

# Research Highlights

## Topic: Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Markey, U., Santelli, B., & Turnbull, A.P. (1998). Participatory action research involving families from underserved communities and researchers: Respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. In B.A. Ford (Ed.), *Compendium: Writings on effective practice for culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional learners* (pp. 20-32). Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically and Diverse Exceptional Learners.

### BOTTOM LINE

This overview of participatory action research (PAR) examines this research approach from the point of view of traditionally underserved communities as well as researchers. An example of a successful PAR partnership exists between the Beach Center on Disability, a research entity under the auspices of the University of Kansas and the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), and the Grassroots Consortium on Disabilities, an organization of 15 community-based organizations, whose members represent culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and who are affected by disability. The partnership is examined, with a focus on how meaningful and relevant PAR research becomes for those involved in it.

### TIPS

- Structure PAR to be based on shared mutual responsibilities in all phases of the research, including design, analysis, product preparation, and dissemination.
- Acknowledge existing cultural and linguistic diversity and develop ways to communicate complex issues, theories, and research methods that are meaningful to both researchers and families from traditionally underserved communities.
- Identify high-priority issues and design research with the end-goal of providing practical solutions for families affected by disability.

TIPS  
cont.

- Recognize and value the trusting relationships, based on shared experiences, that Consortium organizations have developed with families in their communities over time.
- Develop PAR relationships carefully so that families are not subjected to added stress, duress, and cost.
- Provide procedural safeguards to prevent negative biases and attitudes against culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

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KEY FINDINGS

- PAR is a collaborative process between researchers and family members of people with disabilities, who are expected to benefit from the research.
- PAR is outcome-oriented and viewed as a potential agent for social change.
- The PAR method seeks to provide practical solutions for families affected by disability and to give the organizations serving them access to resources.
- The PAR research process ideally includes reciprocal sharing among all participants of perspectives, knowledge, wisdom, experience, and expertise.
- Researchers must be sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and underserved communities in order to overcome barriers to successful communication between the two groups.
- Families that are armed with research-based information gain confidence and become empowered relative to issues surrounding children and adults with disabilities, including special education in our schools.
- PAR teams must recognize that this approach is not without challenges, and that the PAR concept is not universally accepted by all families or by all researchers.
- Quality family support and best practices occur within the context of language, culture, and environment.
- The Beach Center on Disability and the Grassroots Consortium on Disabilities share common values and are committed to enhancing empowerment for individuals with disabilities and their families from underserved communities.

RELATED  
PUBLICATIONS

Markey, U.A. (2000). PARTnerships. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2(3), 188-189, 192.

Santelli, B., Ginsberg, C., Sullivan, S., & Niederhouser, C. (2002) A collaborative study of Parent to Parent support: Implications for positive behavioral support. In J. Lucyshyn, G. Dunlap, & R. W. Albin (Eds.), *Families and positive behavioral supports: Addressing the challenge of problem behaviors on family contexts* (pp. 439-456). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Santelli, B., Markey, U., Johnson, A., Turnbull, R., & Turnbull, A. (2001). The evolution of an unlikely partnership between researchers and culturally diverse families: Lessons learned. *TASH Newsletter*, March/April, 21-25.

Santelli, B., Ginsberg, C., Sullivan, S., & Niederhouser, C. (2002) A collaborative study of Parent to Parent support: Implications for positive behavioral support. In J. Lucyshyn, G. Dunlap, & R. W. Albin (Eds.), *Families and positive behavioral supports: Addressing the challenge of problem behaviors on family contexts* (pp. 439-456). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Santelli, B., Singer, G.H.S., DiVenere, N., Ginsberg, C., & Powers, L. (1998). Participatory action research: Reflections on critical incidents in a PAR project. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23(3), 211-222.

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*This research was conducted in collaboration with the Beach Center on Disability. It was funded by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Families of Children with Disabilities of the National Institute on Disability Rehabilitation and Research (H133B980050) and private endowments. For more information, contact the Beach Center on Disability at 1200 Sunnyside Avenue, 3111 Haworth Hall, The University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-7534. Phone: 785-864-7600. Email: Beachcenter@ku.edu. Website: www.beachcenter.org.*

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