice* (pp. 231–245). New York: Peter Lang.

#### Part 5. Complexities

- Chapter 24: Reprinted from Miller, J. L. Disruptions in the field: An academic's lived practice with classroom teachers. In T. R. Carson & D. J. Sumara (Eds.), *Action research as a living practice* (pp. 199–213). New York: Peter Lang.
- Chapter 27: Reprinted from Couch, S. R. (2004). A tale of three discourses: Doing action research in a research methods class. *Social Problems*, 51(1), 146–153.

---

# Table of Contents

## PART 1

### TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF CRITICAL ACTION RESEARCH

---

Introduction: The Contested Terrain of Critical Action Research .....	3
1 The Emancipatory Character of Action Research, Its History and the Present State of the Art. ....	6
<i>Ben W. M. Boog</i>	
2 Deploying Qualitative Methods for Critical Social Purposes .....	17
<i>Gaile S. Cannella and Yvonna S. Lincoln</i>	
3 The Utility of Educational Action Research for Emancipatory Change .....	27
<i>Kimberly Kinsler</i>	
4 Uses of Data in Action Research .....	39
<i>Marie Brennan and Susan E. Noffke</i>	
5 Critical Advocacy Research: An Approach Whose Time Has Come. ....	53
<i>Carolyn M. Shields</i>	
6 Limits to Knowledge and Being Human: What Is "Critical" in Critical Social Research and Theory? .....	65
<i>Phil Francis Carspecken</i>	

## PART 2

### CRITICAL TEACHER RESEARCH IN URBAN CONTEXTS

---

Introduction: Teacher Research, Urban Contexts, and the Emergence of the Critical from the Practical .....	89
7 Contextualizing Critical Action Research: Lessons from Urban Educators .....	92
<i>Jennifer Esposito and Venus Evans-Winters</i>	
8 From Disillusionment to Hope: Bicultural Practitioner Research .....	105
<i>Eduardo Lopez</i>	

9 Teaching Beyond the Skill and Drill: Reimagining Curriculum and Learning in a High-Stakes Testing Environment . . . . . 114  
*Jennifer Zapata*

10 Big History, Little World: The Politics of Social Justice Curriculum in Advanced Placement World History . . . . . 124  
*Rachel Klimke*

11 Challenging Standardized Curriculum: Recognizing, Critiquing, and Attempting to Transform the Learning Process . . . . . 133  
*Nien N. Tran*

12 Perceptions of Health Education among Adolescents in an Urban School: A Project to Promote Empowerment and Health Literacy in an Underserved Community . . . . . 142  
*Inga Wilder*

PART 3  
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

Introduction: Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) . . . . . 155

13 Doing Research *with* Young People: Participatory Research and the Rituals of Collective Work . . . . . 157  
*Caitlin Cahill*

14 Circulating Critical Research: Reflections on Performance and Moving Inquiry into Action . . . . . 171  
*Madeline Fox and Michelle Fine*

15 In Search of Critical Knowledge: Tracing Inheritance in the Landscape of Incarceration . . . . . 184  
*Carolina Muñoz Proto*

16 Split Scenes, Converging Visions: The Ethical Terrains Where PAR and Borderlands Scholarship Meet . . . . . 195  
*Jennifer Ayala*

PART 4  
NEW BOTTLES FOR NEW WINE—REPORT FORMATS

Introduction: Innovation in Research Report Formats . . . . . 211

17 From Critical Research Practice to Critical Research Reporting . . . . . 214  
*A. Suresh Canagarajah*

18 Recipe or Performing Art?: Challenging Conventions for Writing Action Research Theses . . . . . 221  
*Kath Fisher and Renata Phelps*

19 Narrative Study in the Classroom—Knowing What Was, What Is, and What Could Be . . . . . 237  
*Jessica Blanchard*

20 From Deficit to Abundance in the Classroom; Or What I Learned From Jayda . . . . . 249  
*Lisa Sibbett*

21 Reverberating the Action Research Text . . . . . 260  
*Rebecca Luce-Kapler*

22 Sojourning: Locating Ourselves in the Landscape . . . . . 268  
*Antoinette Olberg, Joy Collins, Colleen Ferguson, David Freeman, Rita Levitz, Mary Lou McCaskell and Brigid Walters*

PART 5  
COMPLEXITIES

---

Introduction: No One Ever Said It Would Be Easy . . . . .	281
23 Wounded in the Field of Inquiry: Vulnerability in Critical Research . . . . .	284
<i>Edward J. Brantmeier</i>	
24 Disruptions in the Field: An Academic's Lived Practice with Classroom Teachers . . . . .	291
<i>Janet L. Miller</i>	
25 Who Says We Can't Make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow's Ear?: Transforming Market-based Programs into Critical Education . . . . .	301
<i>Pamela J. Konkol, with Simeon Stumme and Isabel Nuñez</i>	
26 Forming New Agreements: A Brief Critical Exploration of the Pedagogical Formations of Predominantly White, Preservice Teachers in an Urban Context. . . . .	314
<i>Jeanine M. Staples, Talia Carroll, Donna Marie Cole-Mallot, Jennifer Myler, Corey Simmons, Julie Schappe, and Theresa Adkins</i>	
27 A Tale of Three Discourses: Doing Action Research in a Research Methods Class . . . . .	322
<i>Stephen R. Couch</i>	



