

The Legal Empowerment Lab's
★ Constellation of Methodological Inspiration ★

Start where people are.
Use what they use everyday in their lives.
The personal will always tell the story of the structural.

Where and with who	What was the method	How was it analyzed and presented?
New York City Public School students, between the ages of 15 and 19	Letter writing. The young people were invited to write a letter to someone at their school that offered them support.	We read these out loud and had discussions as a community. These conversations were a way of lifting themes collectively and connections that could then be rolled into reports and articles to influence policy.
Slum-dwellers living in informal settlements in Buenos Aires City, Argentina	Participatory mapping in informal settlements. Informal settlements contain 10% of the City of Buenos Aires population. However, on official maps and the most widely used online maps they looked like gray spots within the city. A group of neighbors from different settlements participated in a project to map their neighborhoods and make them appear on official maps.	Caminos de la Villa is the platform that allowed us to visualize the informal settlements of the city. Workshops were held with neighbors to learn how the platform works and make it more accessible and collaborative.
Slum-dwellers living in informal settlements in Buenos Aires City, Argentina	Strategic litigation to access public services. Different groups of slum-dwellers have sued the government of the city of Buenos Aires demanding the provision of basic services in their neighborhoods, such as water or electricity, that are constitutionally guaranteed.	We have systematized the positive and negative results of these processes in various materials that have been discussed with the neighborhood groups.
LGBTQIA youth in NYC	Participatory survey development. A very rough draft of a survey about LGBTQIA youth experiences was drafted. This was handed out	A group of young people worked collaboratively with the researchers to analyze findings.

	to about 100 young people who came to a survey development party. There was food and beverages and over the course of three hours, students worked in small groups to make edits and suggestions on this survey.	
Over-policed black and brown residents of New York City.	Statistics about stop and frisk practices were gathered and projected on a building. People passing by were able to respond to and add to the information that they saw.	The community members who were also co-researchers engaged in conversations with people who had questions or who were responding to what they saw. This served as information dissemination, consciousness raising, but also active analysis as these conversations informed next steps and the narrative going forward.
First generation, economically precarious, LGBTQIA, BIPOC undergraduate students throughout the United States.	Engaging with the academic dominant literature and narrative about student service and education outcomes, a group of students co-created a public facing space to invite other students to gather resources for survival.	This PAR project lasted over five years and included students attending public universities from five states. By building these relationships over time a space was opened up for monthly conversations that then shaped the steps taken and resulted in a published article to speak of these experiences. The group embodied and enacted practices that challenged dominant stories told about “marginalized” and “under-represented” students.
Adults with intellectual disabilities in a large city on the West Coast of the US.	To talk about segregation and reimagining the urban landscape so that it is more accessible and able to celebrate different ways of being in the world, people within the sheltered workshop worked with a large scale map and building blocks to speak about spaces that were liberating and to imagine the changes that would make the city more so.	This way of engaging is very embodied. By moving a building, by physically making a change on the giant map, people were able to express themselves without words. The analysis was gathered by being in conversation as the activity was happening and working to get a sense of intentionality. Throughout the session, that included urban planners and people with

		disabilities, images were taken to capture the data that emerged.
High school students in NYC.	Students interested in talking about consent within their schools, joined a participatory action research group and learned skills to facilitate focus groups within their individual schools.	Students who conducted the focus groups brought back their experiences to the larger group of students and discussed what they heard. These discussions were acts of analysis and meaning making.
A practice used with youth, people in prison, communities organized against police violence, LGBTQIA+ people, immigrant students throughout the United States.	To trouble notions of expertise asking people to draw a researcher. This question invites people to reflect about whose knowledge, behaviors, clothing, histories are considered valid and whose ways of knowing are considered biased.	Collectively viewing these images opens up the conversation for these deep issues about validity and knowing. It isn't that the image that comes is wrong, but that it is much much bigger.
A practice used with 12-24 year old LGBTQIA+ youth from throughout the US.	Offer a text that cracks open a conversation to provoke reflection on times when feeling safe and seen and times when feeling erased. In this project, young people read words by Junot Diaz. Then wrote letters to younger selves about those different times.	These letters were shared in smaller groups and in larger groups. The themes and topics lifted by the reflections were then used to shape a national quantitative and qualitative survey.
College students who were formerly in foster care.	Visually mapping their journey to college. With the instructions to use red for what got in the way, green for people or opportunities that helped you, purple to represent your wonderful personal spirit and drive.	When completed these were hung on a wall and everyone did a gallery walk. Following that, in small groups, students discussed connections, surprises, and other things they noticed. After that, people were invited to share about their map. When one person shared, questions were asked about who else experienced specific pieces shared and hands were raised.
Women who were incarcerated in New Jersey in a research collaborative with academics.	A course on qualitative methods as taught inside the prison to build trust, develop a common language and a set of skills and relationships and to also discern key questions to shape the research design. Each student pursued a qualitative	From that class, 7 students joined the research collective that met every other week for 4 years. All methods were cofacilitated by a woman inside and a woman outside (except interviews with officers and women who had been released).

	interview with five other women about a question of their own creation. This created an archive of silenced stories.	Methods included: reincarceration analysis, cost benefit analysis, surveys of faculty, interviews with corrections officers, one on one interviews, focus groups with women inside and focus groups with their children, in depth interviews with formerly incarcerated women, student narratives, reincarceration analysis. It was important to purposefully seek a range of experiences and (counter)stories. All analysis was collaborative.
A practice used with youth, people in prison, communities organized against police violence, LGBTQIA+ people, immigrant students throughout the United States.	Watch a film or documentary, or media clips connected to issues being studied. Stop periodically and ask everyone to write down critical questions.	Use the questions to discuss and build theory from the collective.
	Have members of the group take other son walking tours to expand their understanding and share in the experiences of the area, issue, or context.	
Muslim youth in NYC after 9/11.	Identity mapping inviting youth to draw their many selves. Such as their daughter or son self, religious self, school self, secret self, athletic self, friend self- all their parts.	Invite students to share these selves as a way of understanding how broader political events impact youth psychologically.
White, Black, Brown, Asian and mixed race students involved in a study about school integration.	A collective analysis of 12,000 student responses to questions about why there are large racial disparities at college graduation.	A graffiti wall was created by taping a large piece of paper to the wall. With headings like: most disturbing thing you read, most exciting thing you read, things you want to say back.
Doing any research that might influence policy.	Gathering existing statistical evidence to create a community based conversation to unpack the official statistics and place them alongside gathered stories,	

	experiences, and dreams of impacted groups.	