

## Paradox in the Pacific: critical reflection of participatory action research methods

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Throughout the almost two decades of years working in the Pacific, David and Michelle have experienced a methodological paradox while facilitating participatory action research (PAR) for health in the Pacific Island countries of Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Specifically, the paradox of being consistent with PAR principles and processes, which particularly require sustained engagement while working within the limits of short-term contracts and/or research projects.

Critical reflection and discussion will be invited from participants in the catalytic discussion to explore: What type of PAR is possible when the researcher is distanced from the research location for periods of time? How do we sustain relationships? What is the role of a research champion to sustain the PAR process in the absence of the principal researcher/s or research funds? What are the implications of this in resource poor contexts where supports for research are few? How can we negotiate privileged ontologies and epistemologies as researchers working in partnership with communities when employed, or contracted by, organisations external to the environment (e.g. a university)? How can multiple realities be negotiated and articulated when reporting PAR in a language or format contested by some co/researchers? We will share experiences and reflections upon undertaking PAR processes with co/researchers from a variety of social, cultural and professional backgrounds. We will also share and reflect on attempts to enact/enable decolonising research methodologies in the Pacific.

Some insights into our possible shared questions lie in the following: trust-filled relationships; sustained engagement which brings mutual rights and responsibilities; research champions; different experiences of time; centralising cultural knowledge; use of Pacific languages; continual critical reflection and continuous enfolding of theoretical knowledge. These have all been vital to the PAR methods used in our health research practice. However, we welcome your ideas and challenges, which may also assist to shift this methodological challenge.

We are committed to and currently engaged in a number of health research projects with drawing upon or explicitly utilising PAR methodologies. This includes David's PAR investigating culturally appropriate health care with people excluded from health services provided by mission institutions in Solomon Islands, Michelle's planned PhD using a PAR approach with rural women on Malaita, Solomon Islands to investigate HIV prevention and research training in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Your participation in this catalytic paper is timely and welcomed, as it will contribute to the authors' attempts to authentically enact PAR methodologies in the Pacific.