

**A contemporary tale of participatory action research in Aotearoa/New Zealand: applying a power–culture lens to support participatory action research as a diverse and evolving practice.**

*Lewis Williams, Educational Action Research, 2007.*

**Abstract**

*This article represents an attempt at ‘truth-telling’ or problematizing the practice of Participatory Action Research (PAR); specifically as this relates to the ways in which particular sets of knowledge, institutional and identity–power relations privilege particular worldviews and cultural systems over others within the research process. To date, much of the literature available to researchers on PAR remains grounded in Western assumptions and cultural values. However, the internationalization of development work and increasing migration patterns of peoples from to less economically developed countries to largely Western, wealthier countries, means the practice of PAR must become increasingly context-specific.*

*The intent of this paper, therefore, is to illuminate PAR as an evolving practice whose ongoing development must be informed by the entirety of contexts and participants that, in reality, make up any one PAR project. It tells the story of an 18-month PAR project in Aotearoa/New Zealand with migrant, low-income, Tongan and Samoan women living in state-owned houses in the Auckland suburb of Glen Innes. This project evolved through several phases of development that culminated in these women undertaking a child health and safety survey of state-owned houses in their neighborhood and engaging in public policy advocacy. Throughout each phase, the author and the other research participants had to successfully negotiate a number of power–culture dynamics and associated tensions located in the cultural assumptions of PAR, working cross-culturally, and the challenges of attempting PAR within the context of a university–community partnership. It draws on several key examples to illustrate these dynamics and invites the audience to reflect on PAR as a diverse and changing practice.*