

# Transformative Dialogues and the Power of Collaborative Action Research: An Editorial

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Volume 24, numéro 1, 2023

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1110312ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Canadian Association of Action Research in Education

ISSN

1925-7147 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Barker, M. (2023). Transformative Dialogues and the Power of Collaborative Action Research: An Editorial. *The Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 24(1), 1–2.

## TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUES AND THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH

An Editorial

**Marianne Barker**

Managing Editor

Action research unfolds in diverse contexts through relationship and dialogue among researchers and communities. The collection of articles in this issue of *The Canadian Journal of Action Research* offers insight into the challenges and triumphs of action research across distinct locales and domains. Each of the contributions in this issue illustrate the delicate balance between the researcher's expertise and the empowerment of community voices. From negotiating power dynamics to confronting resistance and embracing unexpected shifts in direction, these articles reflect the complexities of action research.

An article by **Hanna Akalu** centers on the “need to let go of control” in PAR research. Discussing the experience completing a doctoral research project with Muslim women in Britain, Akalu describes the processes for building trusting relationships and negotiating equal power dynamics to make the research process meaningful for participants as co-researchers. This entailed allowing diverse and engaged participants to shape the project's direction in unexpected ways. An article by **Lauren Hill** reflects a similar sense of letting go of control in sharing an action research in which the author, a music teacher, collaborated with an Indigenous hoop dancer as part of a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Through honest reflection on the collaborative process, the article explores how the teacher engaged critical and decolonizing pedagogies to introduce humility and de-center individualism in the classroom. The piece speaks to the challenge of negotiating (and sometimes silencing) one's own voice in order to allow space to nurture a collaborative teaching environment.

The next contribution by **Binod Prasad Pant, Bai Chandra Luitel, Sigrid Gjøtterud and Birgittee Bjønness** presents an honest reflection of a PAR researcher's experience in a setting where building knowledge collaboratively turned out to be more challenging than expected. The lead author reflects on choosing when to share their own expertise and when to strategize ways for a community of mathematics teachers to share their knowledge about

pedagogical approaches that work best for them. The authors theorize varying levels of resistance to PAR in the context and reflect on the process of de-centering the self by shifting from “I” to “we” in collaborative research that prioritizes the knowledge of participants as co-researchers.

The final two articles theorize new pathways for action research. An article by **Will Edwards and Amir Kalan** presents a structured model of action research, rooted in the need for an action research model that centers on how neoliberal structures and linguistic imperialism lead to experiences of social and economic exclusion. Rooting inquiry in the view that structures and institutions are systemically inequitable reframes the experiences of social actors and the relationship between structure and agency. The final article by **Carly-Ann Haney and Christine A. Walsh** discusses the alignment of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) with Fat Studies. The authors suggest that CBPR’s commitment to critical social research aligns well with Fat Studies, which values the embodied experiences of what it means to be Fat.

Amidst the diverse landscapes of action research shared through these articles, a unifying theme emerges: the transformative power of collaboration and a shared commitment to fostering inclusive, dialogical spaces for knowledge co-creation. Whether navigating the complexities of PAR in the context of mathematics education, doctoral research with Muslim women, music teaching in response to Truth and Reconciliation calls, a structured model rooted in social and economic equity, or theorizing the use of CBPR in Fat Studies, each contribution reflects a collective pursuit of redefining the researcher-participant dynamic. The common thread lies in the intentional shift from the researcher’s own knowledge to the inclusive use of community knowledge—challenging hierarchical norms and embracing the transformative potential of collaborative inquiry.

Through these contributions, a compelling narrative unfolds that champions the democratization of knowledge, underscores the importance of culturally sensitive methodologies, and advocates for a research paradigm that amplifies marginalized voices. Readers will feel encouraged by the reflection, honesty, and challenges emerging from these articles, which ultimately give way to transformative dialogue and the collaborative strength of action research. ■