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Continuing the Journey: Articulating Dimensions of Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

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The primary aim of this chapter is to begin to articulate dimensions of feminist participatory action research (FPAR). In developing the dimensions, we considered the following questions: What are the advantages of integrating feminist research, participatory action research, and action research into a FPAR framework? What epistemological and methodological dimensions should be integrated into FPAR? What questions could those involved in FPAR ask themselves to continually refine and advance how they go about conducting this type of research? We begin the chapter by providing a brief overview of recent developments in feminist research. In some depth and with the aid of guiding questions, we then articulate the dimensions of FPAR that are, in part, based on our experiences. They include: (1) centering gender and women's experiences while challenging patriarchy; (2) accounting for intersectionality; (3) honoring voice and difference through participatory research processes; (4) exploring new forms of representation; (5) reflexivity; and (6) honoring many forms of action.

With the emergence of social movements such as the women's movement and the peace movement, new and different forms of activism have arisen (Ledwith and Asgill, 2000). The ideals of social critique, emancipation, and collective action that characterize these movements have also filtered into the academy and various approaches to research.

Feminist research (FR), participatory action research (PAR), and action research (AR) are critical approaches that focus on democratizing the research process, acknowledging lived experiences, and contributing to social justice agendas to counter prevailing ideologies and power relations that are deeply gendered, classed, and racialized. FR, PAR and

AR have been critical of the academy's control over knowledge generation practices and have struggled with straddling the community/academy divide (Chrisp, 2004; Lykes and Coquillon, 2006).

We argue that FR, PAR and AR are three research traditions that share some mutual goals and ongoing dialogue could create synergies between them, while addressing their respective oversights and limitations. Traditionally, PAR and AR researchers have seldom seen the need to focus on how gender shapes the construction of identities, behavior, and social relations, in part, because they believed women were included in generic terms like 'the community' or 'the oppressed' (Maguire, 1987). While PAR and AR are increasingly engaging marginalized women, rarely are feminist analyses or gender relations fully considered and women's activities are sometimes trivialized, ignored, misrepresented, or homogenized (Mohanty, 2003; Reinhartz, 1992). FR, on the other hand, despite espousing action and social change agendas, has been slower in articulating specific strategies that can contribute to activist agendas (Naples, 2003). Since feminism and women's studies became instituted in the academy, the growth and development of highly theorized forms of feminism has, in some cases, distanced feminist goals of social change from marginalized groups who feminists initially set out to hear from and serve. As a result, 'many action-oriented feminist researchers have been frustrated by the lack of an articulated framework for translating feminist insights into concrete actions aimed at achieving social change' (Maguire et al., 2004: xii).

We believe that FR, PAR and AR researchers would be mutually well served if they became allies. As a result, we are calling for feminist participatory action research (FPAR) approaches that build on the strengths and overcome the limitations of these three research traditions. Not only are they more powerful as a larger and connected community, but epistemologically and methodologically they serve to buttress one another

(Maguire, 2001/2006; Brydon-Miller and Wadsworth, 2004; Greenwood, 2004; Lykes and Coquillon, 2006). Feminism's theoretical and epistemological debates, while honoring the agency and lived experience of women as it is historically and culturally situated, can serve to strengthen PAR and AR's ability to understand its communities and the implications of an action orientation (Reid et al., 2006). Likewise, participatory and action research, with its deliberate and long-standing tradition of advocating action towards social change, can help feminist researchers move out of the academic armchair by engaging in more transformative research that better serves women's diverse communities (Meyerson and Kolb, 2000).

The primary aim of this chapter is to begin to articulate dimensions of FPAR. In developing the dimensions, we considered the following three questions: What are the advantages of integrating FR, PAR and AR into a FPAR framework? What epistemological and methodological dimensions should be integrated into FPAR? What questions could those involved in FPAR ask themselves to continually refine and advance how they go about conducting this type of research? While we hope that this articulation becomes a conversation between diverse community members, practitioners, and researchers, we acknowledge that we write from within the academy and are linking FPAR's dimensions to theoretical and methodological debates that at times use complex and specialized language. Our aim in including 'guiding questions' is to make the framework more accessible and open to critique and revision given the unique aspects of different FPAR projects.

We identify ourselves as feminist participatory action researchers, located in the academy, who strive to conduct research towards social justice. We share many privileges as we are both white, heterosexual, married mothers from middle-class backgrounds who are well educated, able-bodied, and employed in Canada. At the same time, we have shared the challenges,

difficulties, and rewards of engaging in FPAR projects for over seven years with diverse women on low income in political, academic, and community environments that are sometimes hostile towards this type of research. Before articulating the dimensions of FPAR that are, in part, based on our experiences, we provide a very brief overview of recent developments in FR to frame our discussion.

DEVELOPMENTS IN FEMINIST RESEARCH (FR)

While there has never been a fixed view on gender oppression, a unified vision of women's liberation, or a common approach to knowledge production, different approaches to FR share a concern for understanding the myriad of ways that gender impacts women's lives, conducting research that is politically and ethically accountable, and transforming unjust power relations. For Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 16), what makes the growing array of feminist methodologies distinctive 'is the extent to which they are shaped by feminist theories, politics, and ethics, while being grounded in diverse women's experiences'. The dramatic growth in feminist theoretical positions, methodological stances, and research strategies is viewed as 'a healthy sign of the vitality of feminist studies' (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2213). Researchers are now working across epistemologies and methods to theorize how gender intersects with race, nation, sexuality, class, physical ability, and other markers of difference in more complex ways (McCall, 2005). Postcolonial theories, queer theories, and critical race theories represent just a few of the more recent theoretical developments that are raising new questions about how gender relations are constructed, sustained, and resisted (Harding and Norberg, 2005; Mohanty, 2003). Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 19) agree that FR is challenging conventional approaches to research, grappling with postmodern thought, and articulating

differences between women in largely productive ways, although many gaps and silences remain. The problem with feminist inspired PAR and AR is that theoretical stances are not often clearly identified, nor do such projects always set out to build or extend existing feminist theory.

A significant challenge for FR has been the development of methodologies for studying multiple forms of marginalization. Intersectional theory is based on the idea that 'different dimensions of social life cannot be separated into discrete or pure strands' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 76). It suggests that we need to move beyond seeing ourselves and others as single points in some specified set of dichotomies, male or female, white or black, straight or gay, scholar or activist, powerful or powerless (McCall, 2005). Rather, 'we need to imagine ourselves as existing at the intersection of multiple identities, all of which influence one another and together shape our continually changing experience and interactions' (Brydon-Miller, 2004: 9).

With increased calls for participatory research designs, more attention is being paid to the importance of insider-outsider roles and remaining reflexive about each other's social positioning, how this shifts over time and possibly confounds knowledge generation and plans for collective action (Lykes and Coquillon, 2006; Reid, 2004a; Reinharz, 1992). Some feminist researchers have explored the unique challenges and opportunities of conducting research with women in interpersonal and relational frameworks, with some arguing it is necessary to create close relations, while others warn of the risks of building trust, rapport, and disclosure with participants (Cotterill, 1992; Finch, 1993; Williams and Lykes, 2003). For example, Yoshihama and Carr (2002: 100) discussed the tensions around participation in FPAR for Hmong women in a male-dominated social order, as the women became vulnerable to criticism and rejection from their own families and neighbors because the topic of violence was not welcomed by the community. This illustrates why reflexivity

and developing non-colonial research practices are so central (Tuhiwai Smith, 2005). What remains unclear is the extent to which FR researchers are aware of the growing number of FPAR studies that are drawing and building upon the participatory and action tenets of PAR and AR.

Nonetheless, FR continues to grapple with who is privileged epistemologically and how this affects the representation of voices and the interpretations of findings. Questions about how and who can speak for women of colour, lesbians, working-class women and postcolonials, for example, continue to be pivotal in helping feminists clarify the links between theory, method, and action (Fonow and Cook, 2005). Feminists agree that there is a need to develop a range of research methods that address diversity and divergence as well as commonalities in women's lives (Olesen, 2005), and experimentation with novel data collection techniques is important (Lykes in collaboration with the Association of Maya Ixil Women, 2001/2006). Exploring different methods of representation can help cut across difference to understand the contextualities of women's experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and disadvantage and how they are located in their particular social, economic, political, and cultural contexts (hooks, 1990; Mohanty, 2003; Reinharz, 1992; Wolf, 1996).

Despite a commitment to action-oriented research, FR have been slower to articulate specific strategies that can contribute to such agendas (Cancian, 1992; Naples, 2003). Possibly, those who are most marginalized have questioned the relevance and utility of the Western feminist movement and feminist theory and have identified with other social movements that are more directly action-oriented. Yet Harding and Norberg (2005: 2010) point out that social change has occurred due to 'politically engaged research on violence against women, on women's double day of work, and on the costs to men of maintaining norms of masculinity'. In these ways, feminist researchers can use their power to affect

social policy, but FPAR argues that this can be enhanced through collective action with women who are the intended beneficiaries of action. For example, Wang, Burris and Ping (1996) used a photo novella methodology so rural Chinese women who could not read or write could inform policy makers about their lives and health needs. Three policy outcomes represented action arising from this study that challenged patriarchy through the provision of daycare, midwives, and education for girls.

By naming and mapping out initial dimensions of FPAR below, we hope to encourage stronger links between FR, PAR and AR because there is a recognition that 'existing systems of conducting and evaluating research must be reframed if our scholarship is to be consistent with the values we espouse' (Maguire et al., 2004: xvi).

TRAVELING NEW VISTAS: PROPOSING DIMENSIONS OF FPAR

From the outset we caution that we are not calling for an idealized set of FPAR dimensions that are impossible to achieve. We have seen researchers discount their work because it did not fully engage women in all phases of research, for example (Frisby et al., 2005). Rather, we hope to acknowledge different types and levels of FPAR. By presenting these highly interrelated dimensions, researchers may be able to reflect upon and evaluate FPAR projects as they are initiated, unfold, and are either sustained, disbanded, or partially completed. We do not present these dimensions definitively; rather, we invite others to critique, modify, connect, and extend them. We envision that each new attempt can open up new possibilities for engaging in more reflexive, collaborative, and transformative FPAR. The guiding questions are not meant to be asked only at the beginning of FPAR; they can be re-visited as projects unfold and are evaluated.

Centering Gender and Women's Diverse Experiences While Challenging Forms of Patriarchy

Gender and women's experiences are central to FPAR in several ways – in understanding how different forms of patriarchy create domination and resistance, in identifying key issues for research, and in giving explicit attention to how women and men, and those who do not identify with either of these binary gendered categories, benefit from action-oriented research (or not). Smith (1992, 1997) draws attention to how social relations are embedded and embodied in women's everyday activities, and how rendering them visible can become a starting point for political action. Our own research showed how some Canadian women living in poverty internalized oppression and sometimes saw themselves as being responsible for their own situations. When they engaged in dialogue with other women through a FPAR process, they more fully questioned how their everyday lives were tied to patterns of subordination within their families, workplaces, communities, and society at large, but their interpretations and plans for action differed depending on their age, family situations, ethnicity, and a number of other factors (Frisby et al., 2006; Reid, 2004a).

Such an analysis involves defying 'patriarchal truths' that women are naturally inferior to men and considering how women generally live in different material and social circumstances due to gendered power relations and globalization (Hartsock, 1983; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). Mohanty (2003) argues that patriarchy and gender should not be treated as universal constructs and judged by Western standards, because such analyses often situate non-Western women as inferior powerless victims who lack agency to interpret, resist, and subvert the contexts shaping their lives in different ways. For example, Barazangi (2004) discusses how some academic feminists have dismissed Muslim women's views as

'religious' and considered the prevailing Muslim males' interpretations as representative of Islamic views on gender. Ignoring different constructions of patriarchy and gender as they are historically and culturally constituted will make it more difficult to develop strategic coalitions across difference (Ledwith and Asgill, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). Therefore, we argue that focusing on women's divergent daily experiences as embedded in larger relations of power should be a starting point in FPAR endeavors.

Guiding questions:

- What issues are of central concern to girls and women participating in FPAR projects and how are these issues tied to their everyday experiences?
- How are experiences tied to gendered, classed, and racialized power relations?
- What is the larger historical, cultural and political context that the study is situated within and what are the implications for the research?
- How will experiences with the issues identified be uncovered, interpreted, and collectively analyzed?
- How do experiences vary and what accounts for this?
- What forms of patriarchy exist and how do they shape/challenge researcher/participant worldviews?
- Could challenges to dominant patriarchal norms put participants and/or researchers or others at risk? How will we know this, and what strategies will be used to negotiate risk?

Accounting for Intersectionality

Feminists have argued that additive and interlocking conceptualizations of oppression have inadequately captured women's experiences and that intersectional analyses can be productively advanced by adopting a FPAR framework. A first step towards grappling with the sophisticated analyses of women's intersectionalities is to foster and support sustained, deliberate, and open dialogue with research participants and ourselves. While Ledwith and Asgill (2000) do not explicitly label their approach as FPAR, they do offer a model to

help create alliances across difference based on respect for persons who are different, but whose interests in social justice are similar. Brydon-Miller, Maguire and McIntyre (2004) and Lykes and Coquillon (2006) provide examples of studies at the interstice of FPAR, FR, PAR, and AR that have problematized how power shapes and is shaped across these intersections and how crucial such analyses are for understanding the complexities of women's lives and conceptualizing meaningful possibilities for activism and social change.

Exploring these tensions 'can help reveal privilege, especially when we remember that the intersection is multidimensional and not fixed, including intersections of both subordination and privilege' (Wildman and Davis, 1996; cited in Brydon-Miller, 2004: 9). Affirming, attending to, and authorizing the voice of the oppressed is dependent on our ability to realize our own First-World researcher roles as oppressors (Brabeck, 2004). Through open dialogues with both our participants and ourselves, we can begin to understand the nature of oppression, domination, and exploitation as they intersect and interrelate with gender, race, class and other forms of advantage and disadvantage.

Guiding questions:

- How can intersectionality be considered and what complexities and tensions could this create?
- How does intersectionality shape identities, experiences, and relationships; and how does this shift over time?
- What non-colonial collaborative processes are in place to build relations and work across differences in gender, class, race, culture, sexuality, ablebodiedness and other markers of difference?
- How will intersectionality be taken into account when deciding on research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and deciding upon action plans?

Honoring Voice and Difference Through Participatory Research Processes

FPAR is an approach to producing knowledge through democratic interactive relationships

that are committed to making diverse women's voices more audible by facilitating their empowerment through 'ordinary talk' (Maguire, 2001/2006). The aim is to connect the articulated and contextualized personal with the often hidden or invisible structural and social institutions that define and shape our lives. This can foster the development of strategies and programs based on real life experiences rather than theories or assumptions, providing an analysis of issues based on a description of how women actually hope to transcend problems encountered (Barnsley and Ellis, 1992).

However, in their poststructuralist critique, Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that participatory approaches can impose rather than alleviate entrenched power relations, especially if communities are wrongly assumed to be homogeneous. They argue further that local knowledge has been romanticized through participatory approaches that leave broader exclusionary processes and institutions unchanged. Kesby (2005) counters that while participation is infused with power relations, it can be maneuvered to challenge more domineering and destructive forms of power.

Power is not concentrated; nor is it a commodity to be held, seized, divided, or distributed by individuals. It is a much more decentered and ubiquitous force acting everywhere because it comes from everywhere. ... Neither is power inherently negative, limiting, or repressive; rather it is inherently productive of actions, effects, and subjects, even when most oppressive. (Kesby, 2005: 2040)

Like PAR, FPAR researchers argue for participatory strategies that involve participants in the design, implementation, and analysis of the research that can be deepened through collective dialogue, even though this can be fraught with conflict and challenges (Frisby et al., 2005; Naples, 2003). Collins (1990) suggests that wisdom is derived not necessarily from having lived through an Other's experiences, but from having engaged in an empathetic centerless dialogue with an Other in which the power dynamics are fluid. FPAR researchers hold a great responsibility

in seeking the means through which the subaltern can find voice and can be empowered to represent her own interests (Brydon-Miller, 2004).

Participatory approaches include the co-generation of the research questions themselves, but these attempts often fall short of creating genuinely inclusive, safe, and unbiased spaces of relevance for people who live on the 'margins' of society. This helps to explain why FPAR is sometimes rejected by the very people whose lives it tries to explain (Barazangi, 2004; Reinhartz, 1992). Yet, the feminist ideals of using participatory research techniques to give voice to people's experience and create change by focusing on action aimed at social transformation have not been fully realized. According to Maguire (1987: 35), how knowledge is created and who retains control over the knowledge generation and dissemination 'remains one of the weakest links in feminist research'.

Guiding questions:

- Who is and is not participating in FPAR projects, how are they participating, and what are the consequences?
- How will the voices and experiences of women in relation to broader structural conditions be heard?
- How will research questions be decided upon and who sees them as being relevant?
- What opportunities will women have to participate in all phases of research?
- Could participation put too much of a burden on some participants and how will we know and account for this?
- Is attention being given to barriers to participation (e.g. childcare, transportation, language, inscribed gender roles)?
- What sources of conflict, power imbalances, and silences are emerging and how will these be anticipated and dealt with?

Exploring New Forms of Representation

A related FPAR dimension is exploring new ways of representing data by testing the boundaries of prescribed ways of conducting research (Hertz, 1996). FPAR researchers

have challenged, pushed, explored, and disrupted boundaries that have traditionally been set up by researchers and the researched (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998). They 'continue to seek authentic ways in which the subaltern may articulate her experience and speak on her own behalf in ways that can be heard and understood by members of the dominant culture' (Brydon-Miller, 2004: 12–13). Yet tensions are inherent in representing women's voices and experiences because questions are continually raised about 'who has the authority to represent women's voices and to what end', 'what forms of the representation will best capture the dynamics involved', 'who decides whether they are credible', and 'do representations reinscribe rather than transcend dominant power relations?'. As Lather indicates below, it is necessary to grapple with such tensions to continue to uncover counter-practices for less exploitative and more creative ways of collecting, interpreting, and communicating research findings.

The necessary tension between the desire to know and the limits of representation lets us question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysis, transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility, where a failed account occasions new kinds of positionings. Such a move is about economies of responsibility within non-innocent space, a 'within/against' location. (Lather, 2001: 204)

Diaries and journals; dialogic and interactive interview formats; participatory workshops; poetry, photography, film and art; practices such as co-writing are just some examples of 'counter-practices' being explored in FPAR projects (Brabeck, 2004; Frisby et al., 2005; Lather, 2001; McIntyre and Lykes, 2004; Reid, 2004a; Wang et al., 1996; Williams and Lykes, 2003; also see Fine and Torre (Chapter 27), Chui (Chapter 34), and Chowns (Chapter 39) in this volume). Yet, 'we must trouble any claims to accurate representation to raise new possibilities for knowing and for what is knowable' (Fonow and Cook, 2005: 2222), and we cannot assume that women will want to collaborate and co-construct representations of their lives (Brueggemann, 1996: 19).

While such representations will always be shifting, partial, and contested, working with women to explore the advantages and risks of alternative ways of co-producing knowledge is a key consideration in any FPAR project.

Guiding questions:

- What forms of representation of subaltern and other voices are being explored?
- Who has authority over representation and how was this determined?
- How will data be collected, interpreted, analyzed, and communicated?
- What advantages and challenges are posed through this exploration?
- How might these new forms be received or resisted in the community, the policy arena, and in the academy?
- How are forms of representation connected to action plans?

Reflexivity

Considering the previous FPAR dimensions implicates the role of researchers whether they are from within the academy or not. It is widely agreed that reflexivity is a principle of good FR practice, but what it means and how it can be achieved is more difficult to pin down (Coleman and Rippin, 2000; Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Hertz, 1996; Lather, 1991; Reay, 1996; Rose, 2001). Generally, reflexivity means attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process. It involves critical reflection on a number of levels: the identification of power relationships and their effects in the research process; the ethical judgments that frame the research and mark the limits of shared values and political interests; and accountability for the knowledge that is produced (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002: 118–19). Feminist action researchers are expected to be transparent and attentive to the methodological, epistemological, and political influences, contradictions, and complexities in all stages of research (Ristock and Pennell, 1996). Reflexivity has also come to mean the

way researchers engage in self criticism and consciously write themselves into the text (Brabeck, 2004; Lykes and Coquillon, 2006). At its core, reflexivity is about reflecting on power, a researcher's power to perceive, interpret, and communicate about their research participants (Frisby, 2006; Frisby et al., 2005; Reid, 2004a, 2004b).

Feminist action researchers, with their explicit commitment to participatory research processes and meaningful engagement with research participants, question deeply their power and positions in the research process. Thus feminist action researchers are placed at the edges between public knowledge and private lived experiences. This 'liminal' position not only applies to the research process and product, but also concerns researchers personally in their own lived experiences (Reid, 2004a). Fine (1994) refers to the liminal position as the 'hyphen.' When we opt to engage in social struggles with those who have been exploited and subjugated we work the hyphen, revealing more about ourselves, and far more about oppression and discrimination. By working the hyphen, researchers probe how we are in relation to Others, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations.

Questioning 'chosen silences' as control mechanisms is central in FPAR (Chataway, 1997). Paradoxically, efforts at working reflexively may in fact perpetuate silences and thwart feminist efforts at the authentic representation of both ourselves and our research participants (Reid, 2004a). As women and men engaged in research for social change, it has been much harder to recognize the times that we have ourselves held power over others and possibly used our power in disempowering ways. As white middle-class and educated researchers, for instance, it is essential for us to engage in self-education about our own privilege and to co-create conditions for anti-racist work in order to be able to engage in more equitable dialogue with participants of colour.

FPAR researchers require a great deal of humility, patience, and reflexive dialogue between themselves and their participants so they can learn from their failures and partial

successes (Williams and Lykes, 2003). By working through the struggles of developing relationships, FPAR researchers can learn the significance of tolerance, acceptance, and humility in the development of reciprocal relationships (McIntyre and Lykes, 2004). Maguire (2004) refers to this as 'shared vulnerability', a willingness to examine deeply held beliefs and to try new ways of thinking about gender, sexism, racism, heteronormativity, and oppression to explore new ways of being FPAR researchers. From this perspective, the beginning of the journey begins from within (Maguire, 2004). FPAR researchers are in a position to develop truly reflexive texts that leave both the author and the reader vulnerable, so they must think carefully about the intended and unintended consequences of their research (Reid, 2004a). Yet with the importance of being self-critical we cannot just 'write ourselves into the text'; we must also write ourselves into action and activism and use our self-reflections to generate actions of self-discovery within the research process (Reid et al., in press). This can become a resource to account for power imbalances while also facilitating and possibly transforming them.

Guiding questions:

- What are the intended and possible unintended consequences of the research?
- What are the power relations within and surrounding the project and what steps are being taken to level imbalances and mobilize power?
- What ethical issues are framing the research and its representation?
- Who owns the research, how will it be produced, communicated, and acted upon?
- How are the researchers accounting for their own social location and insider/outsider status?
- What emotions and struggles are being encountered in building relationships?

Honoring Many Forms of Action

FPAR projects need to seek clarity about the emancipatory goals for their research while articulating how they understand action, which is a dynamic process. What actions are

desired is based on one's social, economic, and political situations and it can occur at both individual and collective levels (Reid et al., in press). People with problems figure out what to do by first finding out the causes and then acting on insight (Park, 2001/2006). Reinharz (1992) contends that the act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change, because the paucity of research about women accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness, even though they have agency. It is through action that we learn how the world works, what we can do, and who we are – we learn with heart and mind – and this is how we can become aware and emancipated. Action is an integral part of reflexive knowledge, and can be conceptualized as speaking, or attempting to speak, to validate oneself and one's experiences and understandings in and of the world (Gordon, 2001/2006). However, in some FPAR studies it is not always clear what action was taken, by whom, what effect the action had, and how all of this was interpreted by different participants over time and space. Above all, we want to prevent situations where it is privileged researchers who benefit most by publishing the work.

Intersectional theory suggests that agency, or taking action, is complex and that women consent to, resist, and reshape social relations of power within a complex matrix of domination and subordination. Although FPAR no longer seeks single consciousness-raising events that will inspire all women to action, they increasingly recognize that examining and enacting action is a fruitful avenue for theory and praxis (Fonow and Cook, 2005). Fraser and Naples (2004) suggest that straddling the more conceptual feminist world with the action-oriented AR world, while being unified in similar visions and goals, can be simultaneously theoretical and engaged:

We all know of the theoretical work that, however brilliant, is so abstract and disengaged that it surrenders the capacity to illuminate political practice. But the reverse is equally problematic; when scholarship is too immediately political, too myopically focused on practical application, it loses the capacity to pose questions about the big picture. The trick, of course,

is to keep both concerns simultaneously in view – but in such a way that avoids subordinating one to the other, and so preserves the integrity of each. (Fraser and Naples, 2004: 1106–7).

Another critical consideration is whether individual and local actions eventually link up to a larger social change agenda. What this should look like and what steps could be taken to accomplish this are seldom clear.

Guiding questions:

- What are the emancipatory goals associated with the project and how are these being decided upon?
- What forms of action/in-action were being taken before the project began?
- What different forms of action are (or could be) taken and by whom?
- What forms of action were unrealized but may be taken in the future?
- Who is benefiting (or not) from the actions being taken?
- Are the actions contradictory or being resisted or too risky/difficult to implement and what are the implications of this?
- Do the actions contribute to a larger social change agenda, and what steps could be taken to accomplish this, if desired?

CONCLUSION

As FPAR researchers we draw strength in continuing the journey towards linking FR, PAR and AR. These research traditions complement one another as approaches that are liberating, transformative, and that can, if we act with care and honesty, contribute to new ways of relating, new ways of constructing knowledge, new ways of confronting privilege, new criteria for what is valued in society, and new directions for implementing research processes that lead to social justice (McIntyre, 2000). Maguire (2004) contends that it remains impossible for PAR and AR to be transformative approaches to knowledge creation until more is learnt about feminism, with all its diversity. This involves critically examining their own multiple identities and

implications for their work, and incorporating feminist voices and visions (Maguire, 2004). Indeed, the most reasonable response to overcoming marginalization is to form alliances with others concerned with social change and democratization (Greenwood, 2004).

In this chapter we argued that there are numerous advantages of integrating FR, PAR, and AR into a FPAR framework. We proposed six initial dimensions with guiding questions, and invite further dialogue, critique, and refinement. While we remain passionate about FPAR and believe that it holds many promises, we also recognize that it is not a panacea as it is fraught with tensions, challenges, ambiguities, and contradictions. The greatest lesson we have learned in our own research and from reading about others is the importance of living in places of mutual growth and discomfort, taking action, and not becoming paralyzed while grappling with important questions (Brydon-Miller and Wadsworth, 2004). Inevitably, the researcher can never ‘get it right’ and we share Chrisp’s challenge that:

My hope is that maybe I will get it more right than the last time. ... The tensions require constant deconstructing, complexities explored and acknowledged openly, and dilemmas made transparent. Along with the search for new or uniquely reworked knowledges, there is an urgent need for a courageous search for and utilization of new research processes. (Chrisp, 2004: 92).

It is impossible to rid ourselves of the legacy of discrimination that shapes every aspect of our culture, and we can never truly resolve the issues of power and privilege that continue to affect our interactions with others. However, we can hope to remain vigilant, humble, and open to instruction (Brydon-Miller, 2004). In this process, as FPAR researchers we can perhaps contribute to the long-term goal of social change – indeed, ‘the long haul struggle to create a world in which the full range of human characteristics, resources, experiences, and dreams are available to all of our children’ (Maguire, 2001/2006: 66).

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