Lecture 27
Participatory Action Research

Welcome back to the NOC0 courts titled qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course and we been talking about different strategies of inquiry, so today we will cover participatory action research, in these two lectures today this man and the next one will talk about participatory action research and this is the kind of research that I'd like to do because it shows you results.

And you take feedback from the results then you put them back in again, so that is really the essence of participatory action research, but we will discuss it in details in this lecture and next lecture.

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Participatory action research, what is participatory Research? And now when we talk about participatory research, we are talking about a connection between the researcher and the researched, we are talking about the researcher being part of the situation that is researched, we are talking about the researcher contributing to the situation that is being researched. So the attributes of participatory research are shared ownership of, (**Lecturer say can you please focus on the screen, thank you)**

"shared ownership of research projects, community based analysis of social problems and orientation towards community action." Shared ownership of research projects means that the projects are shared jointly by the researcher and researched, we are not talking about financial sharing, we are talking about taking on the responsibility of the effectiveness of the projects by the researcher and researched, by the people conducting the project, by the community, so that is one big thing here.

Second attribute is community based analysis of social problems whatever we see needs to be contextualized, so when we talk about participatory action research, we are essentially talking about the focus on the situatedness of problems, we are talking about how the problems are situated within their own context, which means we don't only study the problems, we also study them as they relate to things that they come from and think they contribute to.

The social situation from which they come out and the situation that they a part of and the situation that the solution to this problems can affect, so we are essentially talking about contextualizing, situating these problems within the social milieu. Then the third one is orientation towards community action, we are talking about when we do participatory research, the primary goal is to find out more about the problem, to solve the problem with the explicit aim of coming up with the solution, that will be acceptable, to the situation that the problem has come out of.

It's not only generating a solution that will be published, it is also generating a solution that can be immediately applied to the situation that the problem has risen from, we see a problem we identify it we work on it, we analyze it, we find out what is going wrong, how can I be solved and then we immediately go into the field and we act on the solution that we have generated, we take feedback from the situation, we implement it.

We revised solution and that's how the cycle goes on. So we will talk more about this as we go on, but that is really what this is all about. it is about generating solutions, it is about generating results that can immediately result in community action.
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What is participatory research?
(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- Attributes of participatory research:
  - □ "shared ownership of research projects
  - □ Community-based analysis of social problems
  - □ Orientation toward community action"

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Now where and why does participatory research happen? Kemmis, this is from a paper by Kemmis and Mctaggart from the same book handbook of qualitative research methods, I told you about this book, I love this book it's such a comprehensive book. So they have described participatory action Research and where does participatory research happen, we are talking about participatory researcher at this point, it happens in developing countries, and the proponents, the people who do participatory research include the haves for the have-nots.

So the people who have things, who have the resources are trying to generate solutions for people who need these solutions, that is what traditionally participatory research has been all about, it has been about the people who have either resources expertise, or energy or willingness to do something. To do something for the communities that they are connected to in whatever way, but there is a clear distinction between the haves and the have-nots and there's a clear distinction between who does the research and who gets affected by it
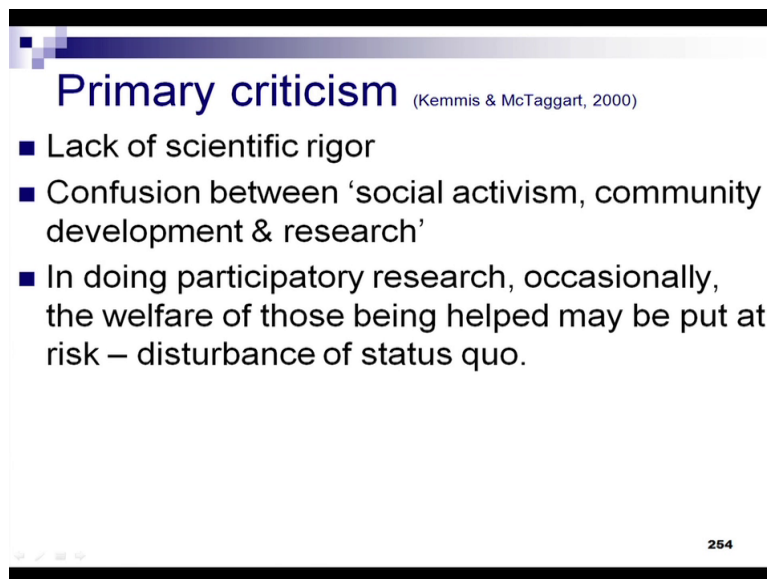
And the people were affected by it are lacking in some way or another, either they don't have resources or they don't have the necessary expertise or they don't have the willingness to get together or they don't know how to, so you know they don't have the knowledge, so the haves versus the have-nots sorry not haves verses haves for the have-nots. Then, sites include far flung remote areas or very underprivileged communities, in most cases historically that is what participatory research has been all about.

The sites for participatory research have included communities that are really, really underprivileged, that are so even within the same city, maybe it is a slum area within the

same city, maybe it is you know the with the places or maybe we are just focusing on the street children, we are not talking about children in schools that do not have good teachers, we are talking about exclusively about street children which is where the participatory research is happening.

So it's not only far flung in terms of geographical locations, it's also far flung in terms of the difference between the social milieu of the people conducting the research and the social milieu of the people on whom the research is conducted. So the difference is very starkly clear and that is where traditionally this has been happening.

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Primary criticisms of participatory research are critiques say that participatory research lacks scientific rigor. They say there is a confusion between 'social activism and community development with research' so say community development and social activism does not constitute research, research is very different from social activism, what you are saying is really social activism, you want to do something for the society very good, very nice, but that is not what research is all about.

And participatory action research tries to bridge the gap between traditional forms of research and the community involvement, so that there is so that is one big criticism here. The other criticism is that in doing participatory research, occasionally the welfare of those being helped maybe put at risk- because the status quo is disturbed. Now I will give you an example of this and I will start with the disclaimer with all respect to or you know I acknowledge, I understand that there are experts sitting in the offices of Human Rights all over the world.

But you know they will, of course you know there is a charter of Human Rights, that I worked on the convention on the rights of the child in a past life at some point. And I saw this you know who decides what is or should be right for a particular community, who decides what should be presented or as mandated as a write for a particular community. Now I will take the example that have taken earlier also in the series of lectures.

And that is the example of hand rickshaw pullers in Calcutta, which is a big thing you know there's been a lot of discussion and we say if you know, the researchers went in saw what was going on, they say okay it's inhuman to sit in a rickshaw that is pulled by another human being. So various reasons, the rickshaw pullers or hand rickshaw pulling was cut down significantly in major areas of Calcutta, I understand the reason behind it, it seems inhuman that one person is pulling a rickshaw load full of people and it seems inhuman.

But looking at this from the point of view of the rickshaw pullers, just imagine a person who has learnt how to pull the rickshaw, the only thing this person knows, is how to put the hand rickshaw, the person has worked very hard that is how he is feeding his family, is pulling is rickshaw, is developed the physical strength, to pull the rickshaw people are paying him, a decent amount of money, what he asks for is being paid to him.

I'm not saying that is bad or good I'm just asking you, who decides that it is inhuman, if the person puts in that much hard work and I know I could get brick back for this, but I mean, I am only talking from the perspective of the researchers. So it, is this is all that the person knows how to do at the age of 50 or 55, when he is doing all this work and is earning an honest living, at that point some Human Rights activists come and say that okay this is banned, you don't have to do this please find something else to do, now is that not inhuman.

Aren't you're taking the persons livelihood away a from him, in the name of participatory research, we have seen how you live, we have seen that this is inhuman is affecting our back, it's affecting our legs, it's affecting this, it's affecting that's fine, accepted what does the person do. So that is what the critics say that you know you disturb status quo in doing participatory research.

We see problems, we disturb status quo, now if this is phased out, if we say okay with hand rickshaw pulling, these many people can sit and if these many people sit, then this is the

amount of money they should be paying, for this much distance that is fine. Who says that the job of a heart surgeon a cardiac surgeon is any less stressful or who says that the job of a pilot is any less stressful, yes the surgeon is working in a flash hospital.

Just imagine the amount of mental stress the person has, any surgeon has when they cut open another human being who has decided to place that life in this person's hands and take out the person's heart and the massage the person's heart, who says that is any less stressful, is that not in human. You ask the surgeon who is in the operation theatre, how much of stress is placed on them when they conduct a surgery, you ask pilots how much of tension they have.

Or how much stress this is when they are flying load of, maybe two, three, four hundred people across the Atlantic or across the Pacific Ocean or across the or over a stripe stricken area like the Middle East, sometime some of the Middle Eastern countries where there is constant bumping going on, who says their job is any less stressful, the person is responsible for four hundred life's, one slip, one tiny slip, one can cause the plane to crash.

Who says that it is any less stressful, yes they have a nice comfortable cockpit, the given whatever they want to eat people serving them, but then the amount of mental stress they carry with them, on this long haul flights, fourteen, sixteen hours non-stop life, who says that is any less stressful, so when we talk about participatory action research, we are talking about disturbing the status quo, people have developed their own ways of living, they have developed their own ways of what they see, what communities see as problems.
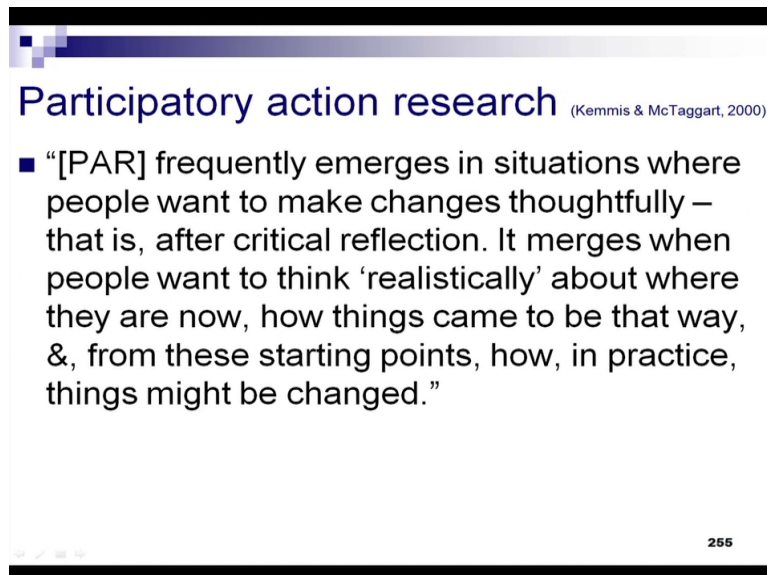
And critics say that when we do research and when we go in and we do participatory research, we find out problems that communities have accepted and learn to deal with and the disturb them in and then we say that okay, you know the rest of the world is saying this is a problem why don't you acknowledge it as a problem and then that is the disturbance that is caused, may work to the detriment of the people in the situation that is being research, with the explicit aim of helping these people.

We say hand rickshaw pulling is banned, we don't realize that this person has lost his livelihood, so that is what one of the criticisms. As Aradhna Malik I am on neither side, so please don't beat me up for it, I am talking to the listeners now, I understand both point of

view and I am, I prefer not to share my perspective here, but as a researcher it is my responsibility to share both of these very strong opinions or points of view.

But very strong, well researched points of view, with the listeners, with the students, so they can think themselves critically as to which side they want to be on, okay.

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Participatory action research and I'm going to refer to participatory action research as PAR from now on, "frequently emerges in situations where people want to make changes thoughtfully - that is, after critical reflection. It emerges when people want to think 'realistically' about where they are now, how things came to be that way and from the starting point, how, in practice, things might be changed."

So where are we? What are we doing? Where do we want to go? Do things need to be changed? If yes, how so? What the impact of this change is going to be like? etcetera and that is what participatory action research does. It talks about change, it talks about change that can really happen, it talks about change that can really take place, it talks about results that can be in front of your eyes, as soon as you have analyzed the situation, okay.

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Traditions in/ aspects of the study of practice
(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- "The individual performances, events, & effects that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'objective,' external perspective of an outsider (the way the practitioner's individual behavior appears to an outside observer);

- The wider social & material conditions & interactions that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'objective,' external perspective of an outsider (the way the patterns of social interaction among those involved in the practice appear to an outside observer);

- The intentions, meanings, & values that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'subjective,' internal perspective of individual practitioners themselves (the way individual practitioners' intentional actions appear to them as individual cognitive subjects)"

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Some traditions in or aspects of the study of practice, five traditions have been talked about, the first one is "the individual performances, events and effects that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'objective' external perspective of an outsider the way the practitioner's individual behavior appears to an outside observer; so its individual perspectives, individual behaviors, as viewed from the perspective of an a complete outsider, who is not connected to the situation.

So you can do research, you can study practice from that point view, so and so is doing this, so and so was found to be doing this, so and so community does this, this way, so and so individuals, so and so members of this community do things this way, that is one perspective.

The other is the wider social and material conditions and interactions that constitute practice as it is view out from the 'objective' external perspective of an outsider the way the patterns of social interaction among those involved in the practice appear to an outside observer; we are still distance, but we are not seen individual members, we are seeing groups, we are saying interaction, this is how people in the community interact with each other.
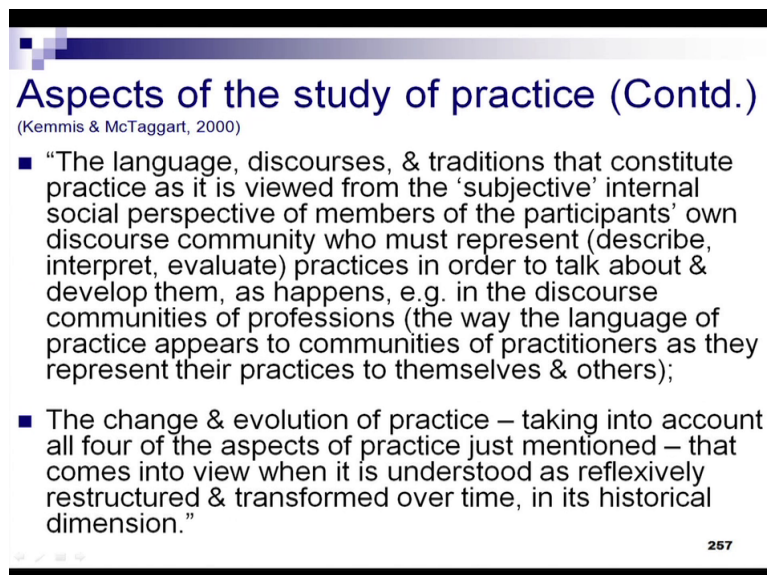
We talk but community oriented cultures, we talk about say the power distance between community oriented cultures, we talked about how people have different rungs of hierarchy communicate with each other and that then constitutes the one another view, we are looking at how groups do their groups or how people interact with one another in social situations, but still from the perspective of an outsider.

The third one here is the intentions, meanings and values that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'subjective', internal perspective of individual practitioners themselves the way individual practitioners' intentional actions appear to them as individual cognitive subjects." Now we are getting into the situation, so we look at the intentions, meanings and values, what really, why are individuals doing what they are doing from their perspective themselves.

So we try and see things as insiders, from the perspective of the people in the situation, we look at that the values they attach, we look at the meaning is interpret from different situation, we see first we see practice from the perspective of individual members who are inside the situation and that is what makes its objective. The biases creep in, the preconceived notions creep in, the intentions creep in, all of that creeps in.

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Then "the language, discourses and traditions that constitute practice as it is viewed from the 'subjective' internal social perspective of members of the participants' own discourse community who must represent which means describe, interpret, evaluate practices in order to talk about and develop them, as happens for example in the discourse communities of professions the way the language of practice appears to communities of practitioners as they represent their practices to themselves and others;
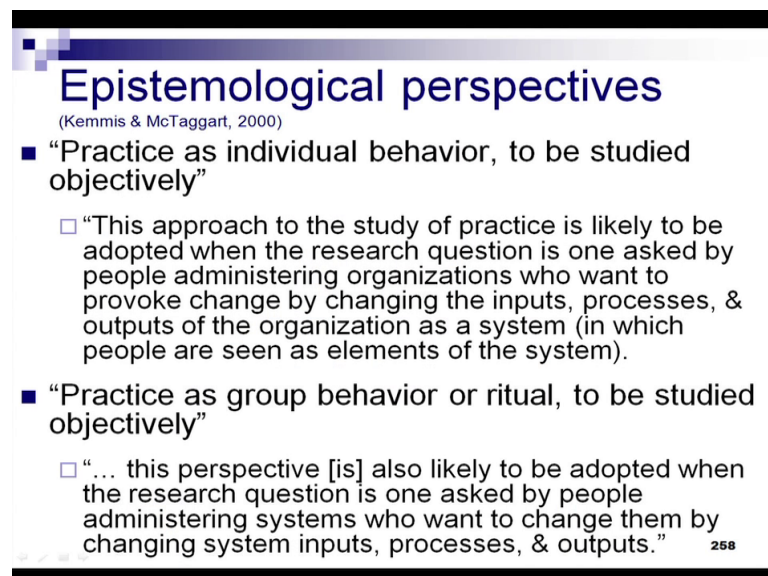
So how people in the community that use language to represent their group or to associate with their own group, to associate with their own community, how the definition the

understanding of that community develops, for the people who are members of that community, so it's all about viewing the group from the inside as insiders okay.

Then the change and evolution of practice - taking into account all four of the aspects of practice just mentioned - that come into view when it is understood as reflexively restructured and transformed over time, in its historical dimension." So the four perspective looked at in a historical, from a historical perspective looked at, from the reflexive standpoint, we go back and we see, we say, why was this happening, so we try and connect the dots.

An outsider see this, this way and outsider see this group this way and insider sees individuals this way and insider sees group that their a part of this way, so what to this four dots connect to and what kind of picture emerges and how does it relate to what they do in future and then how does that feed back into, whatever they are doing next. So reflexivity which means, going back is there. Okay.
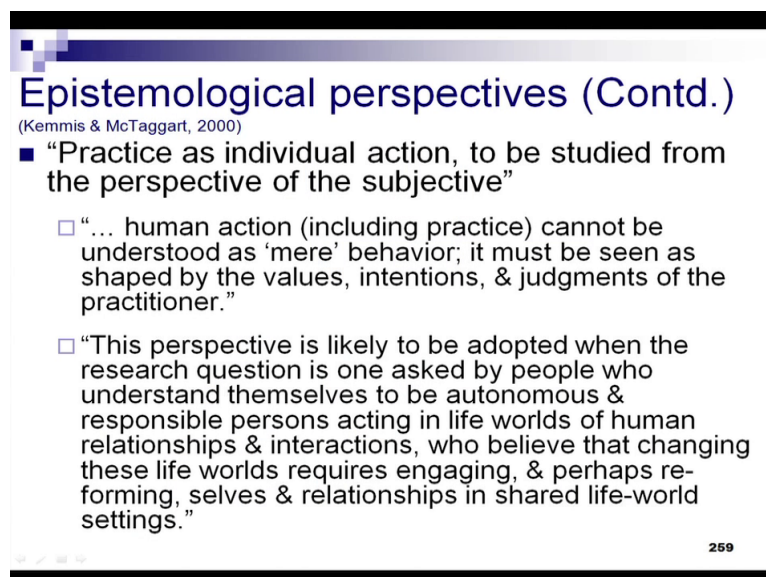
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Epistemological perspectives, there are five Epistemological perspectives that we will talk about. One is; "practice as individual behavior, to be studied objectively" now "this approach to the study of practice is likely to be adopted when the research question is one asked by people administering organizations who wants to provoke change by changing the inputs, processes and outputs of the organization as a system, in which people are seen as elements of the system."

So this is very, very objective, what needs to be done, what should be put in, so that the output changes, what should we do, so that the output changes, this is the kind of approach that develops and this is primarily done by quantitative methods okay.

Second epistemological perspective her is "practice as group behavior or ritual, to be studied objectively" "this perspective is also likely to be adopted when the research question is one asked by people administering systems who want to change them by changing system inputs, processes, and outputs."

So we see group behavior again we quantified things, we draw boundaries and we say okay, you know this is what is going in, this is what is coming out, what do we change in order to change the output, so primarily quantitative methods will be adopted here also.

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Then we come to "practice as individual action, to be studied from the perspective of the subjective," to be studied from the perspective of the insider. "Human action including practice cannot be understood as 'mere' behavior; it must be seen as shaped by the values, intentions and judgments of the practitioner."

So the person who is doing the practice, the person who is involved in the phenomenon that is being studied, has his or her own values intentions and judgments and behavior is being shipped by them and that is where qualitative methods start creeping in. "This perspective is likely to be adopted when the research question is one asked people who understand themselves to be autonomous and responsible people person acting in life words of human
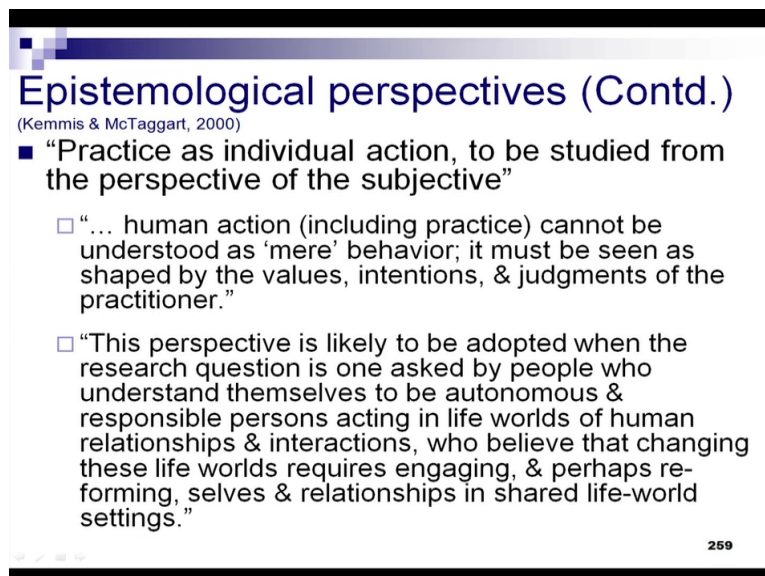
relationships and interactions, who believe that changing these life worlds requires engaging and perhaps re-forming, selves and relationships in shared life-world settings."

So this perspective of, you know practice as individual action is taken on by the people who are, who have a voice that can be heard in communities, who have the power to change things from inside, who thinks that it is their responsibility to change things from inside. So these when we study practice from their perspectives, then we study practice from the perspective of the people who are capable of making some change to the community that they are in.

So they could be the elders, they could be the senior people in the community, they would be the activist from within the community, and we see practice from their perspective and these are the people who believe that changed these life worlds, that are shaping human relationships and interactions, requires engaging and perhaps re-forming, selves and relationships in shared life-world settings.

So they consider themselves to be responsible enough, they consider, it there responsibility to start changing things from the inside and we study this as researchers okay.

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Then "practice as social action or tradition to be understood from the perspective of the subjective." This "takes into account that people and the way the act are also formed historically - that they always come to situations that have been preformed and in which only certain kinds of action are now appropriate or possible." So this happens when, this takes into

account, when the people are, people know that there is a history, there is a reason behind the way things have been done.

And because a certain history has resulted in whatever is being done now, it will, it is difficult to change things unless the historical reasons for the way things are being done or changed or modified. So certain kinds of action are now possible considering the flavor of the social environment that they function in.

It "takes into account the people's own perspective and their very words, have all been formed historically and in the interactions the social life - they historically, socially and discursively constituted." The words that are used, the language that is used, is a result of whatever has been done historically and that those reasons, historical reasons then contribute to whatever is going on now.

The researcher understands himself or herself as a human agent who with others, must act at any particular moment in a situation that is already socially, historically, and discursively formed and in which he or she is also, to some extent, a representative of a tradition that contests the ground with other traditions because different and competing traditions about different things typically are simultaneously at play in any particular situation."

So they realize that other traditions would have been possible, but there are reasons why certain traditions, certain ways of being have taken precedence over certain other ways of being, and the history, the historical context of the way things are is also taken into account while contemplating a change in the situation.

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Epistemological perspectives (Contd.)
(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)
- Practice as reflexive, to be studied dialectically:
  - "... sees the individual & the social, & the objective & the subjective, as related aspects of human life & practice, to be understood dialectically – i.e., as mutually opposed (& often contradictory) but mutually necessary aspects of human, social, & historical reality, in which each aspect helps to constitute the other."
  - "... necessary to understand practice as enacted by individuals who act in the context of history & in ways constituted by a vast historical web of social interactions among people."
  - ... [tries to] recognize not only that people's actions are caused by their intentions & circumstances, but also that people cause intentions & circumstances – i.e., that people are made by action in the world, & that they also make action & history."

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Practice as reflexive, to be studied dialectically: this sees the perspective, "sees the individual and the social, and the objective and subjective, as related aspects of human life and practice to be understood dialectically – i.e., as mutually opposed and often contradictory but mutually necessary aspects human, social and historical reality, in which each aspect helps to constitute the other."

So this perspective accepts, they will always be contradicting points of view and the point of view that has taken that has become more dominant, has some reasons for becoming dominant, the practices that have evolved, have evolved as a result of this discussion between the two extremes and those reasons are also taken into account.

This perspective understands that considers it "necessary to understand practice as enacted by individuals who act in the context of history and in ways constituted by a vast historical web of social interactions among people." "Tries to recognize not only that people's actions are caused by their intentions and circumstances, but also that people cause intention and circumstances – i.e., that people are made by action in the world and the also make action and history."

So we are constantly contributing to this history that is being formed, its reflexive, whatever is happening is a result of something that happened earlier, but whatever we are doing as a result of, whatever happened earlier will also become history, for work for whatever will be done next. So not only are we a product of history, whatever we are doing becomes history

for those who will do things, who will take things from then on and that is how it becomes reflexive.

This constant reflection, constant going back, constant understanding of, what happened how the context was created, instituted also becomes part of and gives the flavor to participatory action research. So that is one perspective, this is all we have time for in this lecture, we will continue with some more discussion on participatory action research in the next class, thank you very much for listening.