

**PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AS THE BEGINNING
OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING**

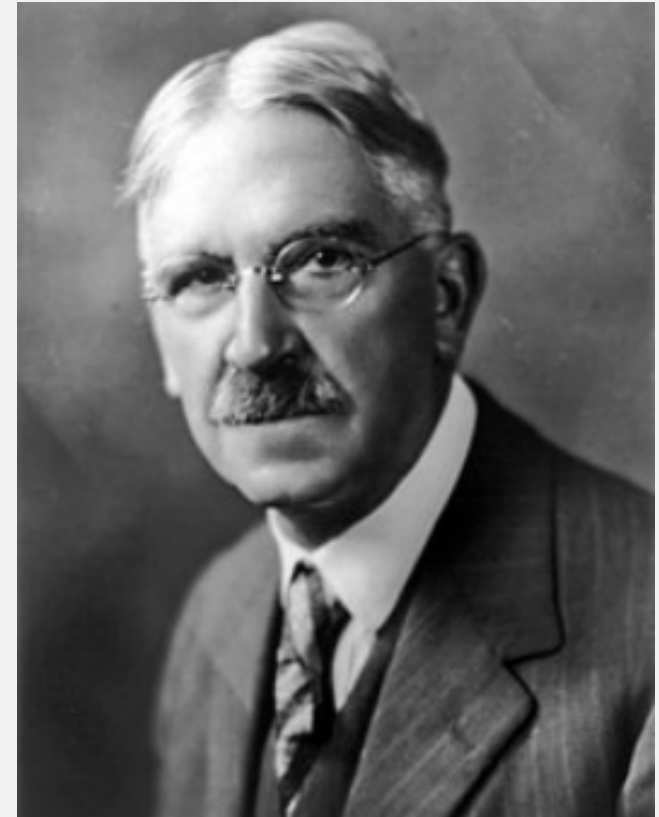
*THE CASE OF COMMUNITY-BASED, PARTICIPATORY
RESEARCH*

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The goal of helping kids engage with knowledge is built into educational theory and practice.

Theory

- **Constructivism** (Dewey, 1902; Fosnot, 2005)
- **Metacognition and “learning about learning”**
(Bransford, 2005; Sawyer, 2014)



The goal of helping kids engage with knowledge is built into educational theory and practice.

Practice

- Educational strategies: project-based learning (Thomas, 2000), inquiry-based learning (Buchanan et al., 2016), discovery learning (Alfieri et al., 2011)
- Stated goals

“...not only a breadth and depth of knowledge, but also the skills to research and use that knowledge...”

How do we engage young kids in conversations about knowledge?

Knowledge?



- Epistemology can be made accessible through perspective-taking
- Perspective-taking is a skill young children already possess (Carpendale & Lewis, 2004; Wellman, 1992)



A CASE STUDY: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH 1ST AND 2ND GRADERS

- In PAR projects, participants collaborate with researchers to investigate phenomena that affect their communities (Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Mirra et al., 2016)
- PAR with older students centers epistemology (Cammarota and Fine, 2008; Caraballo et al., 2017)
- Limited PAR work with younger students neglects epistemology (Nind; 2011; Waller and Bitou, 2011)

A CASE STUDY: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH WITH 1ST AND 2ND GRADERS

- PAR projects are ideal settings for exploring epistemology
 1. They engage students in active knowledge construction
 2. They invite perspective-taking

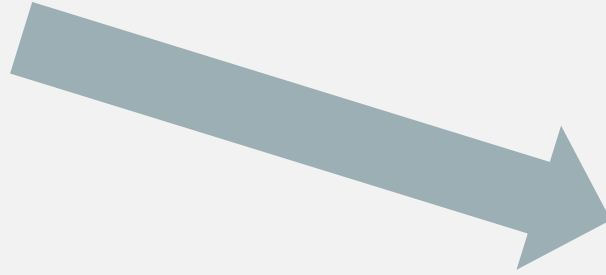
**A CASE STUDY: PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH WITH 1ST AND 2ND GRADERS**

Participants

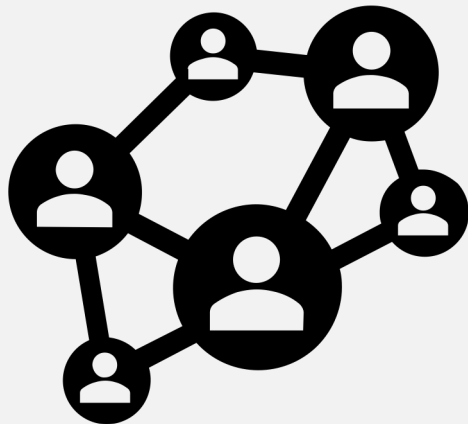
- 10-20 students at a time
- Approx. 1/3 of students changed every two weeks
- Ages 4-7 (m = 6)
- School demographics: 42% Hispanic, 40% white, 26% low income (summer camp demographics may differ)



Step 1: **Reflect**



Step 2: **Listen**



Step 3: **Connect**



Step 4: **Act**



Step 1: Reflect

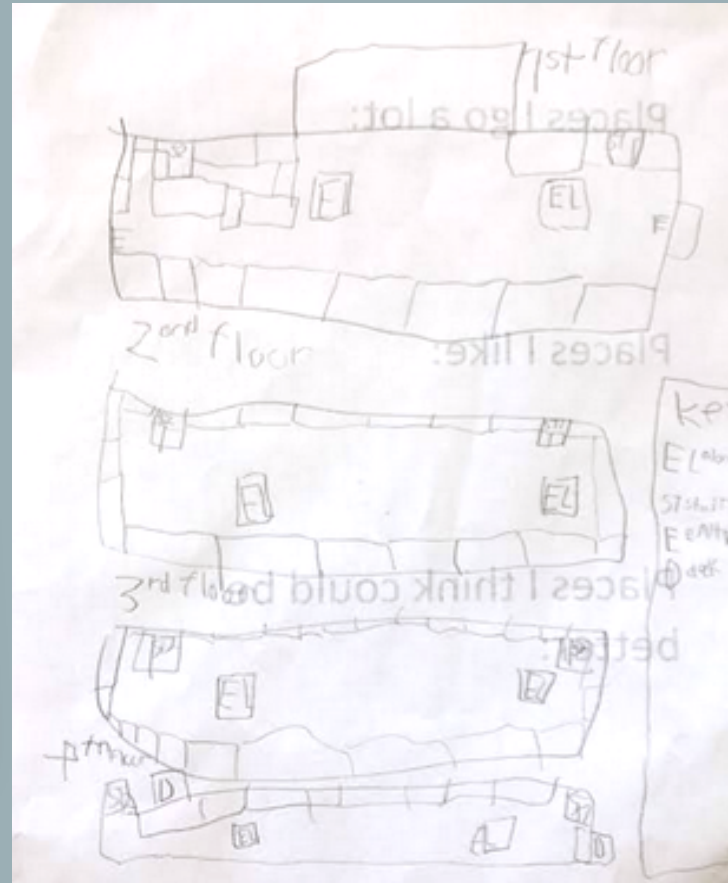
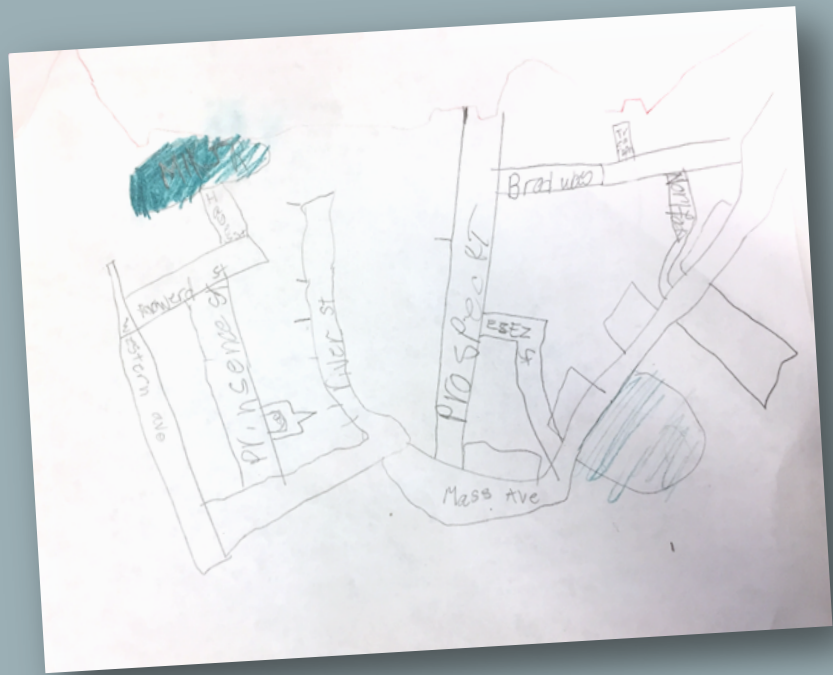


Epistemological goal:

- Establish our *own* perspectives as the cognitive location of knowledge.

Findings:

- The students were easily able to reflect on their perspectives on the city
- They saw how these perspectives were related to (but distinct from) their experiences



Individual community maps



Step 2: Listen



Step 2: Listen

Epistemological goals:

- Recognize that as a result of our differing perspectives, people come to different conclusions about the world
- Begin to understand objectivity vs. subjectivity

Findings:

- Students had an intuitive understanding of why perspectives differ
- Students were able to differentiate between questions with “objective” and “subjective” answers with instruction

Question 1: What things do you like about Cambridge?

Question 2: How do you think we could make Cambridge a better place to live?

Question 3: What is the biggest problem with transportation (streets, trains, buses, bike lanes, parking, etc.) in Cambridge? How could we make it better?



Step 3: Connect



Step 2: Listen

Epistemological goal:

- Illustrate for students how knowledge is established from a plurality of perspectives/beliefs

Findings:


- Most student were able to use the “big ideas” strategies to some extent – however, many defaulted to their own opinions during collage-making
- Comfort with reading facilitated deeper thinking

More recess or active time

I would spend less time getting ready to take the tests and more time doing projects and real world activities.

slides down the stairs and one more hour of school

We love Amigos... wish all schools were this good!



The Zucks
 WITH PUBLIC SERVICE, WINDY DOCTORS, LAWYERS
 AND BUSINESS PEOPLE COME TO THE 80 SCHOOLS
 STUDY BY LORE WOODS

Housing

Eating out at Cambridge could be expensive

Rent

Housing. Internet.


Housing is expensive in general, I think. I know a number of people who chose to live in Medford or Somerville because they can't afford to live in Cambridge. video games and technology and houses and most foods

Housing! It is so hard to finding housing that most people have to leave the city. childcare; housing

apartment is quite expensive! I would prefer for me to live in another city like Cambridge even though I would have to live here.

Housing.

the shops around Harvard are expensive! It feels like they're so expensive! I am sad that I could not afford to buy a house in Cambridge.



HOUSING!!!! Both renting and ownership. Completely unattainable at this point

Data analysis through collage



Step 4: Act

Conclusion

Students...

- Used their own perspectives as a way to reflect on knowledge
- Compared perspectives to recognize the potential ambiguity of certain kinds of knowledge
- Considered ways in which knowledge is established from diverse perspectives



Conclusion

We learned...

- Participatory research that centers perspective-taking is an accessible entry point to epistemological ideas



THANK YOU!