YRD
Youthprise Research & Design

Principles of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

YPAR Challenges Assumptions about:

Who knows

1 Research is never neutral; it always serves someone's interests

YPAR centers those at the bottom of hierarchies as having valuable and necessary knowledge. Too often, research can bring harm to communities, reinforce power imbalances, or wrongfully appropriate the knowledge(s) of marginalized groups. Research can be designed to empower young people & communities to become creative, critical, active experts on their own conditions, experiences, values and culture.

2 Knowledge for Social Change

YPAR centers the decision-making and critical dialogues of youth most impacted by inequality. YPAR addresses the root causes of problems, works to transform the quality of each person's life, the environment, the community, and the whole society. Research for social change is not an individualistically driven academic practice, but a dynamic combination of community research and action, catalyzing systemic change.

How they know

3 Project Guided by Youth and Participants

YPAR challenges hierarchical forms of research design; all researchers and participants have equal roles in planning & conducting research and interpreting & evaluating data. Research that starts by identifying the issues about which participants have strong feelings and can relate to from their experiences will go further in reaching people.

4 Culturally responsive

YPAR honors relationships and builds trust by establishing mutual reciprocity and respect between researchers and community. Research design is a mutually engaged learning process with culturally appropriate methods; it is influenced by different worldviews, cosmologies, rituals, ceremony, and oral history.

Where the knowledge goes

5 Knowledge recycled

By engaging in a research action project that follows the needs and stakes of community members, knowledge gathered by researchers benefits the community. Data/findings can be shared via various mediums—public art, poetry series, and theatre or any other creative application of findings recommended by those directly involved in the project. By collaborating with community partners, data gathered can inform programs, community development, and policy; shift public debates and expand local expertise.

6 Reflection and action

Through ongoing exploration, reflection and action, researchers, organizers, and community members build community when celebrating successes and troubleshooting challenges. Conflict is a natural part of this process and can build relationships and share power. Reflection improves strategies for social change and enhances the group's capacity to transform daily life, institutions and systems.