CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART OF NURSING RESEARCH IN PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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Over the past 15 years, participatory action research (PAR) has become increasingly popular in health science research. Nursing is part of this trend. PAR is often used to study issues related to social justice and oppression with disenfranchised groups. Inequities pertaining to health status as well as ethnic, racial, and class disparities in health are some of the concerns dear to nursing that can be appropriately addressed using PAR. While PAR is often cited as an ideal methodology for studying inequity, oppression, and injustice, PAR methodology is also highly suitable for the study of organizations, organization change, work life, and the dynamics of occupational and professional groups. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight key PAR studies conducted in nursing and the contribution PAR has made to nursing science.

PAR STUDIES CONDUCTED BY NURSES

This section looks chronologically at work done by nursing using PAR. It is not all-inclusive. Rather, it attempts to capture key studies that are indicative of a variety of population groups and topics studied. It also describes some nursing studies using action research (AR) to give the flavor of topics appropriate for AR. Basic differences between AR and PAR are pointed out.

Breda and colleagues (1997) used PAR to study professional autonomy with a group of nurses at a small, rural psychiatric hospital. Through the PAR process, autonomy emerged as the single most important issue for the nurses, even more than salary and benefits. The study followed an earlier ethnographic study by Breda (1997) in the same facility that examined how nurses worked together in a labor union to promote their status as professionals