

STUDYING TIME BANKING:
EXPLORING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH
IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Emma McGuirk

ABSTRACT

This article presents a literature review of Participatory Action Research (PAR) approaches used in New Zealand social science research to assess if there is a 'New Zealand' approach to PAR that differs somewhat from the international literature on PAR. Using the additional device of self reflection on my own current PhD research topic, I argue that New Zealand does have rich local influences that enhance PAR as a methodology, while also maintaining many points of similarity with the international literature. Given the breadth and richness of New Zealand based scholars' experience with this method, I argue that more New Zealand based academic writing should refer to these local examples.

INTRODUCTION

This article reviews what I have learnt about PAR through conducting an ethnographic study of Time Banking, a community building system where people exchange their skills and services with each other. Well known to most social scientists, PAR is a set of research frameworks designed to share power and return value to the participants of a research project. This paper explores the links between PAR frameworks and related traditions of research in New Zealand. Using personal reflections about the challenges and rewards inherent in this process, I draw conclusions about the benefits of incorporating elements of PAR into an ethnographic study.

GETTING INVOLVED IN RESEARCHING TIME BANKING

My first step into the world of Time Banking was neither a planned nor conscious move. In April 2010, I was at a Permaculture hui in Raglan, not as a researcher, but simply looking for social or environmental projects I could get

involved in. Time Banking stood out for me. In conversation with one of the presenters following the workshop, I heard the words that eventually led to my PhD research, 'We really need to have more research done into Time Banking in New Zealand, so if you know of anyone, please let us know.'

The potential for timebanks to act as catalysts for strengthening community ties is what caught my ear. Members of a timebank share their skills (gardening, car maintenance, home DIY, music, languages, cooking lessons, cv editing, tips for using Skype or Google Earth, bee keeping, and many other skills) and support (companionship, listening, lifts to buy groceries) with each other on an equal basis. One hour of work, any form of work, is equal to one time credit. All work is valued at the same rate. Each member has an online account, through which they store and trade their time credits. Credits can also be donated to the Community Chest, and then gifted to schools, community groups or individuals who are in need of extra support. Earning and spending credits are equally valued, as two sides of the same coin. By letting your credit balance drop below zero, you have created an opportunity for another timebank member to engage and share their skills with you. Some of the most highly valued outcomes are the new relationships that are formed, a stronger sense of neighbourliness, and increased resilience of the local community.

When I began fieldwork for my PhD in June 2011, fourteen months after attending the Permaculture hui, I knew of six active timebanks in New Zealand. These were located in Gore, Lyttelton, and New Brighton (in the South Island), and Taita, Otaki, Whakatane (in the North Island). There were others just emerging at that time, for example Wellington South, and two that had been established but were inactive, in Roimata (a neighbourhood in Christchurch) and Kaitaia.

Approaching the end of 2012, Figures 1 and 2 reveal quite a different story, although New Zealand's first timebank in Lyttelton continues to be the heart and home of Time Banking in New Zealand. It has 456 members, three paid part-time co-ordinators, and a high level of recognition amongst Lyttelton's 3,000 residents.

EARLY DECISIONS ABOUT HOW TO DESIGN THIS RESEARCH

I decided at the beginning of my project, that this research would have two broad goals: fulfilling the requirements of a PhD in anthropology; and offering some form of support or value to the development of Time Banking in New Zealand. At that early stage, I was not aware of PAR as a research framework. I

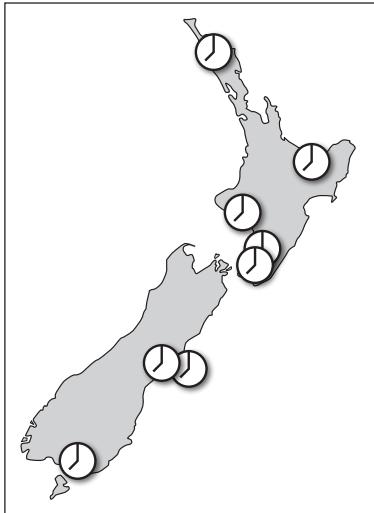


Figure 1. New Zealand Timebanks
October 2010¹



Figure 2. New Zealand Timebanks
August 2012²

wanted to make a contribution to the work of the committed and passionate volunteers around New Zealand who are creating timebanks from the ground up. I set out to explore ways of achieving this goal in conjunction with – or as a result of – conducting research.

As I became aware of PAR, I benefitted from reading the published works of academics and postgraduate students who had taken a similar approach. This article shares the collection of texts from which I have learnt. Most of the literature reviewed in this article is New Zealand based. I hope that this collection will be useful for other emerging researchers in New Zealand who are also utilising the PAR framework. We have an excellent range of research conducted within New Zealand in this style. This research deserves to be more widely shared, built on, and celebrated.

PAR – AN INTRODUCTION

Although diverse, we can draw some commonalities across the PAR literature. For example, the goals of research can include: recognising and valuing expertise beyond the walls of academia (Hall, 2001); social justice outcomes as a result of research with marginalised or disenfranchised groups of people (Freire, 1970); and collaborating with the participants of the research project

to jointly define the social problem being studied, creating shared research questions and research goals (Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

In order to achieve these goals, researchers utilising PAR employ key strategies and techniques. One common thread throughout the literature is the importance of the relationships between academic and community members of the research team. It is acknowledged that the foundation of an effective PAR project is formed and maintained through networking, meeting regularly, and building a strong relationship upon which the research can be negotiated, planned, and revisited and revised when necessary (Pyett, 2002:334; Moller *et al.*, 2009:235).

As well as investing the necessary time to build good relationships at the start of a project, PAR calls on researchers to arrange informal and structured opportunities for collaboration. This could be through meetings, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews. This could also involve sharing the research workload, with community research partners conducting interviews (Park, 1992; Higgins, Nairn & Sligo, 2007) and surveys (Cervin, 2001; Williams & Cervin, 2004). Community research partners could also advise on the validity of the codes assigned during interview analysis, their deeper meanings, and how they are applied (Tandon, Azelton, Kelly & Strickland, 1998: 681; Kelly, *et al.*, 2004). Critical reflection on who 'the community' might be and what 'collaboration' means, and strategies to address these concerns are provided by feminist critiques of PAR (Maguire, 1987; Maguire, 1993; Maguire, 2001; Kindon, 2003; Brydon-Miller, Maguire & McIntyre, 2004; Frisby, Maguire & Reid, 2009), as well as indigenous perspectives on PAR (Hume-Cook *et al.*, 2007; Stewart & Dene, 2009; Te Aika & Greenwood, 2009; Eruera, 2010; Kerr, Penney, Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2010).

As a result of continued revising and discussion of the PAR framework, many overlapping goals and strategies between Participatory Action Research and Action Research can be observed, and these two terms are used interchangeably at times. In *Participatory Action Research*, however, there is usually an added emphasis on subjects of the research having (varying degrees of) control over the research design, goals, and process, thus taking the role of 'participant' beyond participation in a research interview or survey, as in some of the examples listed above. As Reason and Bradbury (2008) explain, at an 'immediate and practical level, participation in inquiry means that we stop working with people as "subjects" ... Instead we build relationship as co-researchers' (2008:9). The following discussion includes research that is published using both of these terms.

PAR AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Many anthropologists also conduct research that is closely aligned with the core values of PAR. An anthropological approach to PAR can include an ethnographic understanding of the nuanced social context within which the research occurs, with the aim of advancing social justice. For example, Dana-Ain Davis (2003) disseminated powerful case studies of the impacts of welfare payment restrictions on single women of colour in the United States of America, making a contribution to social justice goals through ethnographic research.

There are established subfields of anthropology that overlap with the PAR goals, values, epistemologies, and methods. These subfields and methodological frameworks include: action anthropology (Tax, 1958; Tax, 1975); applied/public anthropology (Bennett, 1996; Borofsky, 1999; Purcell, 2000; Singer, 2000; Lamphere, 2004; Vine, 2011); political anthropology (Clastres, 1989; Lewellen, 2003); engaged anthropology (G. A. Smith, 1999; Gross & Plattner, 2002; Lamphere, 2003; Bourgois, 2006; Low & Merry, 2010); collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2000; Lassiter, 2005); anarchist anthropology (Graeber, 2004); and radical anthropology (Watkins & Flynn, 2007).

There are also research projects and theoretical discussions that specifically address connections between anthropology and (Participatory) Action Research. For examples see Stronach (2002), Sheehan, Burke and Slack (2007), Lopes (2009), Sykes and Treleaven (2009), Beech, Hibbert, MacIntosh, and McInnes (2009:196–8), and Johnston (2010). There is also a conversation that extends across two research articles between educational anthropologists making a foray into the world of Action Research (Barab, Thomas, Dodge, Squire & Newell, 2004), and a review of their methods by Peter Reason, a leading action researcher, theorist and writer (Reason, 2004).

PAR IN NEW ZEALAND – A BRIEF HISTORY

To my knowledge, the earliest piece of research published in New Zealand that makes specific reference to the term Action Research is McPherson's (1994) report for the New Zealand Council of Educational Research, on methods to support Māori language use and development in mainstream schools. P. G. Stewart wrote the earliest thesis in 1981 (see Table 1). Judging from the title (no further text is available online), this was a reflexive study of Stewart's teaching practice at an intermediate school, using an Action Research approach.

There have been two major professional networks established in New Zealand

for researchers using PAR. Eileen Piggot-Irvine founded the New Zealand Action Research Network (NZARN) in 1994. This network is no longer active, but Piggot-Irvine now directs the New Zealand Action Research and Review Centre (NZARRC), which is based in Unitec Institute of Technology in Auckland. This centre facilitates Action Research at the postgraduate level, and also works with organisations (often educational institutions) to design and implement Action Research projects. A later professional network was initiated by Bridget Somekh, during her time at the University of Canterbury in 2009. Somekh is the founder of the international Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN). Working in collaboration with other academics around New Zealand, Somekh helped to get the New Zealand Collaborative Action and Research Network (at the time abbreviated as NZCA&RN, and currently NZCARN), off the ground in 2009 (Davis & Morrow, 2010: 96). In December 2009 NZCARN became a special interest group within the broader umbrella of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE), and remains active today.

Since the first wave of research projects began in the 1990s in New Zealand that specifically adopted the terms Action Research or Participatory Action Research (Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996; Kock, McQueen & Scott, 1997; Hill & Capper, 1999), these research frameworks have been interwoven with the existing methods of many academic fields. These include: geography (Kindon, 2003; Pain & Kindon, 2007; Kindon & Elwood, 2009; Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2009), development studies (Sanderson & Kindon, 2004; Gaisford, 2010), social work (Lunt & Fouché, 2009), design studies (Stevens, 2011), zoology (Moller *et al.*, 2009), and ecology (Parkes & Panelli, 2001). In education (McPherson, 1994; Cardno & Piggot-Irvine, 1996; Hill & Capper, 1999; Carr & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2000; Cardno 2003; Munford & Sanders, 2003; Anderson, 2009; Hill, 2011; O'Rourke, 2011) in particular there have been many successful applications of PAR. Presumably because this research can include or overlap with the goals of personal, professional, and organisational development.

The PAR framework – in combination with the established methods of the academic fields mentioned above – has been applied to a diverse range of research contexts across New Zealand. PAR based projects in New Zealand have been located in: state funded mainstream schools (McPherson, 1994; Hill & Capper, 1999; Carr & New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2000; Piggot-Irvine, 2002); a Samoan language pre-school immersion centre (Podmore, Wendt-Samu & Taouma, 2003); workplaces (Twiname, 2008); tertiary institutions (Coleman, 1995; Smith, 2012); local government (Aimers, 1999); a national government department (Sankar, Bailey & Williams, 2003; Sankar,

2005); and grassroots community organisations (Munford & Sanders, 2003).

Equally diverse is the range of social and environmental issues that the PAR framework has been utilised to address. Within New Zealand, these specific research foci include: adult literacy (Vaccarino, Comrie, Murray & Sligo, 2007); state housing conditions (Williams, 2001; Williams, 2007); women's advocacy and support (Cervin, 2001; Williams, 2007); education for sustainability (Hill, 2011); community-based ecological management of a river catchment (Parkes & Panelli, 2001); well-being for people living with dementia (O'Sullivan, 2011); and success in tertiary education for students from a refugee background (O'Rourke, 2011).

BUILDING ON EARLIER RESEARCH TRADITIONS

This emergence of PAR in Aotearoa New Zealand builds on long-standing traditions of research that aspire to be collaborative, and those that aspire to address social problems through the interweaving of knowledge and action. This history includes Kaupapa Māori Research, which was acknowledged at the Inaugural Symposium of NZCARN, as is discussed in more detail later in the text. In addition to Kaupapa Māori research (L.T. Smith, 1999; Cram, 2001), there are also established frameworks for collaborative research (Bishop, 1996), and research partnerships (Park, 1992) in New Zealand. In the discipline that I am most familiar with, anthropologists from Māori, Pākehā, and many other cultural backgrounds have also aspired to make a positive contribution to their local and national communities. In 1949, while writing his MA thesis on 'The History of New Zealand Anthropology During the Nineteenth Century', J. M. Booth selected one of the criteria for the early research projects that he surveyed to be described as 'anthropological in tendency' as being designed to make a contribution to the community in which they were based (Booth, 1949:108). A decade later, Sol Tax's emerging framework of Action Anthropology was being discussed by the New Zealand community of anthropologists, and its potential application here was explored at that time (Piddington, 1960). The New Zealand literature around PAR and related research frameworks contributes a well-developed discussion of the extent to which we have moved from a settler society to a post-colonial settler society, and the many different ways we have explored the management of these relationships (L.T. Smith, 1999). This kind of orientation to research resonates with a New Zealand audience, who are aware of the contested nature of the Treaty of Waitangi, and on-going efforts to honour it. These accounts contribute to Steve Jordan and Dip Kapoor's call to bring PAR back to the critical post-colonial roots from which it emerged in the Global South during the 1970s and 1980s (Jordan &

Kapoor, 2010). The depth that this conversation has, is possible because we have a mixed history of both successful and damaging research projects. The brief examples provided above regarding traditions of anthropology as aspiring to equitable outcomes between 'researcher' and 'researched' is intended only to show that this discussion is also historically located within the academic field of Anthropology in this country. This is particularly the case here in New Zealand, as the historical community of anthropologists includes locally prominent figures such as Makereti (Maggie) Papakura and Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck).

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The term research partnerships is also of particular interest to anthropologists, and it is the title of the previously mentioned paper written in 1992 by Julie Park, in which she combined an ethnographic approach to studying the place of alcohol in women's lives in New Zealand, with a collaborative research framework that reads very much like PAR. In Park's study the research was the outcome of a community consultation process, and it was conducted at each stage (including interviews, data analysis, and the final write up) by teams comprising researchers from the University of Auckland, the National Council of Māori Nurses, and Lesbian Alcohol and Drug Action. Park notes that although Research Partnerships 'do not halve the work, but increase it ... the end result is an expanded understanding' (Park, 1992: 586). One example of a more recent account of this type of research in New Zealand (Action Research in deed, if not in name), is a review of several community-university collaborations in which Cave, Johnston, Morrison and Underhill-Sem (2012) discuss 'the possibilities of hybrid research collectivities' and find that as a result of engaging in collaborative research, 'our role as academics has changed dramatically—from being critics to experimental researchers willing to learn from what is happening to people in our communities' (Cave *et. al.*, 2012: 47–48). In these examples described above, the term 'research partnerships' refers to a working relationship between academic and non-academic researchers, rather than interdisciplinary research partnerships. However, Tynan and Garbett (2007) provide a complementary discussion of the benefits of collaboration for early career academics in New Zealand that has some parallels with the work discussed above – regarding the wider distribution of academic power, and research skills, beyond well-established sectors of the academy.

EMERGENT NEW ZEALAND APPROACHES TO PAR

In May 2009, at the University of Waikato, NZCARN was officially launched

at a symposium that brought together academics from around New Zealand who were utilising the PAR framework. Referring to this event, Niki Davis and Donna Morrow (2010:97) acknowledge that while Kaupapa Māori and Action Research frameworks are different, they are also compatible. As Angus Macfarlane explained in his keynote address at the symposium:

Within both Kaupapa Māori approaches and action research approaches researchers are expected, by their communities to have some form of critical and historical analysis of the role of research in a range of dynamic contexts and sites (Macfarlane, 2009 as cited in Davis, N., Fletcher, Groundwater-Smith & Macfarlane, 2009:2).

In their published account of the symposium, Niki Davis, Jo Fletcher, Susan Groundwater-Smith, and Angus Macfarlane introduce the metaphors that emerged to represent a New Zealand based approach to Action Research, describing ‘... diverse mountains of research methodologies that mingle and nurture their world as their water flows along braided rivers’ (N. Davis *et al.*, 2009:11), as they explain, ‘The metaphor of a braided river is used in order reinforce that no one method be subsumed by another and the mountain range suggests the multiple strengths that they bring’ (Davis *et al.*, 2009:6). These metaphors resonate well for me, particularly in connection to the te reo Māori and kaupapa Māori studies that I was privileged to take part in over 2009–2010. Mountains and water sources play a significant role in both whakapapa (family ties, ancestry, the human and non-human elements of the living systems we come into relationship with at the time of our birth), and pepeha (set phrases used during formal introductions to describe well-known features of a group’s whakapapa). I see these mountains and waterways as providing not only strength, but also a sense of place, a specific local origin, helping us to find our orientation to this research landscape.

In the same article, Davis *et al.* go on to summarise the key issues that emerged from this research landscape, during the establishment of NZCARN, as follows:

- Action research – questioning the term as methodology and its fit with becoming critical
- Colonisation and globalisation through naive assumption of shared ‘western’ world views
- Empowerment – a problematic term
- Collaboration versus autonomy
- Perceptions of partnership (Davis *et al.*, 2009:7)

This list correlates with discussions found in the wider New Zealand Action Research literature. A further point of description about our local research landscape comes from Martin Tolich (2001). He explains the importance of keeping in mind that New Zealand as a country has a uniquely 'small town' feel, a sense that there are only two degrees of separation between most people. This means that the goal of trying to achieve anonymity of research participants, for example, may not be possible in some cases, even on a national level. This highlights again the importance of relationship building as a foundation for research partnerships. Showing respect for people's experiences is a part of building strong relationships. Most of the participants in my PhD research have elected *not* to remain anonymous. However, I am keenly aware during informal conversations that some of the knowledge I could contribute to time banking development strategies *has* been shared anonymously, or is otherwise sensitive in nature. In these cases I either actively forget the information, choose not to pass it on, or anonymise it. The following section celebrates a few examples of the innovative projects occurring in our 'small town' research landscapes. Stopping at just a few points along the braided river described above allows us to delve deeper into the key issues raised at the inaugural symposium of NZCARN.

PART IN A POST-COLONIAL CONTEXT

As mentioned earlier, we have been struggling at a national level to find ways to move from a settler to post-colonial, settler society. This discussion has had an impact right through our large institutions including our public healthcare and education systems. As a result, all New Zealanders are at least familiar with the discussion. One research project that has emerged from within this familiar and contested terrain is M.E. Forster's PhD research conducted from 2006 to 2009 with the Whakaki Lake Trust. The trust is comprised of members from several related hapū (subtribes), Ngai Te Ipu, Ngāti Hinepua, and Ngāti Hine, who live in the area surrounding Whakaki Lake, between Napier and Gisborne in the North Island of New Zealand. Forster, a postgraduate researcher with whakapapa links to these hapū, conducted an action research project designed to support hapū-led management and restoration of the ecologically sensitive sand dunes and wetlands surrounding the lake. Forster provides a nuanced account of the divergent actions of some of the organisations, including local and national authorities, that the trust entered into research relationships with. In the case of a local regional council, for example, although they had made positive contributions to the work of the Whakaki Lake Trust, some of their policies advanced competing agendas. These policies included support for low water levels in the lake, and support for agricultural practices that were

contributing to environmental degradation (Forster, 2011:138). New Zealanders as a population are familiar with both the contested and on-going nature of Māori land and resource claims in regards to the Treaty of Waitangi. We are also familiar with a range of responses from government and local authorities when dealing with on-the-ground community issues related to the Treaty. Forster's account is one of the many rich texts that we are fortunate to have access to in New Zealand, that examine these issues in depth.

He goes on to explain a range of strategies developed within the Trust's management plan that ensure current and future research projects will uphold their values, and support their status as kaitiaki (guardians) of Whakaki Lake and the surrounding wetlands. These include having at least one Trustee or whānau (extended family) member on the research team of each project (Forster, 2011:139). This contributes to up-skilling in research across a range of academic disciplines within the community. It also contributes to a broader long-term goal of shifting the focus of research towards programmes that are designed and run by the hapū, for the benefit of the hapū, and that are consistent with their wider goals.

Complementary to Forster's account are reports and journal articles produced by local tribal authorities that share with a wider audience the experience of engaging in research from a community's perspective. In one example, Henwood and Harris (2011) explain the research guidelines designed by Te Rarawa that are provided for external researchers. They also share with a wider audience their experience of being engaged concurrently on four different research projects. These research projects ranged from exploring local understandings and expressions of well-being; to recording family histories; and developing management strategies for customary fisheries and forests. These separate projects were linked under the broader themes of whānau and hapū development, and the article discusses the sophisticated management of time and resources that this required. The authors of this report – Wendy Henwood and Aroha Harris – are members of both Te Rarawa iwi, and the academic community based at Massey and Auckland universities respectively.

LOCALISING THE ‘WESTERN WORLD VIEW’ OF PAR

Lewis Williams worked with the Women's Advocacy Group (WAG) in the Auckland suburb of Glen Innes, a community in which there is a high proportion of state housing (government provided housing), and the action research project that she undertook with this group formed the basis of her PhD. At the time Williams' research began in 1998, there was growing frustration in this

community at the neglected state of these homes. Williams approached the Women's Advocacy Group, formed a relationship with them, and together they designed a research project to provide empirical data to support their advocacy and lobbying work.

Together they surveyed families in forty-two homes, discussing the families' most pressing concerns. The published results of the survey were widely reported in the media, placing sufficient pressure on the state housing authority to force them to take remedial action. While this summary makes the process sound straightforward, Williams' writing reveals the complex nature of forming a relationship between herself and members of the advocacy group, especially in the early stages of the research, as she explains:

Initially, from one week to the next (as we discovered and negotiated our common ground), I did not know if I would still have a research group ... As our trust grew and common ground became more established, my experience of these tensions lessened, although always remained. (Williams, 2007:623)

She also found that, in contrast to the egalitarian ideals that the framework of PAR sometimes aspires to, as she was conducting this research with women from Auckland's Tongan and Samoan communities, careful attention and respect to social hierarchy was important. As a result, Williams 'found it difficult on many occasions to abdicate from the leadership role' (Williams, 2007: 627). She felt that at times this tension was holding back the research progress, and discovered several strategies that helped to address this issue. These included: seeking advice and professional mentoring from a woman of Fijian/Tongan descent, who helped her to navigate within this dynamic; continually providing opportunities for others to take up leadership roles; and facilitating a discussion amongst herself and the members of WAG specifically on this issue and their views as to how it might be shaping the research process.

Williams also found that to gain power as the result of an Action Research project is not a neutral undertaking and can produce a range of outcomes, many positive, some less so, for the individuals and groups involved (Williams, 2001; Williams, 2007; Williams & Cervin, 2004). The success of this advocacy project had an unintended negative impact on the relationship between WAG and their larger, better resourced, umbrella organisation. This was a result of WAG receiving more media recognition than their umbrella organisation, and WAG's considerable success on both national and local levels regarding improvements to state housing. At the time of writing, Williams noted that this

formerly productive relationship between the two organisations had not yet recovered, and that the loss of this partnership ‘... paradoxically undermined the capacity of the group to influence ongoing change at the macro-policy levels’ (Williams & Cervin, 2004: 28–29).

EXAMINING PAR IN A BICULTURAL SETTING

This work of carefully critiquing and adjusting PAR to fit a post-colonial context in Aotearoa New Zealand is also taken up by Sara Kindon, a strong voice in this research field. Kindon is an editor of an international collection of PAR literature that includes New Zealand case studies (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007), and for her PhD research she conducted a participatory video research project with members of the Ngāti Hauiti community in the central North Island. This research explored relationships between place, identity, and social cohesion within ‘remote’ rural communities. Kindon makes a strong argument for more critical evaluation of participatory research, particularly considering its growing popularity. Kindon’s thesis was published in 2012, but her relationship with the Ngati Hauiti community goes back to 1996 (Kindon, 2012: 8). Kindon, as the Principal Investigator (who had power through her association with the institution, and by acquiring the necessary funding), asks, reflexively, whether she was complicit in reproducing colonising interactions and research. She examined her own practice in detail with this question in mind for the duration of her research. The voices of the Ngati Hauiti community members who speak throughout her text advance this discussion further. This approach, and their comments, affirm both the rigour of Kindon’s research and the value that the community found through participation as a result of this critical approach to utilising the PAR framework in a post-colonial cultural landscape.

The research that I am conducting does not include a strong bicultural focus. However, participants in my study are drawn from the general population of New Zealand (Tolich, 2002). Therefore, members of the time banking community who identify as Māori have participated in recorded interviews (5 out of 21 participants), and in many informal conversations. As my research also occurs within this post-colonial landscape, I have found it useful to engage with these texts, to continually reflect on where I am positioned in both my research and the broader communities of Aotearoa New Zealand.

‘RESEARCHER’ AND/OR VS. ‘COMMUNITY (MEMBER)’

The strength of Kindon’s relationships with the other participants in her research described above, is evident throughout her thesis. And similarly, in

many of the examples discussed throughout this paper, the terms ‘researcher’ and ‘community’ or ‘community member’ are not mutually exclusive. As is the case with many forms of research, this distinction becomes less clear over time; working relationships and friendships develop as the research progresses. Previous research conducted into Time Banking in New Zealand also follows this pattern, and includes the researchers’ interest in the topic being sparked by an initial involvement or experience with the community or issue at hand. A notable example is the work published by Lucie Ozanne (2009, 2010), a senior lecturer in marketing at the University of Canterbury. Ozanne is a long-term resident of Lyttelton and she was a member of the Timebank and its advisory group before she embarked on her research. She has conducted focus group sessions to discuss her research findings, and also gave a valuable presentation at New Zealand’s first national Time Banking Hui in Lyttelton, October 2011.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I have also taken part in the development of Time Banking as an active member of the national community, and as co-founder of the Dunedin TimeBank. My fieldwork has included participant observation, writing ethnographic fieldnotes, taking photos, and open-ended, recorded interviews. This is consistent with an anthropological approach to conducting research, and standard research practice for a PhD student in anthropology. The types of activities that I have undertaken for the purposes of participant observation is where PAR methods start to emerge in my research. My participant observation has included: promotion of Time Banking (public presentations, workshops, and interviews with local media); collating and disseminating resources at the local and national levels; serving on the board of the Living Economies Charitable Trust for one year; writing content for the new national website (www.timebank.org.nz); earning and spending time credits in two timebanks; and working alongside the paid co-ordinator of a timebank outside of Dunedin for five weeks as a part-time assistant. All of these experiences have informed both my overall research questions and my interview questions. I have also disseminated resources, contacts, and knowledge gained at the national level, and here in Dunedin as we develop the new Dunedin TimeBank.

Co-ordinators and members of timebanks in New Zealand have contributed to my research design by encouraging me to establish a new timebank in Dunedin, and by providing me with resources and contacts to assist with this project. They have also contributed rich feedback on my research plans during informal conversations and recorded interviews. Some of these conversations have evolved into small-scale research projects. For example, in 2011 I organised the collating and dissemination of all correspondence between New Zealand

timebanks and the Inland Revenue Department (IRD). This correspondence explores potential tax implications for trading in time credits. This short-term project was conducted in response to requests made during fieldwork in June – July 2011, and was made possible through timebank coordinators and committee members kindly providing me with copies of this correspondence and advising where to find more and how to access it. However, overall my research practice has been weighted more heavily towards my own active involvement in promoting and developing Time Banking, than towards the participation of members of the Time Banking community in my PhD research design and process. My research is therefore mainly ethnographic in nature, incorporating elements of PAR when and where appropriate.

Further community participation in my research will occur at the second national Time Banking Hui to be held in Raglan, November 17th and 18th 2012. Many of the 21 people who have participated in recorded interviews for my research will be present (we expect about 30 attendees in total). I will be attending as a representative of the Dunedin TimeBank, and I will also present some of my preliminary ethnographic research findings for the purpose of feedback and discussion. These shifting insider/outsider roles can at times be demanding—physically, mentally and emotionally, in combination with travelling to the geographically dispersed locations of timebanks around New Zealand. The literature reviewed in the final section of this paper has helped me to reflect on and navigate this tension.

CONDUCTING PAR AS A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT

These key texts include first-person accounts of the challenges and rewards inherent in the process of conducting a PAR projects as a doctoral student (Maguire, 1993; Hanrahan, 2002; Burgess, 2006; Sheehan *et al.*, 2007). Other treasured finds from the literature include advice from seasoned PAR academics written specifically for postgraduate students who are conducting PAR projects (Dick, 2002; Herr & Anderson, 2005). A related set of publications share reflections on the teaching and supervision of action research projects at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Kelly *et al.*, 2004; Greenwood, 2007; Levin, 2008). These texts will become increasingly relevant as New Zealand tertiary institutions continue to adapt in response to the growing demand from students for opportunities to engage with PAR.

To learn more about postgraduate PAR in a local context, in addition to the published accounts mentioned previously (Williams & Cervin, 2004; Williams, 2007; Forster, 2011), a rich source of inspiration can be found in the online

theses databases of New Zealand universities. A selection of the results of this search is presented in Table 1, in order to showcase the range of topics and academic disciplines, and to make these texts easier to locate for interested postgraduate students. These theses contain useful reflexive discussions, and reviews of PAR literature.

Three of the theses included in the table (Rutherford, 2008; Anderson, 2009; Neumann, 2009) do not name their research framework using any variant of the term Participatory Action Research. However, I have included their work in light of a connection to the theory, goals, design and/or delivery of PAR. For example, Anderson established and helped to maintain a peer support group for international students over two years during the course of her research. This group was continually informed by her research, and vice versa. Neumann's project consisted of in-depth interviews with skilled practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is a variant of Action Research.

Table 1. *A Selection of New Zealand Postgraduate PAR*

Author	Year	Title	Degree	Institution
Stewart, P.G.	1981	Self-evaluation: a teacher-researcher's account, in the action-research mode, of an open education approach to the teaching of a composite form one and form two class, established on the criteria of high and low academic ability	MA, Education	University of Auckland
Poskitt, J.	1994	Research as learning: the realities of action research in a New Zealand individualised learning programme	PhD, Education	Massey University
Boyles, P.	1998	Enabling participation through partnership: emancipatory research: the potential for change for disabled people	PhD, Social Policy and Social Work	Massey University
Cervin, C.	2001	Action research, power and responsibility: the predicament and potential of New Zealand community groups	PhD, Social Policy and Social Work	Massey University
Williams, L.	2001	Identity, culture and power: towards frameworks for self determination of communities at the margins	PhD, Social Policy and Social Work	Massey University
Symes, M.	2004	The legacy of prenatal exposure to alcohol: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, the New Zealand situation	PhD, Social Anthropology	Massey University
Huygens, I.	2007	Processes of pākehā change in response to the Treaty of Waitangi	PhD, Psychology	University of Waikato

Table 1 *continued*

Author	Year	Title	Degree	Institution
Prince, C. M.	2007	A knowledge creation approach to environmental education in early childhood: creating a community of learners	PhD, Education	Massey University
Rutherford, G.	2008	Different ways of knowing? Understanding disabled students' and teacher aides' school experiences within a context of relational social justice	PhD, Education	University of Otago
Anderson, V.	2009	The experiences of international and New Zealand women in New Zealand higher education	PhD, Education	University of Otago
Neumann, C.	2009	Appreciative inquiry in New Zealand: practitioner perspectives	Master of Commerce in Management	University of Canterbury
Gaisford, T.	2010	An alternative to development framework: a study of permaculture and anarchism in global justice movements in New Zealand	Master of Development Studies	Victoria University of Wellington
Brinsden, K. E.	2011	Improving teacher appraisal through action research: One school's journey	Master of Educational Leadership & Management	Unitec Institute of Technology
Hill, A. M.	2011	Re-envisioning the status quo: developing sustainable approaches to outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand	PhD, Physical Education	University of Otago
Stevens, H. K.	2011	Participatory design for community planning and development: tools to collect, synthesise, and use local knowledge in decision-making processes	MA, Design	University of Otago
O'Sullivan, G.	2011	Living with dementia in New Zealand: an action research study	PhD, Occupational Therapy	AUT University
Forster, M. E.	2012	Hei whenua papatipu: kaitiakitanga and the politics of enhancing the mauri of wetlands	PhD, Māori Studies	Massey University
Janssen, J.	2012	Building research capacity in a clinical setting using a participatory action research approach	PhD, Physiotherapy	University of Otago
Kindon, S.	2012	'Thinking-through-complicity' with Te Iwi o Ngāti Hauiti: towards a critical use of participatory video for research	PhD, Geography	University of Waikato

Searches of New Zealand tertiary institutions' own databases revealed the following numbers of potential further theses utilising the PAR framework: University of Auckland (51); AUT University (59); Massey University (35); Unitec Institute of Technology (13); University of Waikato (58); Victoria University of Wellington (104); University of Canterbury (41); Lincoln University (65); University of Otago (13). Numbers are approximate only, due to wide variation in the search functionality of the databases, and the variation in use of terminology. A further search of the online digital repository, DigitalNZ (www.digitalnz.org) returned a total of 358 journal articles, theses, reports, and other publications under the search term 'action research'. These include at least seven Action Research based Masters degrees in Music Therapy awarded by the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington. An additional source of research publications and contact details for New Zealand researchers working within this framework is the Community Research website (www.communityresearch.org.nz).

Postgraduate students who are incorporating PAR frameworks into their research benefit from reading the stories and strategies of those who have gone before them. Carmel Cervin, for example, shares one of her reasons for working simultaneously with three community organisations. Doing so allowed each group to feel genuinely free at any point in the process to withdraw from the project without jeopardising the completion of her thesis (Williams & Cervin, 2004). Forster recounts the need for flexibility. At one point during his research, an illegal poaching incident occurred on Whakaki Lake that tied up the community in a lengthy legal process, during which time community participation in the Action Research project stalled completely (Forster, 2011:137). Williams eloquently describes her role in a similar vein:

Throughout the entire research process I continued to hold the tension point between the requirements of the research culture and the needs and requirements of the community I was working with. As our trust grew and common ground became more established, my experience of these tensions lessened, although always remained. I was in a bridging role between two quite different cultural communities and their sometimes divergent needs (Williams, 2007: 623).

During fieldwork in 2011, I made an ambitious promise to disseminate summaries of participants' operational questions e.g. 'How can we increase trading in our timebank?' and their potential solutions. I soon realised that this conflicted with the longer process of detailed ethnographic reflection and analysis. So instead, I actively encouraged participants to attend the first national hui,

where we collectively brainstormed development strategies (www.timebank.org.nz/forum/2). In all of the writing mentioned above I found confirmation that feeling overwhelmed at times by exploring PAR in this way as a post-graduate student, and continuing on with it regardless, has put me in the good company of many others who have experienced the same doubts and made the same decision.

CONCLUSION

Because of our two degrees of separation, and the increase in interest in conducting PAR style research at the postgraduate level, we should be looking more at the literature produced here. When conducting PAR in Aotearoa New Zealand, we must remain attentive to the unique politics and social landscape that exists in this place. The list of references at the end of this article is provided to help take a step forward towards collecting all of these rich resources into a more easily accessible collection. I hope that other writers will come forward to add to and build on this as yet incomplete collection. The insights discussed in this article indicate how New Zealand research can be very valuable to New Zealand people. It is possible to combine an ethnographic approach with elements of PAR in ways that are mutually beneficial to both research frameworks. In my own research I have enjoyed increased opportunities for participant observation, and gained a much deeper understanding of the field, through incorporating elements of PAR into my ethnographic study. Also, utilising an ethnographic approach: being a keen and observant listener; being passionate about people and what has meaning in their lives; and also being flexible and highly mobile as an individual ethnographer – has revealed the potential for anthropological methods to enhance and strengthen the emancipatory ideals of Participatory Action Research.

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NOTES

- 1 Copyright ©2010 Mediaworks TV. This map has been adapted from an image featured in a 3 News story about the Lyttelton Timebank, broadcasted in October 2010. Refer to Rowe (2010) in reference list for full publication details. Reprinted with permission.
- 2 Reprinted with permission from the artist, Jennifer Kenix, Lyttelton Timebank Coordinator.
- 3 This list of references is provided in full in order to help make New Zealand based PAR publications more widely available.

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