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Speaking Up and Being Heard

An analysis of young people's participation in civic activities.

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Abstract

This research highlights the need for young people to be active participants in civic activities. This means going beyond engaging them in the process, by ensuring they have opportunities to help design, develop and review their participation and consider how to act upon the information they identify; generating positive outcomes for young people generally.

When youth participation is successful it contributes to shaping young people as the next generation's leaders. To facilitate successful youth participation adults need to understand what participation processes young people find helpful and unhelpful. This research explored young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. To support an understanding of these processes this research explored the views of young people currently involved with a Youth Council, through seven semi-structured qualitative interviews. This data was thematically analysed using a deductive approach, and was underpinned by relevant literature and the *Culture of Participation* framework (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003).

This research produced several key findings. Youth councils provide young people with a forum to learn and develop skills as the next generation's leaders by teaching them new skills and offering them a safe place to explore and participate in civic activities. Young people need and appreciate adults who support their participation through behind-the-scenes support and encouragement, which does not take over or lead processes. Young people must be able to contribute to the design and development of youth centric participation processes through regular reviews and evaluations. And finally adults must view youth positively as their perception of adolescence affects the success of young people's participation.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This research explores young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. Participating by 'speaking up and being heard' is more than just offering an opinion; it implies a person's views are listened to and acted on. By exploring young people's views about their participation in civic activities and focusing on what they find helpful and what they do not, young people's participation can be supported and encouraged. This is important because getting youth participation right is an important facet of a young person's successful development. What follows is an analysis of the techniques used to facilitate young people's participation in civic activities; consideration of how adult's attitudes influence young people's participation in civic activities; and an exploration of how young people's participation experiences support and develop them to be the next generation's leaders.

Research goals and objectives

This research will support youth participation in civic activities by generating a clear understanding of what young people find helpful and unhelpful. It will enable adults, who facilitate young people's participation, to encourage youth participation by outlining activities adults should avoid and key processes they can use to support young people's participation in civic activities.

This is a qualitative study utilising seven semi-structured interviews with young people. It explores how adults, and the participation processes the adults administer, support young people's participation in civic activities. Participation frameworks are used to analyse young people's participation, aligning this research with other academics and researchers (Funk et al., 2012; Graham, Whelan, & Fitzgerald, 2006; Percy-Smith, 2006). In particular, the Culture of Participation[1] (Kirby et al., 2003) is used to analyse the participation experiences of the young people.

[1] Chapter Three: Theory, page 35

Participation versus consultation

This research considers young people's real and active participation in civic activities, so it is important to understand the difference between participation and consultation. Consultation is considered as a tokenistic activity where young people's views are gathered but not acted on (Malone & Hartung, 2009). While consultation processes seek young people's views, they veer into a tokenistic or 'tick box' process when adults do not act upon these views (Barber, 2009). If consultation occurs, without listening to the views and opinions of young people, young people disengage. Sinclair (2004) suggests this can be a result of consultation fatigue. Others argue that even when participation does occur, those involved find the slow pace of change frustrating, making it difficult to evidence how they incorporated young people's views in decision-making (Pinkney, 2013). Either way this points to the need for young people to be actively participating not just consulted. This research explores young people's experiences of active participation in civic activities and explores the activities and process that enable young people to feel encouraged and supported to participate.

Where there is a clear attempt at creating a participation process, the processes include space where young people and adults can share some of the power, decision-making, and benefits (Barber, 2009). By exploring the activities that young people find helpful and those they do not, this research identifies the facilitators and barriers for young people's participation in civic activities.

The policy framework

Youth participation is an important facet of New Zealand's policy framework. New Zealand is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), a universal declaration of the rights of children and young people. When the New Zealand Government signed up to UNCROC in 1993, they made a commitment to ensure New Zealand's laws and policies would respect and uphold these rights (Youth Law, n.d.). Specifically, Article 12 of UNCROC says children and young people's views must be considered in decisions that affect them, including civic activities. Upholding UNCROC requires adults to ensure young people can participate in these decisions, which is important as participation is the cornerstone of democracy and inclusiveness (Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 1999). While participation ensures the consideration of young people's views, this

consideration occurs alongside the views of others with no legal mandate to compel people to act on the basis of these views (Sinclair, 2004). Therefore, while UNCROC promotes children and young people's participation, it does not provide any assurance that adults will use their views in a meaningful way. This study addresses the way young people can participate meaningfully, as a way to advocate for their active engagement in civic activities.

New Zealand has written young people's participation into legislation. For example, the Children, Young Persons' and Their Families Act 1989 section 5(d), expressly asks that children and young people's views are considered when making decisions that affect them.[2] New Zealand also has a population specific Ministry, the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD), which supports the development of young people through establishing its own regional youth councils and developing resources that encourage civic organisations to involve young people. MYD has developed policies and toolkits to support organisations facilitating young people's participation in civic activities. One of these is the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa 2002 (YDSA). The YDSA sets out principles that guide youth participation and encourage children and young people's development. This research supports this direction by suggesting ways that adults can support youth participation and guide young people's positive development.

Significance of the study

Participation in civic activities is an important tool in developing young people to be responsible citizens. Thomas and Percy-Smith (2009) argue persuasively that "opportunities for participation at an early age enables [young people] to develop and mature through taking on responsibility and learning to make wise choices and to interact and hear different views" (p. 361). It is hoped that this research is a useful tool for anyone supporting and encouraging the participation of young people in civic activities. Consequently the research findings can be used by adults who support young people's participation to advocate for processes that support, motivate and engage young people to successfully participate in civic activities.[3]

[2] Examples of this include having a say when adults are making decisions such as an out of home care placement or a youth justice plan developed during a Family Group Conference.
[3] This is not limited to adults working with young people on Youth Councils, but will also be beneficial for other adults such as researchers working with young people, adults supporting youth boards or policy makers looking to involve young people in decision-making.

This is a small scale study, so rather than trying to address the issue of participation for young people globally, this research focuses on a specific geographic region of New Zealand. This research informs other studies undertaken in New Zealand on young people's participation and builds on previous work by others such as McGachie and Smith (2003) and Smith, Narin, Sligo, Gaffney, and McCormack (2003). These studies, exploring young people's participation in New Zealand, were completed over ten years ago, so this research will provide a current perspective on how young people are supported to participate in civic activities.

Positioning of the researcher

I am a Registered Social Worker, with a background working as a child advocate for the Office of the Children's Commissioner. In the Office of the Children's Commissioner the views of children and young people are sought on a regular basis to inform assessments of statutory services and provide advice on government policy. The Office of the Children's Commissioner believes that young people's opinions add significant value to these assessments and advice. Sinclair (2004) attests that society is developing a greater understanding of young people as social actors and believes that organisations must find ways of involving young people and be respectful of what they say. These positions align with my view that organisations who work with children and young people need to work collaboratively with their client group, supporting youth participation and seeking their views, to significantly impact in their lives and shape the services adults and organisations deliver.

This research evolved from my interest in understanding what young people think are the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities, in order to support and encourage adults and organisations to involve young people in meaningful ways. I believe that young people should be supported to participate in civic activities. It is my vision that the findings from this research, will provide information to advocate and support young people's participation, by clearly setting out their views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities.

Structure of the thesis

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research into young people's participation in civic activities. The next chapter, Chapter Two reviews youth participation literature by focusing on the

conceptualisation of young people and the period of adolescence; participatory action processes; the importance of using youth centric models; how and why young people participate in civic activities; and how organisations and young people can benefit from young people's participation. Chapter Three, outlines the theoretical underpinnings of this research. It addresses the difference between participation and non-participation or consultation; and discusses a range of youth participation theories that seek to explain and in many instances assess or grade the level of youth participation. Chapter Four outlines the methodological framework for this research and the method of analysis used to establish the key findings. Chapter Five presents the results from the seven semi-structured interviews; and Chapter Six discusses these findings overlaying the literature and theories captured in Chapter's Two and Three. Finally Chapter Seven synthesises the key findings from this research alongside recommendations for future research and practice.

Definition of key terms

A number of terms are used throughout this research; what follows is a description of how these terms have been understood for the purposes of this study.

Young person

A young person in this research is defined as someone aged 16-24 years of age.[4] In this research, young people and the period of adolescence is viewed from a strength based perspective, as people moving through an important transition period where they successfully develop into adulthood.

Participation

For the purposes of this research, real or active participation are experiences that contribute meaningfully to civic activities. This can take a number of formats such as youth voices or consultation where adults are in control; youth-led initiatives where young people work independently; or participatory action processes where adults and young people work together. What holds these formats together is the real impact young people's views make. This research

[4] Please note this differs from the legal definition as defined in New Zealand by the Children, Young Person's and Their Families Act 1989, and instead aligns with the United Nations definition of a young person.

focuses on activities that nurture, value and respect young as they actively participate in civic activities.

Civic activities

This research focuses on opportunities for young people to participate through involvement in a Youth Council. This is generally a group of young people who provide policy advice or who promote youth friendly activities on behalf of their City Council.[5] Youth participation in civic activities enables young people to influence decisions that affect them within an environment which excludes some of this age group; for example those under the age of 18 years who do not have all of the same legal rights that adults do, such as the right to vote.

[5] A City Council is a board of elected officials who govern a city, town or district.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

When adults support young people to participate in civic activities it helps shape their future as the next generation's leaders, therefore the purpose of this research is to understand what young people think are the barriers and facilitators for youth participation so participation can be successfully supported. Definitions and perspectives of this age and stage shape the interactions between young people and adults in the society. These perspectives determine whether the framework used, to support young people's participation in civic activities, is positive or negative. In this chapter relevant literature is discussed concerning how young people and the period of adolescence is conceptualised. This chapter provides a context for the purpose of this research where young people have an opportunity to discuss their views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. It includes how and why young people participate in civic activities and how organisations and young people benefit from young people's participation. Additionally, understanding how adults and organisations generate environments where young people can participate in civic activities is important to support organisations doing the right thing for the right reasons. These environments could include the use of participatory action processes and the importance of using youth centric models.

Conceptualising adolescence

Participation occurs where there is joint process between adults and young people. This does not happen by chance and there are a range of facilitators and barriers to a young person's participation including how young people and the period of adolescence is conceptualised by themselves and others; and how this influences youth participation in civic activities.

Young people are often torn between a desire to develop their own unique sense of identity, and a pressure to conform to other's expectations (Batsleer, 2008; Buckingham, 2008). They shape their identity based on a wide range of social constructs including the expectations of their parents and other peers (Batsleer, 2008). Buckingham (2008) describes adolescence as a period of testing and

learning about one's own identity. Adolescence can therefore be framed as a complex stage in the life of a young person that helps to shape their identity and future development.

Young people are often conceptualised by adults or society on the basis of their peers and can therefore be subject to multiplicity. Multiplicity is when adults generalise young people as a group without recognising their individual characteristics (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010). For some young people there is safety in belonging to a group and they inadvertently reinforce and project the group image by mirroring the group's actions. By spending time as a group they develop shared language and behaviours that send messages to show others they belong to this collective group identity (Holliday et al., 2010). Young people do this to reinforce their group's cultural identity by playing their 'identity card', to show others they belong. Buckingham (2008) notes there can be positive consequences of people forming groups and calls this 'identity politics'. Identity politics develop as a result of marginalised or disaffected groups rising up against society-wide power imbalances or struggles (Batsleer, 2008). Multiplicity and identity politics can be beneficial to young people if their group identity is seen as positive, but can be detrimental, if their behaviour is negatively viewed.

Placing negative stereotypes known as essentialism onto sections of society such as young people leads to diminishing and undermining the valuable role they can play (Buckingham, 2008). If, because of the behaviour of the group, this collective youth identity is predominantly negative, some adults find it easier to believe in a generally negative view of youth. If adults generalise young people as deviant or disinterested in civic activities they may develop negative views of this group or collective. This may mean they do not take the time to develop their own understanding of who each individual young person is and what they have to offer and ultimately may not support their participation in civic activities (Holliday et al., 2010).

Historical frameworks shaping the view of adolescence, can be grouped under two major themes (Wyn & Harris, 2004). The first is a sociological viewpoint defining young people as a reflection of their collective group identity, including the things they associate with, such as their interactions with others and the styles they emulate. These can be both positively and negatively framed. The second is a developmental approach that sees adolescence as a linear process where young people develop their own identities as they become adults. This developmental approach can focus on

positives such as maturing and developing; or deficits, such as viewing adolescence as a period of time where young people are human beings 'in the making'. The risk in using this lens is adults can view young people as not having yet developed the capacity to contribute and therefore do not support or encourage youth participation in civic activities. Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005) note adults often define young people through comparisons. This comparison includes viewing young people as 'childish' or not being 'adult', without valuing adolescence in its own right. This deficit focus enables adults to dismiss young people's contribution, by making the assumption there is something wrong with being young and that young people are unable to offer a positive contribution as they traverse the period of adolescence.

When considering how adults support young people to participate in civic activities, it is important to consider how adults view the potential contribution a young person can make. If society positions young people negatively in a deficit framework as 'adults in progress', adults can take this to mean young people have not quite reached their full potential to engage in civic activities. This negative social construct can mean adults ignore young people as contributors who have an important role to play in civic and community activities (Freeman & Aitken-Rose, 2005). This negative view can be what stops some adults asking young people for their opinions; or restricts adults from viewing young people as an integral part of civic activities. Furthermore, conceptualising youth as deviant, hapless victims that are marginalised and disaffected impacts on the ability of some adults to value a young person's contribution to civic activities (Batsleer, 2008; Hil & Bessant, 1999).

In contrast to the previous discussion regarding negative constructs of adolescence, viewing young people positively can open up a space for adults to see the importance of supporting a young person's participation in civic activities based on the important contribution they will make. Adults can play an important role in supporting a positive representation of young people, using a strength based approach. The strength based approach views adolescence as a relational construct which does not position young people as lesser or greater than others but as individuals during a unique and important life stage, who can shape their own identity and can positively impact on the way society views them and supports them to participate (Wyn & Harris, 2004). This positive view helps to recognise the unique role adolescence plays as part of a young person's wider environmental and developmental progression. It also suggests participation is an important step in a linear process, for the young person's development and the impact they can have on their wider environment

(Matthews et al., 1999). It then becomes easy to argue and advocate for the support and inclusion of young people in civic activities.

Sukarieh and Tannock (2011) believe the positive conceptualisation of adolescence is getting stronger over time. They argue historical youth development studies focused on the negative aspects of youth culture where macro influences, such as political contexts, shaped the representation of adolescence. They believe the rise of spiritual and religious-funded studies, which focuses on the good in others, has shaped this new positive construct of adolescence. This is based on a positive social concept underpinned by a positive youth development framework. If the developmental approach is viewed from a strength base this means adolescence is recognised as a unique and critical stage where young people are developing and learning as citizens of today (Matthews et al., 1999). In viewing young people positively it reinforces the valuable role and contribution they offer. This shift, towards a positive view of adolescence and young people, supports organisations and adults by promoting the value young people add when they participate in civic activities.

In summary, research such as this thesis is an important step in supporting and valuing the period of adolescence and what young people offer to civic and community activities. This section has discussed the many factors that reinforce negative stereotypes of young people, prompting adults to believe young people are not mature enough to be fully engaged in civic activities. However, there are emerging views that position young people from a strength based framework where young people have much to offer civic activities. With a negative view of adolescence in mind it is easy to see how society's perception of adolescence, can, in some instances, hinder an adult's ability to understand and embrace the individuality of a young person and the unique perspective they have to offer. Understanding how adolescence can be viewed is important for this research as a negative concept of adolescence can permit adults to dismiss the contribution young people can make. As outlined in Chapter One, this research has taken a strength based view of adolescence as an important period of transition, where young people can be nurtured and supported to become leaders of the next generation. This sets a platform for understanding young people's perspectives on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic life by engaging in civic activities, in this research.

Young people's involvement in civic activities

Involving young people in civic activities has become a popular tool for supporting the development of young people resulting in the creation of a range of policies, toolkits and packages for civic organisations to follow (Hart, 1992; Keelan, 2002; Ministry of Youth Development, 2009; Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003; Skelton, 2007). However, there are still many instances where adults misuse the involvement of young people, such as using the voice of the young person to draw a crowd, without actually responding to their views. This section looks at the role young people, adults and communities have in shaping the opportunities and openings for young people to have a voice in civic life and participate in civic activities. It further considers when, how and why it is important to get participation 'right'.

Research into young people's participation often focuses on why young people do or do not participate, rather than what civic organisations or adults do that encourages or discourages young people from participating (Alfred, Pitawanakwat, & Price, 2007; Banaji, 2008; Barber, 2009; Collin, 2008; Graham et al., 2006; Gray, 2013). Generally research tests the hypothesis, that young people do not participate in civic and community activities, such as voting, because they are apathetic (O'Toole, Lister, Marsh, Jones, & McDonagh, 2003). However, O'Toole, Marsh, and Jones (2003) found most young people do not participate because they do not feel listened to and feel civic activities have no relevance for their lives. Harris et al. (2010) found only young people interested in politics were actively involved in civic activities. These young people were actively involved in campaigns and areas of social activism such as promoting the benefits of eco-friendly policies to protect the environment. Their research showed the rate of voter turnout did not accurately reflect young people's interest in other areas of civic activities; instead they found the adult centric political engagement process was the cause of low voting rates for young people.

Adult centric projects can lead to young people becoming wary of the process and avoiding involvement altogether (Taft & Gordon, 2013). If society believes young people are apathetic it can impact young people's participation in a range of ways (Checkoway et al., 2003). For example, when young people 'buy-in' to society's view of them as apathetic and disengaged, they start to believe they do not have anything to offer and consequently are unable to see how they can make a contribution. Secondly, if adults believe young people are uninterested, they are less likely to create environments where young people can contribute and are less likely to provide participation

opportunities. Finally, if communities themselves become disaffected, through struggles of their own power imbalances in civic activities, they lack the energy to encourage young people to participate. As a result, the environment impacts on how successful young people's civic participation is.

As described earlier in this chapter, when 'youth' are socially constructed as 'competent' they have more opportunities to participate in civic and community activities (Checkoway et al., 2003; Faulkner, 2009; Sinclair, 2004; Taft & Gordon, 2013). These researchers describe the importance of young people having a voice and a sense of being part of a social movement. They cite examples of positive youth participation. These include youth councils that can introduce legislation; civic engagement through active involvement in research and community surveys; starting petitions; holding community meetings; and being part of protests. These examples support young people's involvement at all stages of the process and result in a meaningful engagement during their participation.

If young people feel excluded from civic and community activities adults can create an inclusive culture that helps to shape young people's participation. When young people can see the impact of their participation they are more inclined to engage (Nolas, 2014). A further incentive to participate in these civic and community activities occurs when young people buy-in to the intended outcomes of the process (Taft & Gordon, 2013). This starts with young people's involvement from the very early stages of the participation project so they can help to shape process and identify the intended outcomes. Checkoway et al. (2003) outline how adults who are allies to young people become a 'bridging person' by providing a useful cross-cultural translation service between young people and adults in communities and organisations. Bridging adults play an important role in helping young people to navigate new processes and ensure they have enough information to be fully engaged (Sinclair, 2004). This active engagement, means the participation process take on real meaning for the young person because they can see the impact of their participation.

Hil and Bessant (1999) do not believe young people are at the mercy of adults and social systems which have power over them; they feel young people have power over how they interact with others and can therefore shape their own involvement. They believe while adults must be open and willing to understand a positive concept of adolescence to successfully communicate with and

encourage the participation of young people, the role young people play is equally important. They argue that young people must confidently secure their place in civic activities and participation processes by recognising the important role they can play and ignoring any negative societal view that positions them as unready or unwilling to participate.

Getting it right is important because poor participatory mechanisms become effective in training young people to become non-participants and therefore reinforce negative stereotypes and representations of adolescence (Matthews et al., 1999). Positive participation is key to supporting the development and maturity of young people and this is best learnt through practice in everyday or ordinary situations, that enables them to participate on a regular basis such as routinely seeking their views and making relevant changes as a result (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2009; Ule, 2013). In this way adults generate opportunities for young people to participate on an ongoing basis without having to force a formal or unnatural participation process. Then active engagement becomes commonplace for young people through being actively encouraged to get involved in civic activities.

This section highlighted the importance of creating the right environment to support young people's participation in civic activities. The importance of all three facilitators: young people with positive attitudes, adults that support and encourage this and communities that foster young people's engagement in civic activities, should not be minimised. This section also shows how participation in civic life, through involvement in civic activities, supports the positive development of a young person's identity by supporting them to develop and mature and teaches them how to get involved in civic activities now and prepare them for the future.

The benefit of young people's participation in civic activities

Successful youth participation involves viewing adolescence positively. This is often referred to as Positive Youth Development. Research has shown that Positive Youth Development happens when adults provide young people with a range of opportunities and experiences to develop in their own unique way (Sanders & Munford, 2014). Alongside this, this section considers how civic organisations can benefit from ensuring they set up youth participation processes in the right way to enable young people to participate in civic activities.

There are a number of reasons why civic organisations involve young people. Kay and Tisdall (2012) framed these under four discourses: legalities, consumerism, democratic education and young people's well-being. There are benefits and pitfalls associated with each discourse. For example while legalities can provide the mandate or 'must-do' element to participation, the law can be unfamiliar and off-putting to those trying to interpret it. Kay and Tisdall caution that basing participation solely upon a legislative framework can lead to tokenistic models that do not empower a young person to learn about their rights. Secondly, a framework based on a consumerism model ensures young people can voice their opinions. However in a 'pure' consumerism model, the consumer will act on their opinions about a negative service by no longer using it. In the case of a young person, if their views are sought for a compulsory service such as education, they are less able to take a consumerist approach to the service if they are unhappy with it. The final two discourses are often grouped together and show that participation models based on democratic framework or models that have a focus on young people's well-being, have the potential to enable young people to learn about democratic processes and empower them with self-esteem and confidence to participate in all aspects of civic activities (Kay & Tisdall, 2012). Therefore, it is imperative for civic organisations to understand why they are involving young people, and have a clear understanding of the framework they are using to engage with the young person to achieve their intended outcome.

In some case young people's participation is excluded because civic organisations fear an advisory or discussion group is not representative of all young people. Adults must be careful not to assume that 'the few' is representative of 'the many'. Critics of youth participation advisory groups state only elite or select young people get picked for advisory positions, and assume these young people cannot speak on behalf of their peers (Faulkner, 2009; Roberts, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). Other research has cautioned poor youth participation includes creating a process young people find boring and pointless and ultimately disengage from; engendering unclear outcomes which creates confusion; or developing a vague pathway of what happens once a young person's view has been 'heard' (Smith et al., 2003). These disadvantages all promulgate a loss of integrity to future participation processes, and give civic organisations 'permission' to avoid creating youth participation spaces. It opens up excuses for why youth participation is 'doomed' in the first place and therefore unnecessary.

However, when done well there are many benefits to civic participation for the young people and adults that work with them. Benefits for young people include enhancing the relationship amongst

young people themselves, and with the adults working with them; strengthening services by making them more relevant and responsive to the needs of young people; generating successful outcomes through co-construction of the aims and objectives of the participation process; and saving money because resources do not get directed into areas or services that young people are not interested in or disengaged from (McGachie & Smith, 2003). Likewise young people develop new skills and acquire new knowledge; develop confidence; and understand how to make best use of democratic processes by having a say and getting their point across (Smith et al., 2003; Yeung, Passmore, & Packer, 2012). Barber (2009) and Craig (2003) say these benefits are further enhanced when the young people and adults have induction, support, and training to prepare youth participation process so the outcomes are clear and everyone can operate effectively. When done well, participation can help shape young people to be the next generation's leaders by teaching and actively engaging them in civic activities.

To summarise, this section highlights the importance of collaboration between adults and young people to develop a shared understanding of the aims and intended outcomes of the participation process. This requires adults to view the contribution young people can make positively so they create the space for young people to participate in civic activities and use these experiences to develop young people's skills as the next generation's leaders.

Creating a youth centric approach

A youth centric approach enhances the benefits for civic organisations and young people. This section explores they ways in which adults can make young people's participation in civic activities appealing and meaningful. It discusses the difference between asking young people to be involved in adult processes versus generating a youth centric framework to support young people's participation.

Creating participation models that reflects the group you are trying to engage is likely to support participation. Some youth participation models require young people to develop adult centric skills, such as formal writing and speaking, to participate (Wynn, Richaman, Rubinstein, & Little, 1987). Matthews et al. (1999) found when participation is framed as an adult activity, it is not an appealing process that encourages young people to engage. Processes that only contain adult activities are

unlikely to engage young people, because adults are asking young people to participate in a process that has little relevance for the way they think and act.

Emond (2006) describes adults who consider the ability, interests and views of young people in the development of the questions and methods, as successful. Emond (2006) believes this should not be limited to the development of participation process but should also extend to how the information is analysed and later disseminated. This is referred to as a 'youth centric model' where adults ensure participation suits the development and interest level of each participant, rather than suggesting there is a one-size-fits-all model for participation. Matthews et al. (1999) suggest young people need their own model for participation. An example of this is the use of participatory action processes that support youth participation, by grounding its foundations from a youth centric perspective, rather than using an adult centric model (Eruera, 2010). Research into youth participation best-practice suggests youth participation models should seek young people's views on their preferred methods of engagement, such as using new technologies and virtual spaces, to create social connections and encourage young people to express themselves (Harris et al., 2010). Using new technologies ensures the participation processes relates to the world the young person is currently engaged in, and ensures participation is not only rewarding but enjoyable, from a youth perspective.

To create a youth participation process that is youth centric, rather than adult centric, the intended outcome of the participation should be clear. Adults need to recognise the process used is just as important as the result. Therefore, adults should use processes that keep young people interested and create sustainable models of engagement to ensure participation is not tokenistic and one-off; rather a preferred on-going active engagement with a young person (Craig, 2003). Rayner (2003) adds adults need to understand the value base of the young person; have realistic timeframes and resources; and ensure communications, for example reports, are written in youth friendly formats. Taking the time to ensure organisations' processes support the young person's involvement in civic activities, supports successful engagement of the young person long-term and helps prepare them for future civic activities.

There are arguments against a youth centric approach. Critics believe that youth centric approaches potentially patronise young people by implying they are less able than adults (Emond, 2006). Adults and organisations need to create and promote a youth centric approach that is not a 'dumbed-

down' version of an adult process to avoid this. An active participation process recognises that young people are not less intelligent than adults, but they have different preferences for engagement to their adult counterparts. A tokenistic model that consults with young people but does nothing to actively engage them in civic activities would not be considered youth centric.

Most research into young people's participation focuses on what the young person and adults gain by engaging with young people (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003; Faulkner, 2009; McGachie & Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). What is apparent from these studies, is that young people and adults engage for different reasons and are motivated by different processes; highlighting the importance of designing a youth centric participation model. It is an important distinction, because if you try to train young people to be like adults you can lose any of the benefits you may have gained from working with them in the first instance (Roberts, 2003). Freeman and Mathison (2009) describe this as 'organisational internal colonisation' where young people's views are shaped in such a way by those asking the question, to generate the answer expected of them.

To summarise this section, to determine whether participation is successful by generating good outcomes for the young person and the organisation, it is important to understand young people's views about what facilitates and supports their engagement so the process encourages them to participate in civic activities. This sets out a platform for the purpose of this research, generating an understanding of young people's views on what supports youth participation.

Participatory Action Processes

Participatory action processes can be one way to ensure the success of young people's participation in civic activities. This section considers the use of participatory action processes as a way to ensure young people's participation is meaningful for them, as well as achieving the intended outcomes for the adults and organisations involved. It discusses the importance of the right process and environment to enable youth participation to take place and suggests participatory action processes as a framework for doing so.

For organisations to give the participation process integrity, they need to ensure young peoples' participation is meaningful and achieves the expected outcomes, this can be achieved through participatory action processes (McNeish, 1999). Participatory action processes ensure the participants engage in the design, development and delivery of the process (Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Hilppö, & Mikkola, 2013). Participatory action processes require adults to let go of some of their power and enable young people to get involved. This ability to let go of power and promote another group, points to the importance of adults viewing young people as competent so adults can carve out a positive space for young people participating in civic and community activities.

Adults need to create models of engagement that fit with a young person's frame of reference and engages them in meaningful ways. Wynn, Richaman, Rubinstein, and Little (1987) suggest organisations need to ensure young people and adults create a valued reciprocal relationship through a sharing of power and responsibility. This level of equality enables young people to participate in civic activities with adults and communities. A reciprocal relationship means the contribution of both young people and adults and the opportunities to participate are valued and equal (Percy-Smith, 2006). As Allard (1996) warns participation can be unsuccessful when "you ask young people to contribute to a process over which they have no control and to which they have no input other than their own contribution" (p. 165). This may be the result when adults have a predetermined process and outcome in mind and merely ask young people to provide a view or be consulted on the topic. While this is an important first step in gathering young people's views, it does not then go on to afford a young person the opportunity to fully participate in civic activities, as the aims and objectives of the process have already been decided. This is in contrast to the benefits of using participatory action processes.

Participatory action processes are successfully used to engage young people in developing effective outcomes that impact on positive changes for young people as members of society (Boog, 2003; Eruera, 2010; Nieuwenhuys, 2004; Wyn & Harris, 2004). Using a participatory action framework helps to break down power imbalances between the adult and the young person by ensuring they develop processes together. When participants buy-into the project there is a greater chance of the outcomes influencing social change and supporting civic activities. This supports a positive representation of young people, which then paves the way for others to participate.

When the participation process is developed collaboratively, it is easier to describe the engagement process and outcomes, using young people's language, to determine how the results can be successfully disseminated at the end of the project. This helps to engage young people in the process from the initial stages. Using young people's language honours them and their viewpoint (Smyth & McInerney, 2013). Involving young people in the process helps to ensure their rights are upheld, the outcomes are directed at ensuring efficient services for them, and the gains benefit individuals' and organisations' development (Head, 2011). Participatory action processes capture many of the basic principles of normalising participation because "it is carried out in natural, real-world settings, is participatory, constructs theory from practice, involves dynamic processes of change as it progresses, and aims for understanding of meaning and experience" (Greig, Taylor, & MacKay, 2013, p. 172). A participatory action framework provides a structure for adults and young people to work collaboratively.

To review, using a recognised framework, such as a participatory action process, adults develop a participation process that fully engages the young person in civic activities. It requires a shared distribution of power and ensures adults listen to young people's view not only through the process but also in the design phase and later dissemination of information. Participatory action processes suggest the initial planning and later follow-up is just as important as the opportunity for young people to be involved in sharing their views.

Chapter summary

This chapter has focused on conceptualisations of adolescence and the consequences of this view for both the young person and the organisation. Ensuring the process supports young people in a constructive and supportive way is an important consideration so participation is youth centric compared to a simplified adult model. When done well participation is an important step in shaping and developing the next generation's leaders. The literature shows that participation is not a straightforward process. Even if consultation regularly occurs, successful participation and legislative compliance comes from active and ongoing participation. Real and active participation enables a young person to see value in their contribution and understand the impact they have on civic activities.

This chapter highlights the benefits of viewing young people from a strength based perspective that recognises the valuable contribution they make. Positive participation upholds young people's rights; creates better and more efficient services; and helps to develop individual skills which benefit society as young people become active civic members. Youth participation should not be seen in isolation but should be part of how systems and communities operate; so that engaging with young people has positive long term benefits for everyone.

This chapter has shown the outcome is impacted by the level of planning and thought that goes into the design of the participation process. For this reason this research focuses on what young people perceive to be the facilitators and barriers of youth participation in civic activities. Theoretical participation frameworks provide adults with a way to check the youth participation model matches their intended outcome, the next chapter explores these participation frameworks.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Underpinnings

Introduction

This chapter considers the theoretical underpinnings of civic participation theories. The purpose of this research is to analyse young people's participation in civic activities by gathering their views about the facilitators and barriers for their participation. Participation theories provide an understanding of what happens during participation, and in this research ensures the information gathered is underpinned and analysed using a consistent theoretical paradigm. The theoretical paradigm for this research supports an understanding of the type of participation the young person engages in and how their engagement in an organisation is understood. It describes the nuances of youth participation processes and the impact this has on young people. Finally the paradigm ensures the findings from this research, the facilitators and barriers to young people's participation in civic activities, are easily understood by the reader by applying the theoretical framework to the results.

This chapter follows the development of youth participation theories that are commonly used by those wishing to set up a participation process and researchers and evaluators, to plan, measure and analyse the impact of young people's participation (Barber, 2009). These theories are discussed on the basis of how and why they were developed; how they are used; and a critique of their application.

Theories of participation

To conceptualise the work adults undertake with children and young people, youth participation models and theories were developed (Barber, 2009). Youth civic participation theories were initially developed to support civic organisations in response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), where young people's participation s recognised as a fundamental right (Skelton, 2007). Historical frameworks of civic participation centre on activities that allow 'powerless' adults to shape and influence civic activities (Arnstein, 1969). Early civic participation models, such as Arnstein's Empowerment Model, show the shift from those in power oppressing others, to models of empowerment. UNCROC focuses on protecting the rights of young people by creating political and societal culture change that empowers and protects them and ensures they

can contribute in personal and civic activities. Consequently, youth participation researchers found a natural synergy with early civic participation theories, which support processes for vulnerable groups to share power with others (Sotkasiira, Haikkola, & Horelli, 2010). These early theories including the Empowerment Model by Arnstein (1969), shape youth specific participation frameworks, by suggesting the model of participation impacts on those involved in both negative and positive ways.

This section discusses the evolution of youth participation frameworks and sets out a platform for understanding the nature of young people's civic participation explored in this research. This includes the Ladder of Youth Participation (Hart, 1992); the Model of Youth Participation (Treseder, 1997); the Pathway to Participation (Shier, 2001); the Ladder of Indigenous Participation (Burford et al., 2012); E Tipu E Rea (T J Keelan, 2002); and the Culture of Participation (Kirby et al., 2003).

The Empowerment Model (Arnstein, 1969)

Due to its influence on later frameworks, Arnstein's Empowerment Model is the seminal research from which later youth participation models are derived. While not focused on young people specifically, this model articulates the degree an individual can advocate for themselves, based on community development and planning projects in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America (Varney, 2007). Research into anti-poverty and urban regeneration programmes, shaped the design of the Empowerment Model (Cooper, 2011). Its development highlights what the author perceives as the inherent contradiction between participation and power (Barber, 2009). The model challenges power imbalances and is similar to the later child rights movement and the disadvantages, UNCROC sought to redress.

Arnstein (1969) believes participation is the cornerstone of democracy. Her model has a typology to identify the degrees of participation an individual, who is underprivileged or underrepresented in society, can be involved in. Vulnerable groups of society are described as the 'have-nots' and those in power as the 'haves'. The model describes the relationship between the level of power that is shared or transferred between the two groups (McNeish, 1999). Arnstein, feels those in power are often motivated by racism, paternalism and resistance to power distribution. These factors mean the 'haves' are unlikely to create opportunities for others to participate. The Empowerment Model provides a theoretical framework for understanding what needs to be done to allow power sharing to occur through participation.

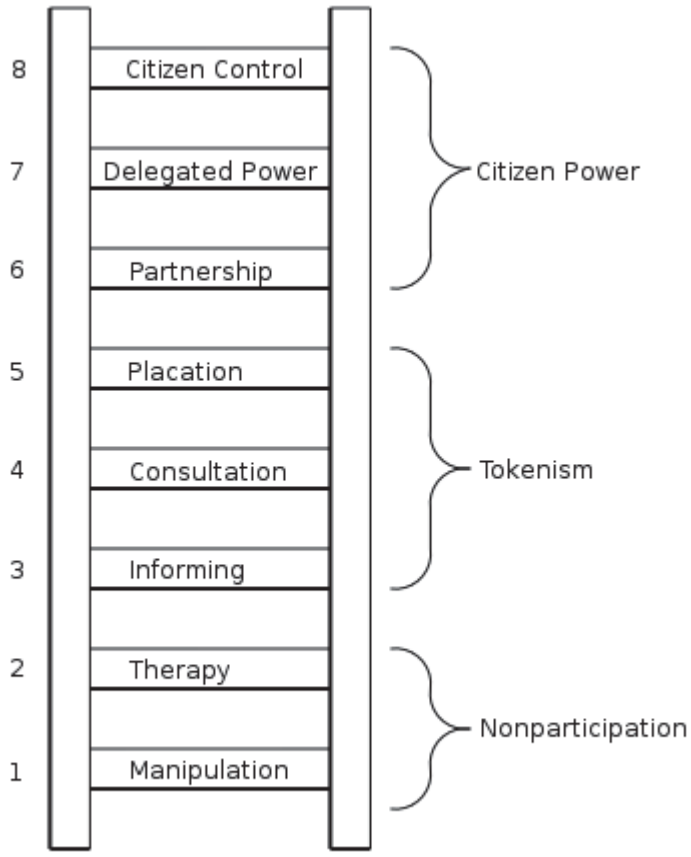

Figure 1 – Arnstein's Empowerment Model (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217)

Arnstein (1969) describes participation as a continuum but for the purposes of the Empowerment Model she portrays participation as eight rungs on a ladder, with clearly defined levels rather than a fluid measurement. The model simplifies the many levels of participation the 'have-nots' can experience into eight clear ladder rungs. Arnstein (1969) groups the eight rungs of the Empowerment Model into three stages (see figure 1). The first stage is 'non-participation'. This includes manipulation and therapy, where those in power try to educate or cure the participants. Dishonesty and arrogance characterise non-participation, where those in power think so little of the 'have-nots' opinion, their views are either ignored or manipulated. At this stage, the 'have-nots' views and opinions have little or no impact on civic activities. The middle stage is categorised as 'degrees of tokenism', which includes informing, consulting and placation. This stage can be an important step to support the 'have-nots' to move to the top stage of the ladder. However, when used exclusively the middle stages create an illusion of participation without any power sharing, by encouraging the 'have-nots' to share their views without the 'haves' acting on, or taking these into

account. The third and final stage on the ladder is 'degrees of citizen power'. This includes partnership, delegated power and citizen control. The Empowerment Model suggests the 'have-nots' should strive for the top rung to be empowered. Although, Arnstein (1969) cautions the top rung can have unintended consequences including creating a new model of separatism, generating higher societal costs and encouraging dishonesty from all parties, where the 'have-nots' then become the new 'haves'.

The Empowerment Model is above all concerned with who holds the power in any given scenario (Thomas, 2007). Because it is based on the power and control struggles of civic activities and community participation, the model naturally encourages people to climb to the top to generate an even distribution of power. This shared power distribution was a useful way to show equality during a time of revolution and urban regeneration during the 1960s (Varney, 2007).

While the Empowerment Model supports change and encourages equality, it has some limitations. Participation is a complex phenomenon and, as described by Arnstein (1969), a continuum of experiences and processes. Therefore, any attempt to generate levels which sections off participation can be challenged (Barber, 2009). Arnstein acknowledges some of the challenges with trying to simplify a power relationship by establishing categories (Arnstein, 1969; Cooper, 2011). The Empowerment Model presents an ideal, useful for planning and evaluating participation, but in practice, participation processes are not always succinctly packaged.

The Empowerment Model is successful in providing a vulnerable group with a framework for regaining lost power and contributing to civic activities. Despite concerns about the model's limitations, it sets a solid framework for later models describing young people's participation (Burford et al., 2012; Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001). The model opened up debate amongst participation researchers, addressing how and why a person can and should participate, and whose interests are best served in the process of doing so (Barber, 2009). The ladder structure of the Empowerment Model shapes several later youth participation frameworks including the Ladder of Participation, the Pathway to Participation, and the Ladder of Indigenous Participation discussed later in this chapter.

The Ladder of Youth Participation (Hart, 1992)

After the United Kingdom (UK) signed up to UNCROC in 1990, UNICEF UK contracted Roger Hart to develop a modelling framework to describe how organisations can support young people's participation in decision-making (Funk et al., 2012). This framework provides guidance for those wishing to uphold children's rights, through empowering them to participate in decisions affecting them. Hart (1992) modelled his Ladder of Youth Participation (Hart's Ladder) off the Empowerment Model. Similar to the Empowerment Model, this framework describes the relationships between two groups, in Hart's framework it describes adults engaging with young people. Hart's Ladder was designed to show adults how and why they should involve young people in civic activities (Freeman et al., 2003). However the hierarchical nature of the ladder deters some organisations from involving young people, because they feel the top rung is too difficult to achieve (Thomas, 2007). Hart subsequently noted that in contrast to Arnstein, he never intended his model to be used as a ladder to climb, (Hart, 1997). Rather, users of the model often treat it as a destination (Hart, 1997).

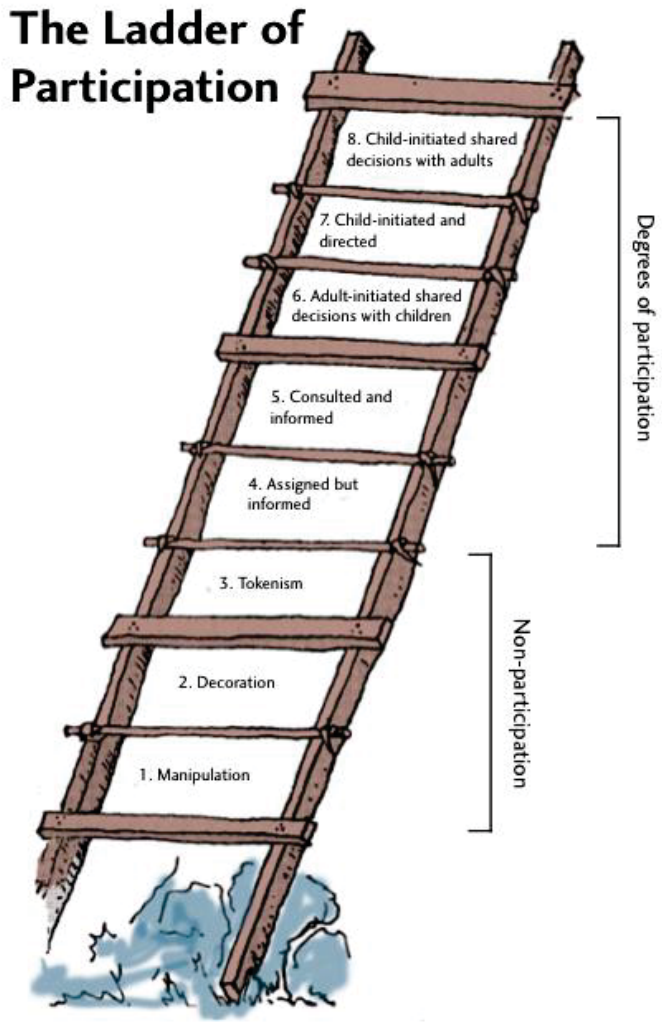

Figure 2 – Hart's Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1992, p. 8)

Hart's Ladder contains two levels, participation and non-participation (see figure 2) (Hart, 1992). Like the Empowerment Model, Hart's Ladder identifies the bottom three rungs of the ladder as examples of non-participation and discourages the use of these processes. Identifying non-participation has become one of the greatest benefits of the framework, despite the criticism the hierarchical nature has drawn. Showing civic organisations how to avoid non-participation has become a key tool, to support organisations wishing to uphold their responsibilities under UNCROC (Shier, 2001).

As evident in Figure 2, the remainder of Hart's Ladder describes different degrees of young people's participation. One of the main differences between this model and the earlier Empowerment Model is a shift away from the focus on power. Unlike the Empowerment Model, which describes two competing groups, Hart feels adults should be involved at all degrees of youth participation. Hart believes adults' involvement is vital to ensuring young people have a clear understanding of what they are participating in and why they are involved (Hart, 1992, 1997). In this way Hart's Ladder encourages adults to be animators, promoters and facilitators of young people's participation. It is useful for adults who want to push the boundaries and be creative when involving young people in participation (Head, 2011). A distinguishing feature of Hart's Ladder is the way it identifies the importance of adult's roles in youth participation.

Hart's Ladder (1992) promotes democratic processes for young people. Hart (1992) notes true democratic processes are both fair and transparent, and he encourages participant recruitment through youth led processes such as forming a committee or group, over adults handpicking who should be involved. Hart believes democratic responsibility is something that should be nurtured in young people and participation is a tool to do this (Matthews et al., 1999). Hart's Ladder shows adults and organisations how they can facilitate young people's participation in different ways, depending on where their processes sit on the ladder.

Hart's Ladder was the first participation framework to have a youth focus, so it became immediately attractive to the youth movement of the 1990's, and the implementation of UNCROC (Barber, 2009). It encourages organisations to do things differently. Whereas, generic participation frameworks, such as the Empowerment Model, imply organisations do not do any 'real' participation and only provide tokenistic participation opportunities (Head, 2011). While initially interpreted as a hierarchical model, recent uses see the ladder rungs as a situational concept to describe what is

happening rather than rank it (Head, 2011). These strengths support the popularity of Hart's Ladder amongst those looking for opportunities to encourage young people's participation.

While Hart's Ladder has become the dominant paradigm in youth development frameworks, such as New Zealand's Ministry of Youth Development's *Keepin' it Real* publication, its high profile has also generated considerable discussion and debate. This is consistent with Hart's intention to both support organisations as well as generating discussion about young people's participation (Barber, 2009). However, Thomas (2007) notes it is unlikely he would have expected the level of criticism and constant refinement it continues to generate. As noted earlier, a core concern is the implication that Hart's Ladder presents a ladder to climb, implying organisations should strive for the top. It was later critiqued because it lacks an emphasis on the impact or outcome, and merely describes participation processes (Kay & Tisdall, 2012). However, Hart designed this model to help adults think about youth participation. It was not developed as a model for practice, much less a rigid framework where users feel constrained within sections or rungs of the ladder (Thomas, 2007). Hart believes users should pick the rung most suited to the situation and intended outcome of the young person's participation. He also believes for a young person's participation to be truly effective, they need to be involved throughout the entire process, to some degree or other, and they should be able to choose the format of their participation (Hart, 1997). As per its original brief, this framework was designed to support organisations, not hinder their progress.

Hart's Ladder remains a useful framework to identify false participation. Ultimately this has become the framework's legacy and is still used in this way today (Barber, 2009; Shier, 2001). As in the Ministry of Youth Development's *Keepin' it Real* publication, it is the preferred framework for understanding young people's participation in organisations (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009). By viewing the model as a continuum it has become used extensively by organisations to ensure they do more than just offer a tokenistic approach to participation (Howe, Batchelor, & Bochynska, 2011). Hart argues hierarchical frameworks distort true participation, when the essential value in any model should be the ability for the participant to choose their level of involvement (Hart, 1997; McNeish, 1999). Hart's Ladder is the youth participation model most often used and supported and it has become a founding framework for many others that followed.

The Model of Youth Participation (Treseder, 1997)

Treseder's model was developed for 'Save the Children, UK' in the late 1990's as part of a manual for organisations working with young people. The manual provides useful advice to increase youth participation. Treseder questioned the validity of the hierarchical concept presented in Hart's Ladder and the confusion it generated regarding the best way to approach youth participation (Sinclair, 2004). Consequently, his new framework, the Model of Youth Participation (Treseder's Model), is designed around a circle, where every approach is given equal status, see figure 3 (Treseder, 1997). A major shift in this model is the removal of the bottom group of non-participation levels (Thomas, 2007). This became a consistent feature in the development of future youth participation frameworks, because authors feel that models describing participation, should only include activities that are real and active participation processes. The model retains the participation categories from Hart's Ladder, but depicts them in the circular framework (see figure 3). The central construct of Treseder's Model is that all participation processes have merit, so he represents all of the processes as equally valuable as the next. This model encourages adults to pick their participation category on the basis of their desired participation outcome (Treseder, 1997).

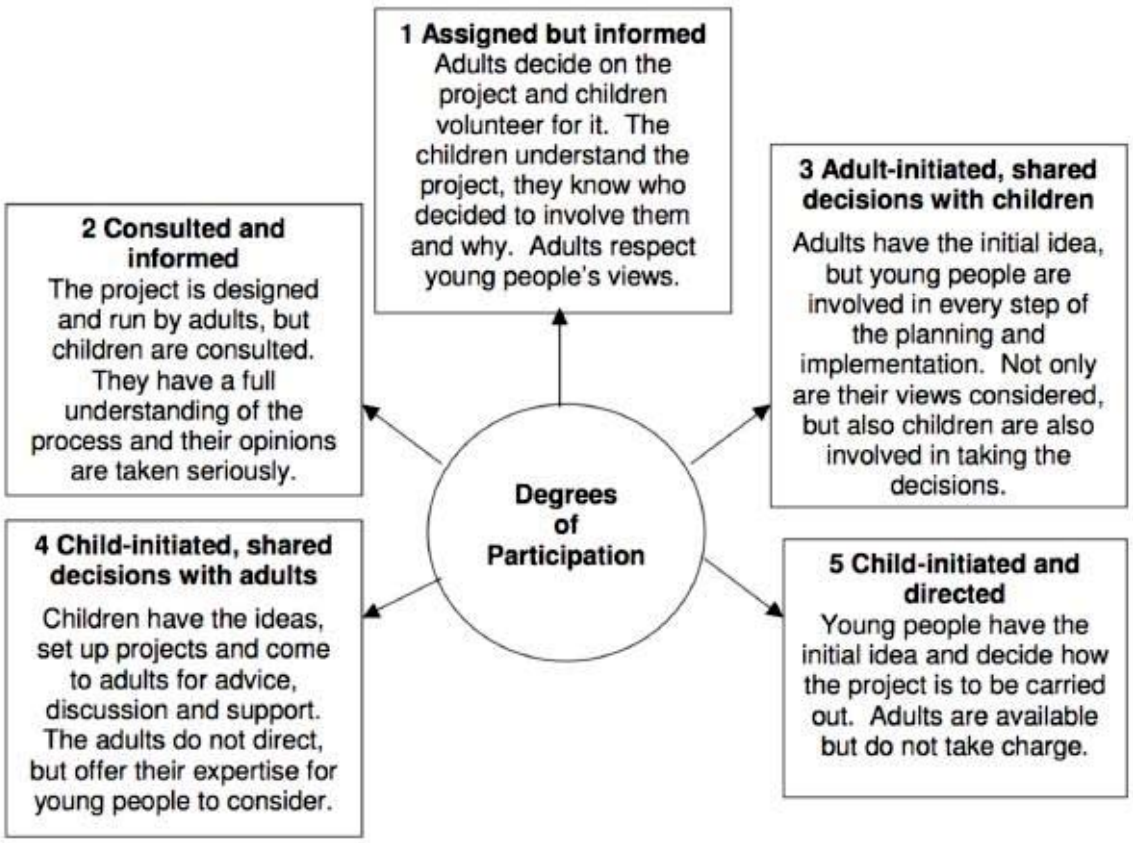

Figure 3 – Treseder's Model of Youth Participation (Treseder, 1997, p.7)

Treseder's (1997) manual which contains the Model, supports civic organisations to understand how they are involving young people in participation by undertaking self-administered tests and questionnaires. These are designed so organisations can evaluate who holds the power; how the participation occurs; and the intended outcomes of the participation. From this, civic organisations are able to pick the model of participation that best suits their situation. The manual also includes tools and methodologies for participation processes and for evaluating the outcomes of the process at completion.

Treseder (1997) claims who holds the most power or control during the participation is less important than the process. Because of the focus on process, Treseder's Model is underpinned by what he names as the five pre-requisites to participation (Hodgson, 1995 cited in Treseder, 1997). The five prerequisites are young people having access to people in power; working with adults who create suitable environments; having a real choice; developing a trusting relationship with at least one person; and having valid avenues to complain. These prerequisites are applied to all types of participation as depicted in figure 3. In this way, Treseder's Model suggests adults focus on the participation environment they create rather than the types of processes they implement.

Treseder's Model was the first youth participation model to explicitly suggest participation is not hierarchical (Thomas, 2007). Treseder developed a model that encourages adults to use their judgement to match the participation process to the intended outcome, without a desperate bid to reach an ideal state. Hart formally endorsed this approach as he had not intended for his Ladder to be used in a hierarchical way (Thomas, 2007). Because Treseder emphasises the participation context as the main influencing factor, those using it find it "more pragmatic and accepting of adult involvement" (Barber, 2009, p. 29). This is similar to the paradigm suggested by Hart, where the participation framework focuses on adults and young people working together. But, is a distinct contrast to the Empowerment Model which implies an ongoing power struggle between the two sides of the participation process.

Similar to earlier models, Treseder's Model is a generalisation of a complex phenomenon, so it has some limitations which invites critique (Barber, 2009). In addition to this, Treseder strongly challenges the view that young people are inherently vulnerable to the power of adults. Supporters of the child's rights movement feel this disadvantages young people by implying they do not need

support and ultimately preventing them from getting the help they require (Alderson, 2001). This presents a mixed message. In Treseder's Model, on the one hand, it highlights the importance of the environment adults create, but then also suggests young people have the power to generate their own environment.

Treseder's Model provides a non-threatening framework for understanding youth participation, because it does not imply that adults need to strive for a certain type of participation. He shifts Hart's Ladder metaphor to a more fluid transitional model creating a sustainable platform for other youth participation frameworks (Barber, 2009). The largest (or most significant) change is the removal of non-participation levels and this trend carries on into the development of future youth participation frameworks.

The Pathway to Participation (Shier, 2001)

In 2001 in the UK, Shier developed a new model he named a Pathway to Participation (the Pathway). The Pathway provides information to organisations by adding layers of guidance to Hart's 1992 Ladder for organisations wishing to involve young people in participation (Shier, 2001). The Pathway returns the youth participation framework to a hierarchical model and presents the participation processes as an incremental linear framework (see figure 4). At each stage, organisations and adults rate their processes so they can describe the level of young people's participation.

Based on a participation continuum, the Pathway maintains the trend of removing the bottom, non-participation rungs and focuses on processes that support or encourage participation (Howe et al., 2011). In line with Hart's Ladder, the Pathway's five levels are as follows: children are listened to; children are supported to express their views; children's views are taken into account; children are involved in the decision-making process; and children share the responsibility or power for decision-making (see figure 4). At each stage it sets out openings, opportunities and obligations for an organisation. The Pathway defines an opening as the personal commitment a person makes to work in a particular way; the opportunities signify when the time is right for each stage to occur; and finally the obligation is the commitment made by an agency to put the participation process into practice.

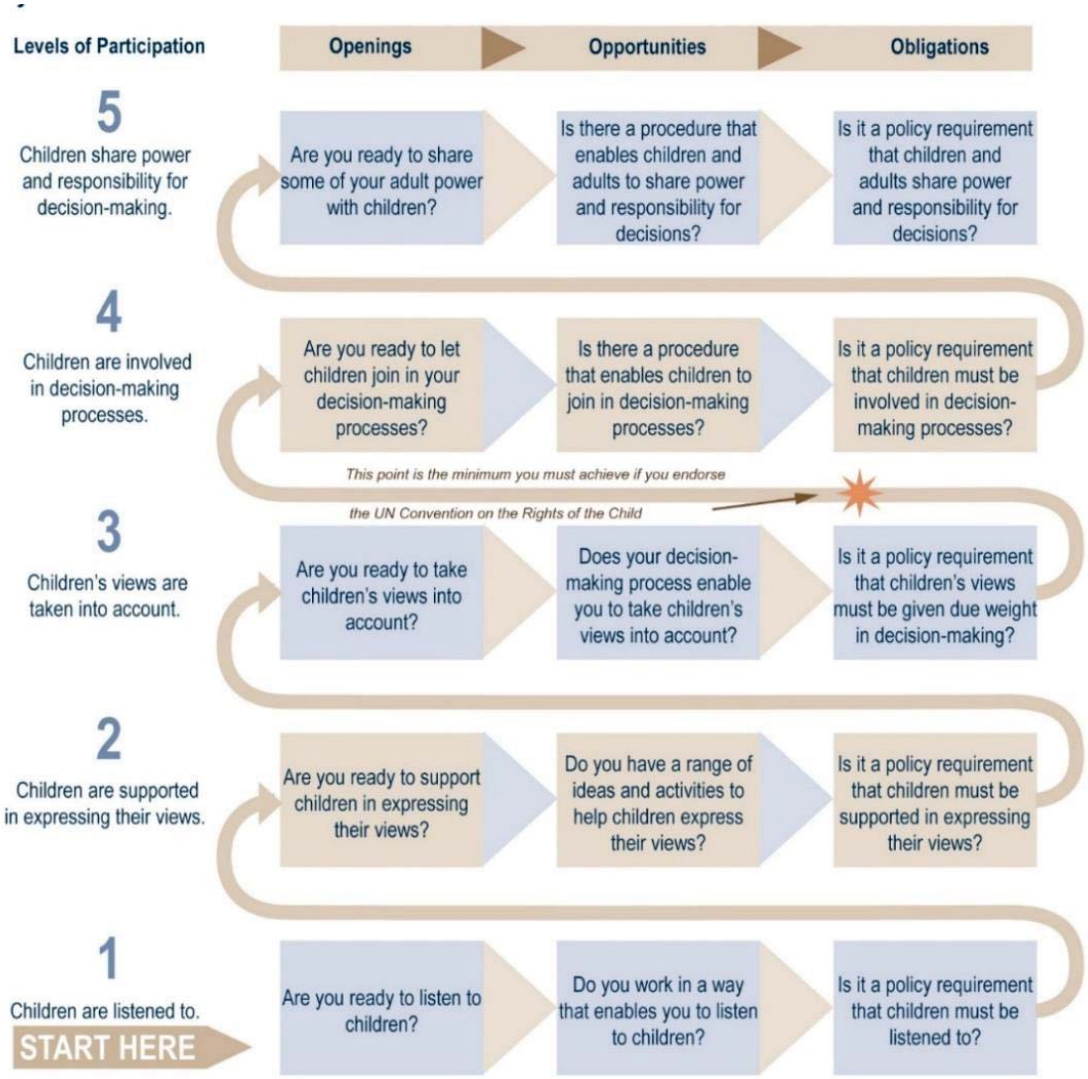

Figure 4 – Shier's Pathway to Participation (Shier, 2001, p. 111)

Like earlier youth participation theories, Shier (2001) makes it clear this model focuses on how children and adults work together. At every stage the Pathway describes interactions between adults and young people, rather than autonomous decisions. Autonomous decisions are deliberately left out because they do not constitute participation between two groups (Shier, 2001). This focus on how young people and adults work together is a clear step away from Arnstein's (1969) original framework which focuses on supporting the 'have-nots' to regain lost power from those in charge, by creating autonomous decision-making processes.

Shier's model develops a linear pathway for organisations (Freeman et al., 2003). The Pathway is transactional, because each level or stage builds on the previous one. It outlines the steps adults and organisations take to reach 'full participation'. As evident in figure 4 the Pathway incorporates three

steps to this. The first step see adults developing and embedding a culture in an organisation that participation is desirable; secondly equipping the organisation with the skills and resources needed to make participation successful; and finally introducing on-going opportunities to normalise participation (Head, 2011). Shier believes true participation is achieved when adults explicitly share their power aligning the Pathway with the Empowerment Model (Thomas, 2007).

While each level follows into the next, it takes account of the fact that adults use different models for different circumstances (Sinclair, 2004). Like Treseder (1997), the Pathway has a strong focus on the environment in which the participation occurs (Barber, 2009). Its framework supports adults to achieve clarity over the purpose of the participation and to determine where an organisation sits on the participation continuum (Sinclair, 2004). Importantly, the Pathway also identifies the point where participation processes match with the responsibilities of Article 12[6] under UNCROC. By aligning itself with UNCROC, this framework promotes the importance of young people participating with adults as part of legislative compliance or best practice (Percy-Smith, 2006). While there has been some critique of the Pathway's hierarchical framework, its unique focus on UNCROC compliance has cemented it use in organisations wishing to encourage youth participation.

The Ladder of Indigenous Participation (Burford, Kissmana, Rosado-May, Dzul & Harder, 2012) and E Tipu E Rea (Keelan, 2000)

The theoretical youth participation frameworks discussed so far were developed in response to a perceived lack of opportunities for young people's participation. However, they do not address any issues arising from working with indigenous young people. Ensuring marginalised ethnicities are able to participate presents some challenges, to address this gap a theoretical paradigm is needed (Sinclair, 2004). As a response, a group of researchers in South America developed the Ladder of Indigenous Participation (the Indigenous Ladder) (Burford et al., 2012). While indigenous participation is not a focus of this research, knowledge of this theoretical framework is useful for considering any participation by indigenous youth explored in this research. This focus is important as New Zealand is a bi-cultural country as set out in te Tiriti o Waitangi.[7] Te Tiriti is the founding

[6] Article 12 – states that children and young people's views must be considered in decisions that affect them, See Chapter One: Introduction, page 2

[7] Tiriti o Waitangi = Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840.

document that outlines the partnership between the indigenous peoples of New Zealand (Māori) and the British Crown (State Services Commission, 2005).

The Indigenous Ladder is a hierarchical framework and constructed in an educational setting with a particular focus on curriculum (Burford et al., 2012). Burford et al. (2012) developed the Indigenous Ladder under the premise young people will find it easier to learn in an environment where they can fully participate. The authors note the educational benefits for full participation, including higher educational achievement and engagement, are irrespective of the outcomes or results of the activity (Harder et al., 2014). The Indigenous Ladder evaluates the participatory processes available to indigenous young people (Podger, Velasco, Luna, Burford, & Harder, 2012).

The Indigenous Ladder was developed from Hart's Ladder, but reframed with an indigenous lens, meaning they used indigenous principles to support participation, such as promoting the value of indigenous knowledge (see figure 6) (Burford et al., 2012). Unlike many other participation frameworks, it contains two lower non-participation levels (level -1 and level 0). The remaining four levels relate to the interaction between the young person and the adult in an educational environment. The four participatory stages are acknowledgement, engagement, interculturality and full partnership.[8] The Indigenous Ladder suggests adults and young people should work together to reach the top level (level 4 – Full Partnership). It uses value based indicators at each stage (Burford et al., 2012). Value based indicators are "statements or criteria that guide the identification of measurable indicators for tangible values, through local conceptualisation and operationalization [sic]" (Harder et al., 2014, p. 125). Some of the points of difference between the Indigenous Ladder and other models are the inclusion of an ethical value base which underpins the participation process; the inclusion of the impact of peer elicitation and peer validation methods; the importance of familiar vocabulary in participation processes; and the importance of challenging young people with new ideas all developed from an indigenous frame of reference (Podger et al., 2012). This focus on peer influences suggests this type of participation occurs in group settings, rather than measuring participation on an individual level.

[8] *Acknowledgement* is defined as learning about another's culture; *engagement* is defined as learning from another's culture; *interculturality* is defined as processes where cultures learn together; and *full partnership* is where groups are learning as one and where the 'us' and 'them' mind-set is dissolved (Burford et al., 2012).

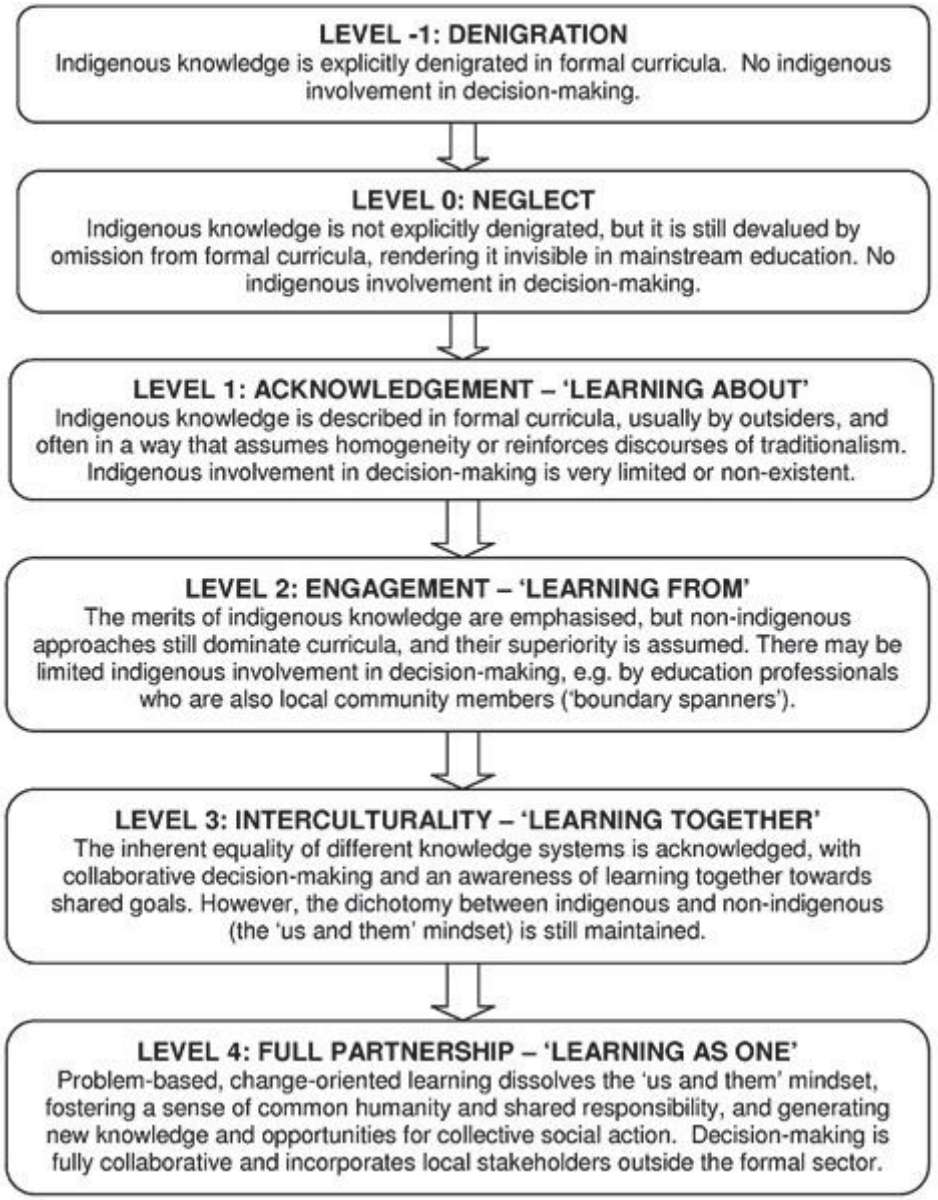

Figure 5: A Ladder of Indigenous Participation in Intercultural Education (Burford et al., 2012, p. 6)

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Youth Development promotes the use of 'e tipu e rea'[9] a toolkit for ensuring young Māori in New Zealand have opportunities to participate (Keelan, 2002). While not a specific theoretical framework, it is an activity kit containing tools to support indigenous participation, rather than describe or evaluate it. E tipu e rea lists four objectives to ensure young Māori have the same opportunities to participate as any other young person. The four objectives are involving taiohi Māori[10] in activities that are important to them; integrating contemporary issues into any development project for taiohi Māori; providing opportunities to integrate tikanga Māori[11] into

[9] E tipu e rea = grow up tender young shoot, in reference to supporting young people's development
[10] Taiohi Māori = young people of Māori descent, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand
[11] Tikanga Māori = ancestral customs of Māori

activities for taiohi Māori; and ensuring adults nurture taiohi Māori during any participation process (Keelan, 2002). While e tipu e rea was created for the New Zealand context, it is underpinned by an international model of positive youth participation called the 'circle of courage' (Reclaiming Youth International, n.d.).

Critiques of indigenous models suggest while these models may be specific to the needs of indigenous groups, they do not increase participation when used in isolation (Sinclair, 2004; Wearing, 2011). Critics also note top down or adult lead processes do not work for young people and are even less successful for indigenous youth who respond better to 'bottom up' or youth led approaches (Palmer et al., 2006). While the Indigenous Ladder is designed for an educational setting, it arguably adds value across other settings. It is a fairly new model and will benefit from further testing and evaluation.

The Culture of Participation (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair, 2003)

In 2003 the Department for Education and Skills in the United Kingdom commissioned a research report, named 'Building a Culture of Participation' (Kirby et al., 2003). This research investigated models of participation through examining a range of participatory practices in the United Kingdom. From this Kirby et al. (2003) developed a new theoretical framework to describe young people's participation, the Culture of Participation. The authors describe participation as a multi-layered concept (Kirby et al., 2003). To assess participation, organisations' processes are examined under six dimensions: the level of participation; the focus of the decision-making; the content of the decision; the nature of the activities; how often and for how long the activity takes place; and who is involved.

The research completed by Kirby et al. (2003) culminated in the development of the Culture of Participation, which in essence simplified Hart's Ladder, Treseder's Model, and the Pathway down to four categories of participation (see figure 5). The authors (Kirby et al., 2003) refrain from representing the Culture of Participation as a hierarchy and instead focus on the importance of adults choosing the category most appropriate to the circumstances, the young people involved, and the intended outcomes (Kirby et al., 2003). The Culture of Participation has four participation categories (see figure 5). They are young people making autonomous decisions; taking young people's views into account; shared decision-making between young people and adults; and young people and adults sharing power and responsibility for decision-making.

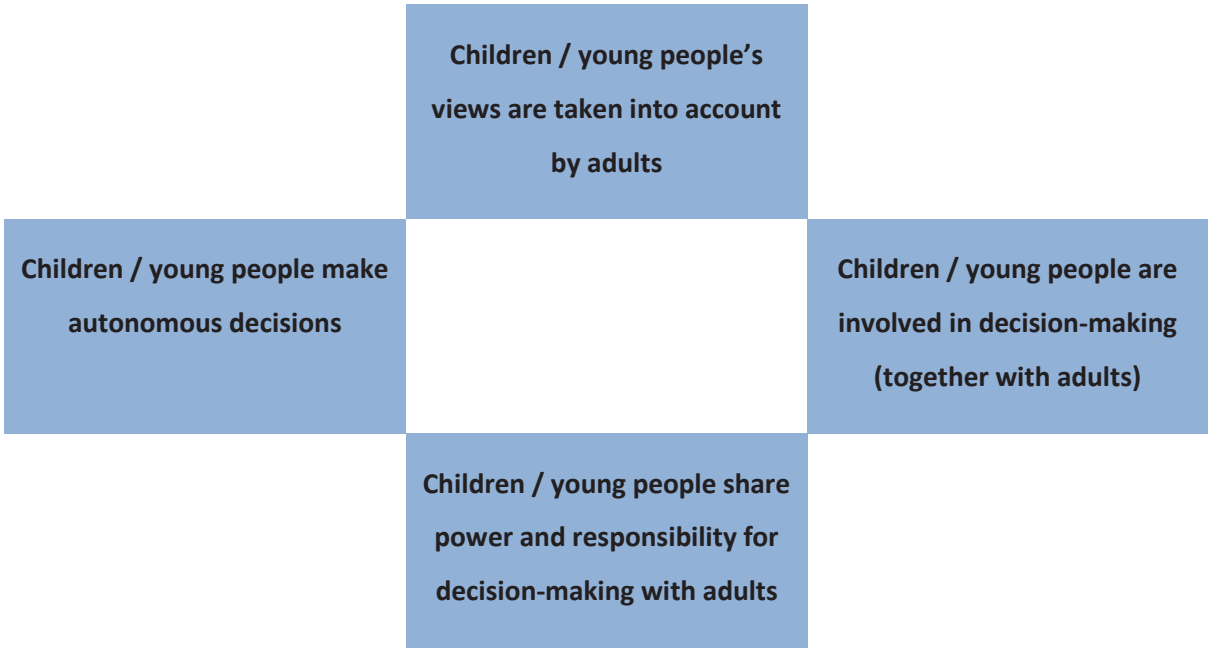

Figure 6 – Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin and Sinclair's Culture of Participation (Kirby et al., 2003, p. 59)

This model is designed to help organisations build a participation culture (Sinclair, 2004). It clearly moves away from any hierarchy and encourages a match between the process and the circumstances (Barber, 2009). All of the categories focus on core components such as decision-making, autonomy and partnership. In the Culture of Participation, adults' behaviour determines the category of participation. This means the same task completed in different organisations, could fall into a different category, depending on the focus or processes used. The Culture of Participation describes the need for adults to use a different level or model for each individual circumstance, rather than striving to implement a desired framework or model that may not suit the situation (Sinclair, 2004). Because there is no hierarchy between the categories, and no suggestion that one model is preferred over another, all forms of participation are valid. Consequently, organisations are less likely to feel pressured to conform to any particular scale, level or practice.

The Culture of Participation is useful for organisations seeking to involve young people because it presents a framework for what occurs during participation and sets out the four stages necessary for an organisation to develop a participation culture. These stages apply regardless of the participation category used. The first stage suggests unfreezing any pre-existing attitudes or barriers in existing structures. Secondly, it encourages organisations to use champions as 'change catalysts' to role model change through practice, partnership and funding structures. Thirdly, organisations develop

their own internal change process by implementing a shared vision and understanding of what participation means to them. Finally organisations institutionalise these changes into mainstream practice to develop a culture of participation (Partridge, 2005). This is a useful framework for this research when considering the facilitators and barriers that young people discuss, because it does not judge or grade the participation process; instead it seeks to understand or explain what is happening.

Critics have argued the focus on embedding a culture, could lead to the exclusion of young people all together from organisations who do not have a participatory culture to begin with (Thomas, 2007). Despite this critique, the Culture of Participation has remained popular in policy and organisational practice (Collin, 2008). The neutral stance it takes to all types of participation, alongside setting out how to build a participation culture in an organisation, makes it the most useful theoretical framework for this research to analyse the information gathered, namely the facilitators and barriers to young people's participation in civic activities.

Applying participation theories in this research

All of the participation frameworks discussed here were developed to support and encourage organisations involving young people to generate participation cultures in their organisation. While setting out to describe what is and is not participation, all of these models offer useful tools and information to organisations wishing to involve young people in decision-making and civic activities. As the models have progressed, authors have refined the content of their theoretical frameworks to support rather than hinder participation. Through the child rights movement and processes promoting a youth development approach, these participation frameworks encourage and support young people's participation.

While the Model of Youth Participation and the Culture of Participation tried to steer clear of a hierarchy, they still indicate that participation processes need to be inclusive of both young people and adults. This joint effort ensures the process is genuine participation, with both adults and young people working together. Real or active participation in civic activities suggests the young people involved have some level of influence by generating ideas and opinions, and having these acted on. This ensures that adults do not use any tokenistic models or processes for participation.

This research does not set out to evaluate or grade any of the organisations' practice, but rather to discuss what participation activities young people find helpful or not. Therefore this research does not use any of the theoretical frameworks suggesting a hierarchy or stepped process to frame up the participation processes described by the respondents. Instead the Culture of Participation (Kirby et al., 2003) provides the most useful framework for articulating and understanding the participation model the organisation has used. The lower rungs of non-participation identified in Hart's Ladder, are a useful checkpoint to ensure the processes the young people describe are participation rather than non-participation or tokenistic consultation (Hart, 1992). These important theoretical underpinnings supported the development of themes that were applied during the analysis of the data gathered from this research.

Chapter summary

The central concern of this research is to seek young people's views of the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. The six theoretical frameworks presented all contribute to the definition and description of the type of participation that young people and the organisation engages in. As evidenced in the progression of ideas and continual refinement of the frameworks, the flux between hierarchical and circular frameworks continues. The purpose of this chapter was to set out the theoretical underpinnings for understanding and validating the range of participation experiences the respondents in this research had. This research assumes a theoretical framework that validates all types of participation is most useful. For this reason this research used the Culture of Participation (Kirby et al., 2003) to explain the modalities of participation experienced by the young people, in the analysis of the qualitative data gathered through this research.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology, research design, respondents, data collection and analysis, and the limitations and strengths of this research. It also covers ethical considerations, which are fundamental to the design and application of the research methods. This research has been conducted in line with Massey University's *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants*[12] (Massey University, 2015).

Qualitative research

The research focused on qualitative information generated through semi-structured interviews with seven young people. Information gathered through research falls under two broad categories, qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data refers to the interpretation of information gathered through words and images, by grouping together themes and patterns; whereas quantitative data refers to the interpretation of information that can be counted or represented numerically through the use of statistics (O'Leary, 2009). Social science research, such as this, tends to focus on a more qualitative approach and explores or seeks to understand the consequences or impact of an activity or event (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Flick, 2014; Smith, 1983). The aim of this research is to understand what young people view as the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. Therefore qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews to explore the young person's experience and delve into their view of this involvement.

Bell (1999, p. 7) notes "researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world". Bell's inference is that social science research may not help the researcher fully understand the cause of an issue, instead they explain something that has occurred. This research considers how participation occurs, but more importantly what the respondents' experiences of it are, so the use of qualitative data is the most appropriate data for this research.

[12] Ethics Application Approval Number 14/46

Research design

Research question

The use of the semi-structured interviews in this research supports a detailed understanding of young people's perspectives of youth participation in detail through the gathering an interpretation of qualitative data (O'Toole, Lister, et al., 2003). The main focus of this research is exploring what young people view as the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities in New Zealand. This research also sought to explore whether young people feel their participation influences decisions about civic activities; what techniques facilitate their participation in civic activities; whether adult's attitudes influence how young people participate in civic activities; and if young people think youth participation experiences support and develop them as the next generation's leaders. To answer these questions this research drew on qualitative data gathered from seven semi-structured interviews, with young people who have direct involvement in youth councils.

Planning research with young people

Some adults who view young people from a deficit perspective assume that young people cannot be direct respondents in research because they believe young people do not have the ability to offer a useful perspective. However, if the research uses an age-appropriate design and is carried out by a sensitive researcher, children and young people are able to provide robust and articulate responses and have a keen desire to be heard in research (Craig, 2003) . When research participants are young people the researcher needs to ensure they consider the age of their participants so the process enables and supports them to engage (O'Toole, Marsh, et al., 2003). To get the best results from the respondents, the design of this research has been considered from a developmental perspective, for its use with young people (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Although, even with meticulous planning, it is important to keep an open mind during research and continue to reflect and review the plan as the research progresses (Leyshon, 2002). Therefore, this research was flexible when required to meet the research's intended aims. This included planning to use a range of communication modes prior to interview (text messages, phone calls and email); organising interviews at a time that did not conflict with the school exams and holidays; factoring in space at the start of each interview to ensure respondents were relaxed and able to ask questions about the research prior to turning on the audio recording device; and allowing for a range of ways for young people to feed back on their written transcripts. Finally the interviews themselves generated a creative and engaging exchange

between the researcher and the participants, following the content and subjects discussed and led by the respondents.

The relationship between the researcher and participant is a critical competent of any qualitative research project, as a positive relationship ensures the participant feels relaxed and able to engage in the research (Collin, 2008). Listening carefully and having respect for the participants are critical to success of any research and align well with sound social work skills (Fitzsimons, Hope, Cooper, & Russell, 2011). Mooney (2012) sets out some best practice principles for developing a good rapport with taiohi Māori[13] including use of self, use of tikanga (protocols), reciprocity, creating space and time, and being respectful. The researcher involved in this study is an experienced social worker with a history of interviewing and engaging with young people in this capacity; these skills supported rapport building with the young people throughout the project. These indigenous principles and social work skills were forefront of the researcher's mind while engaging with the young people involved in this research from design through to implementation. These principles and skills helped shape the research questions, research design and guide the interview process. This included factoring in time to ensure the participants had information prior to the interviews; allowing space for whakawhānaungatanga (the process of establishing relationships) at the start of the interview; and providing opportunities for the participants to ask questions about the process and content of the interviews, at all stages of the research.

Recruitment

Respondents were directly recruited through existing organisational structures that support and encourage young people to participate in civic activities, such as youth councils, and youth advisory boards (see Appendix A). These organisations were sent an initial letter (Appendix B) to request their assistance in recruiting potential young people to participate in this research. Of the thirteen organisations approached eight responded positively, with one of these organisations proactively forwarding the information to alternative organisations who had access to similar group of potential respondents.

[13] Taiohi Māori = young people of Māori descent, the indigenous peoples of New Zealand

Once the organisations had indicated a willingness to help recruit young people to participate in this research, a formal thank you letter (Appendix C) was sent back to the organisation with an information sheet (Appendix D) outlining the research design, interview structure and time commitment for the potential respondents. Young people were asked to make contact directly with the researcher, who personally contacted the young people to arrange a mutually convenient time and location for the interview. The consent process included information about how to opt-out of the project at any stage and adhered to Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Organisations are more likely to participate when they have all the information about the aims and intended outcomes of the research (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). For this research the potential gains for organisations wishing to support young people's participation in civic activities were highlighted, such as providing them with feedback and guidance on the facilitators and barriers to young people's participation in civic activities. By handpicking a group of organisations who knew the potential respondent group well, and who were likely to support the aims of this research, the organisations became recruitment assets (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

The respondents

Through this process seven young people were recruited to participate in the semi structured qualitative interviews. The young people all met the inclusion criteria that specified they were aged between 16-24 years; live in the Lower North Island; spoke English; and were a member of a board, panel or advisory group that participates in agency decision-making. The following table introduces the respondent group, pseudonyms have been used to retain the respondents' anonymity.

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity As provided by the participants	School / Work
Angela Council A	20 years	Female	NZ European	Work
Zach Council B	17 years	Male	NZ European / Maori	Work
Emily Council B	16 years	Female	NZ European / South African	Secondary School
Helen Council B	16 years	Female	NZ European	Secondary School
Anna Council B	16 years	Female	NZ European / Maori	Secondary School

Nisha Council C	17 years	Female	NZ European / Pakeha	Tertiary Education
Neil Council C	16 years	Male	Pakeha / NZ European	Secondary School

Table 1: Overview of respondents

Semi-structured interviews

To develop a clear picture of the young person's experience in civic activities, this research used semi-structured interviews to gather data. The purpose of an interview is to focus on a pre-determined subject by generating a thick or rich description of the respondents' experience of participation in civic activities (McGachie & Smith, 2003). Working with the young people on a one-to-one basis ensured they had the researcher's complete attention (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Using a semi-structured interview also gave scope for the respondents to bring up unexpected content (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The semi structured interviews provided the space and structure to delve into each young person's experience by providing a platform for learning about young people's view of the facilitators and barriers of their youth participation experience. In every instance the researcher travelled to a location near to the respondent. Prior to each interview, respondents were screened to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and confirm they were willing to participate in a face to face semi-structured interview to reflect on their views of participating in civic activities. Engagement was based on an informed consent process, Appendix E, (France, 2004). Each interview lasted between 45 – 90 minutes and was supported by the use of the interview schedule which helped guide and shape the questions (the interview schedule can be found in Appendix F), this ensured the information gathered answered the research questions (May, 2011). With the respondents' consent all of the interviews were digitally recorded using an audio recording device. The audio recording enabled an accurate transcription of the interview to be undertaken.

The interviews used open ended questions to encourage as much dialogue as possible from the respondents. During the interview the respondents were given space for silence, an important tool so that respondents were not rushed and could take their time to answer questions and process the information being requested (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Respondents were also encouraged to generate discussion by bringing up new topics that they felt were relevant to their participation experience. The researcher focused on providing a relaxed and safe space for the respondents to feel engaged during the interview.

Data analysis

Prior to the thematic analysis, the respondents were provided with transcripts of their interviews via email, so they could clarify any inaccuracies in the transcripts prior to analysis (O'Leary, 2009). This is often referred to as 'member checking' and is a tool used to validate research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The transcripts were analysed for patterns and themes, using a deductive approach (O'Leary, 2009). A deductive approach uses existing theory and knowledge, to develop a coding scheme for analysing the data (MacPherson & McKie, 2010). The deductive approach started with the key themes from the literature review in Chapter Two; and the themes outlined in the framework provided in The Culture of Participation (Kirby et al., 2003) in Chapter Three, by identifying the key concepts of the four participation types outlined this framework.[14] Following the identification of themes a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was undertaken, by grouping together data gathered from all of the interviews. This forms the basis of the next chapter: Chapter Four: Results. One of the strengths of using a thematic approach is its flexibility, as it can easily be adapted to a range of data sets, is easily understood by readers and it finds repeated patterns to make the data meaningful (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Flick, 2014).

Limitations and strengths

The time-limited nature of this research meant that there were some sample size limitations. The research request was sent to potential respondents during the month of September, close to when end of year exams were scheduled. While care was taken to ensure interviews were not arranged at a time that conflicted with exam preparation, it is likely that the ability for potential respondents to participate may have been restricted because of the time of the year. To mitigate against any sample size limitations, part of the planning also included engaging the right people. Qualitative research, such as this, tends to seek out answers that are only understood by a few experts or insiders (O'Leary, 2009). Consequently while only seven respondents were engaged they were carefully recruited to ensure they had knowledge of the research question. Because this research was focused on young people's experiences of participation within civic activities, only those with current involvement in a youth council or decision-making board were recruited.

[14] Young people making autonomous decisions; taking young people's views into account; shared decision-making between young people and adults; and young people and adults sharing power and responsibility for decision-making

To further mitigate against any limitations due to sample size, this research used qualitative data to create a 'thick description', that is an depth narrative using the respondents own words and viewpoints, which added to the integrity of this research (McGachie & Smith, 2003). So while the findings from this research are unable to be translated to reflect the entire population, it will generate valid and reliable conclusions.

Ethical considerations

This research gained ethical approval from the Massey University Human Ethics committee, Approval Number 14/46. The ethics application for this research can be found in Appendix G. "An ethical approach involves taking steps to address the safety, rights, dignity and well-being of respondents" (Sapin, 2013, p. 173). It is complex to define the parameters of ethically based research given the varied professional definitions of ethics (France, 2004). What is consistent is that ethical research ensures the research is transparent and contains a clear consent process; and secondly that research with people does not harm the respondents. There are four commonly held ethical principles which guided the process of this research: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice (Greig et al., 2013).

Autonomy relates to 'self-rule' or the ability to make decisions for oneself. This was addressed through an open and transparent consent process where the respondents gave their own consent, with space and time to fully understand what they were consenting to. This is discussed in greater detail in the consent section below. The second principle, non-maleficence is about ensuring the process did not harm the respondents in any way. This was addressed through considerations outlined in the ethics application. This included maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring the respondents were supported if they felt uncomfortable discussing any negative experiences. The likely impact of the research on the respondents was considered, to ensure the respondents were comfortable during the interview and with how their views would be expressed. The ability for respondents to clarify or change the interview transcripts following the interview supported this. The third principle beneficence relates to acting for the positive benefit of others. The intended aim of this research was to present young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities and civic life. The anticipated outcome of this research is the support and advocacy of successful participation processes. The final principle relates to natural justice and requires the researcher to treat all the respondents in the same ethical and fair manner. The

researcher took care to visit all of the respondents at a time and location that suited them and to thank them for the time they gave to the research by offering a small koha at the completion of the research,[15] this was applied equally to all respondents.

Consent

Informed consent is an important component of autonomy, because it ensures the respondents make a personal choice about their involvement in the research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Generally it is accepted that as a person gets older they develop a higher level of competence that determines when they are able to give their own informed consent (Greig et al., 2013). This research was conducted with young people aged 16-24 years of age. For this research, young people over the age of 16 years are deemed to be capable of giving their own consent in line with Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants (2015). Respondents were asked to consent themselves without requiring consent from their whānau[16] or caregiver (France, 2004).

It was important the research did not harm the respondents in any way. This was achieved in two ways. Firstly the respondents' were made aware of their rights outlined in the information sheet (Appendix D) and secondly the research was conducted in a manner that was unlikely to cause the participants any harm. Potential respondents were provided with an information sheet detailing their right to:

- withdraw from the study (up until the approval of the transcripts);
- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- provide information on the understanding that their name or the name of the organisation they are connected with, would not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; and

[15] The koha was offered at the end of the interview and was not advertised during the recruitment phase to ensure it did not act as a reward or incentive to participate in the research.
[16] Whānau = family, including extended family.

- bring a support person with them to the interview, if they chose.

At the start of each interview, the researcher went through the respondents' rights contained in the information sheet and then talked through the consent form (Appendixes D & E). This ensured the young people were aware they could choose whether to be involved in the research; could withdraw or stop the interview at any time, without consequence; and were given information on how their data would be stored. Interview files were saved on the researchers' home password protected computer. They were then asked to sign a consent form (Appendix E) to show they understood the information provided, and an authority to release their transcripts (Appendix H).

As described earlier the objective of this research was to determine young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic life and civic activities. Therefor this research provided information that would benefit the respondents. Alongside this, participating in research provided the young people with an opportunity to be heard and have their views considered in a way that would help shape future participatory practices for other young people (Epple, 2007; Smyth & McInerney, 2013). It also provided the respondents with an opportunity to experience research as a respondent.

The researcher took responsibility for ensuring all respondents were treated in a just and fair way. As mentioned above the research was conducted at a time and location most convenient for them. This was negotiated over the telephone once the respondents had made initial email contact expressing interest in the research. To ensure the respondents were aware of their rights the interview included time and space for the respondents to ask questions and clarify any point made in the information sheet and research brief. In particular time was spent discussing the limitations upon confidentiality before they agreed to participate in the research. As the research was conducted via a face to face interview, their identity was known to the researcher. However, while absolute confidentiality could not be guaranteed, all available steps were taken to ensure their confidentiality. This included not informing the organisation that helped recruit them of their participation in the research and using pseudonyms to report their views in the research. Once the respondents had acknowledged they were happy to proceed, they were asked to complete the consent form.

Chapter summary

This chapter has focused on the method and methodology for conducting this research. The focus of this research was to analyse young people's views on youth participation in civic activities. To achieve this young people's views were sought on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities and civic life. This relied on gathering qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, to allow young people to voice their experiences of civic activities.

Time was spent designing a research process that would work for the intended sample group and data required. The four ethical principles of autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and natural justice informed the design, implementation and data analysis. The next chapter presents the results of this research.

Chapter Five: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the seven semi-structured interviews undertaken as part of this study. There were seven respondents from three different youth councils. A full overview of these respondents can be found on pages 42-4342. The previous chapter outlined the method, and the following chapter compares these results to the relevant literature discussed in Chapter Two and the theoretical underpinnings discussed in Chapter Three. The interview results are presented under three main themes. The first provides an overview of the respondents' participation in civic activities and discusses the respondents' views on the barriers and facilitators for youth participation in civic activities. The second describes the differences between adults and young people during the civic participation, including adult and youth's roles and perceptions and the age appropriateness of the participation processes. The third presents the respondents' views of the impact of youth participation in civic activities on the wider youth community and their own personal development as the next generation's leaders. This chapter presents these results in their raw form, giving voice to the respondents in their own words.

Theme One: Overview of the respondents' participation in civic activities

This first section describes the nature of young people's involvement in civic activities and the elements of the participation processes they see as facilitators or barriers for their engagement. The main activities differed between the three youth councils, ranging from organising events for other young people, to submitting on council policy. However, the facilitators and barriers for youth participation are similar, for example appreciating the support from adults, but not wanting this support to hinder their ability to lead their own work. This theme covers three areas; the participant's views on the types of civic activities they are involved in; what processes they found helpful and facilitate youth participation; and what processes created a barrier for youth participation.

Participation in civic activities

Each respondent discussed the range of activities their youth council was engaged in. The youth councils each had a slightly different focus, which influenced the types of process used and the nature of the civic activities. The three key activities were setting up youth friendly events in the community, submitting on council processes and policy changes, and establishing networks or connections with young people in their community. While all three youth councils were involved in each of these types of activities at some point, they were not actively engaged in each activity at all times. For example if the focus of a youth council was running events they had little time left for focusing on the other two key activities, submitting on policy change and establishing youth networks. Helen described this tension "w*e didn't do much of the addressing issues…. but we've got big plans".* Although submitting on policy change was something all strived to be engaged in, only one youth council had a consistent process for participating in this way.

All of the respondents described involvement in the first key activity, organising youth friendly events. For example *"well, we organise a lot of things, events and what's going on. And if anyone has an idea they want to see happen in their community they can just bring it up and we'll talk about it" (Anna).* For two of the three youth councils this was their main activity. Youth friendly events in this context included parties or functions for those under 18 years of age, conferences or training for youth councils from other areas, award ceremonies to celebrate youth success stories and ongoing hobbies or sports clubs. "*We did a massive conference…. and we had all kinds of workshops. From all the youth councils. That was really fun. It was good to meet other people as well and get ideas off them" (Angela).* As Angela described, the impact of this event extended beyond her local youth council and helped her council to connect with others and generate new ideas.

In contrast only respondents from one youth council (Council C) noted their main activity was to submit on city council policy. "*It's mainly been submission based" (Neil)*. Neil and Nisha's youth council was dedicated to providing policy advice, and had set up formal processes to ensure they provide advice on a range of topics. "*Well it's really an advisory committee so we advise (city) council on various issues, we discuss them as a council and decide which ones we want to submit on…. we provide the youth voice on an issue" (Nisha)*. Nisha and Neil's youth council was regularly informed by the council of the policy agenda and as a group they responded to all relevant policy proposals. While the other two youth councils (Councils A & B) submitted on one-off issues, described by Emily

"we had one on legal highs when that whole debate was going on. We gave a deputation to the city council about that….. but youth and politics are sort of hard to combine".

Finally all three councils were involved in establishing youth networks or connections as a secondary activity that often supported their key function. Emily described how they used their connections to support the other functions of their youth council.

> *We have set up a mailbox…. so that people can write their own ideas and stuff rather than them specifically having to talk to us….. We are going to try and attend more community events so that we can be there if anyone wants to talk to us.*

These connections were used as a way for the youth council to gauge young people's views on submission topics, their thoughts on their community, and as a way to inform young people what was happening in their community. *"So for the events that we run, we advertise through (a venue)…. and we advertise through our Facebook page and through just word of mouth, talking to our friends and stuff" (Helen).* While there were differences in the key and secondary activities, the processes used were often similar. The next two sections describe these processes as facilitators or barriers to the respondents' participation in civic activities.

The facilitators for young people's participation

The young people spoke about the processes they found helpful or that supported their participation. Many of the reasons were personal and what worked for one young person could vary to others from the same youth council. However, there were some consistent themes. These included behind-the-scenes support from adults, regular communication with the council and local community, and their initial training and induction processes.

All of the respondents' spoke highly of the support they received from the adults who worked for the city council providing them with stability and structure, resources, and backroom assistance to do their job well. Anna felt strongly that this support and connection was important.

> *I like that it's connected to (a venue). Some of us have been talking about how they want to be separate from (a venue), because they want more individuality. But I think that it's good that we're with them. I think it's like a blanket.*

Alongside knowing adults were there to help, the respondents commented on the importance of the tasks they completed. *"They do a lot of coordinating for us…. I suppose it's just all that background behind stuff, making sure our room's there, we've got food and things like that. Yeah" (Angela).* In all of the interviews the young people made some reference to the importance of having adults there to support them and provide this behind-the-scenes support.

A further facilitator for the respondents was the ability to have regular communication between their youth council and with the city council. Emily explained how her council had a liaison allocated to support this process. "*Oh yes so we have (name), and he's our sort of connection between the council and councillors and us. So we're able to effectively communicate with senior management and whatnot, within the council for what we're doing" (Emily).* All of youth councils had a liaison person and all respondents agreed with Emily that it was important to assist them to maintain links with what was happening in their community. They believed strong communication supported them to carry out their responsibilities and enabled them to stay connected to the real issues in their community. As described by Angela "w*ell they [the adults] do have really good communication with the local council in (city)…. they connect really well with other services in (city) to see how we can help them out and how they can help us so then we connect well".* The adults also provided advice on the functioning of the youth council which in turn supported process improvements in a positive way: "*Councillors will give us feedback on how our advice was received and why it was either acted on or not acted on….. and I think that that feedback is quite good and helpful to inform the work that we do" (Neil).* This guidance and support from adults was important to the respondents.

Finally, all of the respondents attended some form of start-up camp or received initial training, and described this as one of the facilitators for youth participation. Camps and team building activities were considered useful at breaking down barriers and enabling the young people to get to know each other, as Zach summed it up: "*Yep, so it was a recruitment camp…. bonding to get to get to know each other [pause]. It was a really significant milestone. If I ran the council, I would do that again cos it worked perfectly".* Regardless of how or when the initial training was delivered, young people felt confident to carry out their roles in the youth council. "*In the [initial] workshop we had, during the recruitment process, there was quite a good workshop on developing a draft submission on a policy. It was quite useful" (Neil).* So not only did it teach the young people what to do, it set up a solid foundation for the youth council to work well together, supported by strong relationships.

The barriers to young people's participation

While there was not the same level of consensus regarding the barriers to young people's participation, as there was for the facilitators, there were several common themes cited by four or more of the seven respondents. These included feeling frustrated when their group was not being as effective as it could be; a sense of frustration about the equality of effort from other participants; worries about pressure on younger members; or being hampered by adults who try to take-over.

Six of the seven respondents described a level of frustration when processes did not happen as intended. "*To be honest I feel like we haven't done that much this year. Just cos we've had all these ideas but none of them have like gone through" (Anna).* Young people shared their experiences of the youth council not delivering on what they saw as its full potential. They felt this was due to a lack of engagement from their peers either in or external to the youth council. "*It's taken me 17 years to know there's a youth council…. How are we supposed to be youth council for these students if they don't know we're here?" (Zach).* Angela described her frustration as a shifting scale, depending on the youth council activities. "*Yeah I feel like our youth council at the moment, well half the time I really enjoy it and the other half the time I'm quite scathing cos I know what it's supposed to be doing".* The respondents frustration centred on the things they felt were out of their control such as the behaviour of other people.

The respondents also held fairness in high regard, and all of the respondents raised this as a concern. "*I know before we had our little re-vamp adding more people, we felt it was quite one sided. There were the kind of people who barely did anything and then everyone else did kind of everything" (Emily)*. They discussed feeling frustrated when they did not feel the share of the workload was evenly spread out. Likewise, the respondents believed process where others made decisions on their behalf were unfair. Such as the process Zach described to change his council's liaison person. "*He did not consult us, he didn't even ask us. And that's what made the youth council as a whole really upset and annoyed".* This sense of frustration arose from unfair decision-making processes, or when decisions were made by adults that impacted on them, without any form of consultation.

While generally the majority of the respondents were comfortable with the nature of the activities on the youth council, there was an underlying concern the time commitment or the nature of the issues discussed could be difficult for some people to manage. "*Sometimes we can get into quite*

heavy debates about topics, and if you're uncomfortable about the topic then it could make it real awkward for you and you could feel uncomfortable" (Helen). Six of the seven respondents raised concerns about the amount of time involved and Emily's views were "*I think, this sounds really bad, but it takes up a lot of time…. and you need to be giving it your all and having that commitment and you have to put it as one of your priorities".* In particular the respondents raised these concerns in relation to the younger members of the council and the likely impact the content of discussion might have on their ability to fully engage on a topic.

Four of the seven participants described frustration when adult involvement tipped over from behind-the-scenes support or providing a useful connection, to leading meetings and taking charge of meeting content, as a barrier for youth participation. "S*o our liaison has mostly been running what we've been doing lately. So they've [the adults] been saying 'hey we're going to focus on this idea for now' or 'why don't you do this instead of this'" (Helen).* This level of involvement was not seen as helpful and was echoed by Anna. "*Well we couldn't really do anything without the adults…. we had to go to them for permission to do anything…. I'd rather not have to go to an adult and ask them if we're allowed, or asking them to do all this stuff".* In contrast to taking over or taking charge, was an example for Angela where her youth council was no longer involved in a process. *"I've noticed over the past year anyway, is the two youth development coordinators they will ask for ideas and then they will kind of like go away and do something themselves".* Ultimately the young people felt this hindered their ability to operate as a youth council. In response to adult involvement being both a facilitator and a barrier to the respondents' participation, the next key theme looks at the difference between adults' and young people's roles and the impact this has during young people's participation in civic activities.

Theme Two: The difference between adults and young people's roles during youth civic participation

This section reflects on the respondents' views of the different roles of adult and young people within the youth council, perceptions of each other and activities they were involved in. It also considers the age appropriateness of the activities they were engaged in. As described above, it is clear that all of the respondents felt the behind-the-scenes support received from adults was a facilitator for youth participation, and that while adult support was needed, there was a point when young people think adults had taken over and their involvement was no longer helpful. As illustrated

by Emily, "w*ell, we felt that we couldn't get much done being so reliant on a staff member to run us. And it wasn't really a youth council. It was an adult telling youth what to do, kind of thing".* In this theme the respondents discussed how the way they were viewed by adults impacted on their ability to participate. The respondents placed a high level of importance on ensuring their involvement was pitched at the right level so processes were youth centric. In this theme the respondents discussed the nature of the adult involvement in their youth council, how they felt the adults involved viewed them, and how age appropriate the youth council processes were.

Adult roles and perceptions

As discussed above, there were essential elements of adult support that young people found helpful. In particular the young people noted the importance of adults providing backroom support to ensure things ran smoothly. "*We need that adult guidance because we are still growing as people and maturing. But what makes it difficult is if they take that and overpower us in a way that means we can't still be independent" (Emily).* So while some of this support was helpful, it often bordered on interfering. Angela expressed her views as "*they do like quite a lot of the organising behind the scene stuff, um yeah which can be a pain".* And also a sense the young people needed to control or contain the level of input the adults had. *"Well we're trying not to let him be, hands on. We're trying to do it all by ourselves" (Helen).* Adult input was viewed as necessary but also something that needed to be contained.

Youth roles and perceptions

The respondents felt the way adults viewed them, influenced their participation opportunities. While some felt valued by the council, others were concerned they were a nuisance or disliked by the council. It should be noted that this was not a static feeling and three of the respondents (Zach, Angela and Anna) described feeling both valued and a nuisance depending on the youth council activity. "*I think they don't even want us. I literally believe they don't even want us here. I mean half of them they just look at us angry….. and then there's like two or three of the city councillors who actually are genuinely interested" (Zach).* The respondents also discussed the sense of responsibility they felt to be actively engaged. They believed if they are not actively engaged, both central and local government would ignore them, or their perceived lack of engagement would feed into negative media stereotypes about apathetic young people. Neil set the scene for this:

Well I think firstly it's a change in attitude from central government and local government and authority in general because there's, you know, often misconceptions about youth. How the media portray youth is a big issue. And there needs to be a cultural shift. There needs to be a significant cultural shift to enable better youth participation. Because um, you know the media criticise youth for not being engaged but that can just lead to more apathy if the media are just slamming youth for being completely apathetic and not caring about what's happening. And it's a bit of a cycle.

Despite some of these challenges five of the respondents across all three youth councils, recognised the council valued youth and felt their contribution was needed by the city council to represent a local youth voice. "*Definitely they see we [youth] are important…. cos youth don't want to talk to old councillors, they don't want to do that. So, just to be able to establish a bit of a different connection, to hear our voice" (Helen).* They also noted that when adults viewed them positively they were encouraging and supportive. "*Often when guest speakers come they often mention that we're the future and all that kind of stuff…. I think they realise that we have a valuable perspective they don't have" (Nisha).* Neil described feeling valued and respected by the adult members of the council. "*Generally, I think they view young people with some importance…. we sort of have quite a credible reputation, which is nice, because it shows some genuine willingness to engage with young people, so I think that's good" (Neil).* These young people described councillors that were open to engage with them and willing to accept they had a unique perspective to offer, as people that actively encouraged youth participation. As described in theme one, these attitudes were a key facilitator to young people's participation.

In contrast five of the respondents felt their youth council or young people in general were seen as a nuisance by the city council. This view was expressed by Helen who said "*I think that council views youth as a problem they can deal with later*". Some of the young people also discussed the negative reactions they believed city councillors project when they attended city council meetings. The respondents were quick to note that this was not the reaction of all city councillors but in some instances felt it was the majority. In several instances, the young people thought the reaction was fair because they were not pulling their weight as a youth council, as Emily described. "*Well I know our relationships* [with council] *aren't very good at the moment, we get quite a lot of funding ….. the council aren't very fond of us, because we haven't done many things and we need to pick up our act".*

Regardless of how they believed they were viewed, five of the respondents believed their actions set the tone for how youth were viewed in their community. This view is expressed clearly by Angela:

> *I think one of the risks is the council starts thinking that all young people are like those on the youth council. And they're not and then those disengaged youth don't even associate with the youth council, they don't identify with the council. So I think the youth council can be kind of one sided.*

They discussed the sense of responsibility they carried to promote a positive youth image. This also instilled a level of concern their engagement could misconstrue the wider perception of youth in their community.

Age appropriate processes

Finally under this theme, regarding the difference between the roles of adults and young people, the respondents discussed their perception of age appropriate processes. As described in theme one, one of the barriers to young people's participation was when adults took-over. The lack of age appropriateness of the youth participation processes in civic activities can reinforce this barrier. When adults took-over, it was linked to processes directed at a much younger group, and referred to as 'childish'. The respondents felt because they were young, adults treated them as a token participant, without respecting the contribution they made. The also discussed frustration over processes which supported the adult members of the council and excluded the youth council altogether.

Zach discussed activities he felt were childish. "*So far every event we've been to, is targeted at children. I mean when we're going out to these events, we're handing out stickers. I've never met any 17 year old who'd wanna [sic] wear a sticker. So it's beyond me".* Zach recalled this process of handing out of stickers with some embarrassment. Neil also mentioned processes that he felt were tokenistic or insincere. "*I just think they could do more with more young people…. It can't sort of became a mechanism for council to fall back on, that this is the only way they get young people's views".* Zach had also experienced tokenism, of being put on display, when he was part of a meeting with visiting dignitaries from overseas. "*I was there with my (city) youth council top on and was just sort of sitting there. And then he kept on like referring to me. And I was just sort of like 'can you stop using me?'"* These insincere activities frustrated the respondents and left them feeling negative about their involvement.

As well as processes they thought childish or tokenistic, there were some processes aimed at adults that restricted young people's involvement. In particular, Angela felt the academic nature of the application process could put off young people from applying to be on a youth council in the first place. "*It's a bit intimidating and might put some people off…. I was thinking wow you're only going to have the top youth getting into the youth council so it's not really the best way of presenting youth as a whole" (Angela).* However once they were part of the youth council, the processes had a more balanced engagement approach. *"Yeah, but it [the initial interview] was really cool. There were lollies on the table and a glass of water and they were pretty relaxed about it" (Helen).*

Other examples of adult-centric processes that restricted or hindered youth participation were described by Zach and Nisha. Zach said "*we got policies, procedures, like obligations and stuff like that. All the boring stuff that half of us just would have looked and just put it aside. I mean what's fun about getting pieces of paper".* And Nisha's experience: *"sometimes the councillors, their speeches could be slightly more engaging for young people. Sometimes it feels like they're giving a speech to adults".* These examples suggest these two councils had not adapted processes or policies to support young people's engagement. Angela, noted that some processes, such as the timing of meetings, effectively excluded the youth council altogether. "*It's quite difficult like being actively involved because they have their meetings during the day when everyone else is at school or has work. So we can't always be there".* The respondents' believed that these processes had been developed without considering their needs.

In contrast there were many adaptations to usual council processes that were pitched appropriately for their age group. As noted in theme one, one of the facilitators to young people's participation, was the ability to have regular communication and feel connected to the council. Once the respondents became part of a youth council they found most activities were pitched at a comfortable level that was engaging and age appropriate for the group. "*A mixture's good…. I think we can engage in a huge range of topics. It doesn't have to be watered down for us or anything. I do like that side of it" (Nisha).* Even those that had not experienced age appropriate processes, had ideas on the way that city councils could engage young people at an appropriate level. Six of the respondents were able to describe adaptations to processes that would support their engagement in an age appropriate way, an example of this is given here by Neil. "*To facilitate better engagement simplifying policy; making decisions more accessible; and simplifying council processes in general…. and all of that needs to be broken down if local government is to become truly representative".*

So far the first two major themes of the respondent's interviews have focused on the processes themselves. The final major theme looks at the impact or result of youth participation.

Theme Three: Respondents' views on the impact of youth participation in civic activities

The final major theme to emerge from the respondents' views was the impact of youth participation on civic activities. In particular the respondents discussed their role in representing a wide range of young people's views and their processes for doing so. They also thought better civic decisions were made because of their youth perspective. They discussed the personal benefits from involvement in civic activities. These personal gains included learning about civic participation and processes, and developing skills to set them up as the next generation's leaders.

Speaking up for all young people

All of the respondents spoke about the challenge of speaking up on behalf of all young people. While some felt it was impossible to speak up on behalf of everyone, others did not believe it was their role to do so. The respondents had a range of ideas of how a wider youth voice could be gathered, these ideas ranged from better word of mouth processes and using social media, to full scale consultations that would require a large public spend. One of the key concerns voiced by four of the respondents was how their high level of personal engagement could skew the perception of young people generally and impact on the way the wider youth cohort was treated. Angela described this concern. "*Predominately all youth councils…. are made up of the high achievers…. so I feel like we kind of cater to that population and not the population, that, I don't know, just kind of hang around and don't go to school" (Angela).* Neil offered his view on the impact of this one-sided view. "*The people in the group are highly engaged, but it doesn't really do a lot to engage people outside the group…. That's somewhat of a problem because it's not going to attract people who aren't engaged" (Neil).*

Despite the potential to present a positively skewed view of youth, all of the respondents had a range of ideas for generating a wider youth voice. Some of the respondents were already trying to put these ideas into practice. For example, *"going to the different schools…. types of people, will sort*

of categorise into one school. So having a range of different schools you are able to get a range of different people, all different backgrounds" (Emily). Three of the respondents (Anna, Emily and Angela) spoke of linking up with other young people through secondary schools. They thought this could be achieved by having representatives in each school, conducting surveys through school networks or regular youth council visits to schools.

Helen, Neil, Zach and Emily discussed the use of technology to gain a wider youth voice. "*If you have a good process, and Facebook's really good these days, you can at least get people to do surveys and go out there and talk to people about what they think. It's achievable, but it's difficult" (Angela).* These ideas focused on using social media to communicate with young people, or mass advertising campaigns using a range of media including print, radio, television and the internet.

Lastly six of the respondents (Helen, Anna, Zach, Emily, Neil and Nisha) felt they could reach other young people through regular communication with other groups. *"I've got my fingers in lots of pies…. so it's good that I'm here and can get lots of voices heard" (Anna).* They also spoke about linking in with community organisations and co-running events. This included consultation techniques such as running surveys, or large council funded consultation workshops. As well as the important diversity they were able to offer from within their own group. "*We're coming from different youth perspectives, so we need it all. So we just encourage each other to keep bringing out our own youth voices" (Helen).* Three other respondents talked about smaller scale options, such as setting up a mailbox in a local youth venue for young people to post ideas, raising issues in their own peer groups, and using their own group's diversity.

All of the respondents noted their role was to provide a unique youth focus on civic activities that will be otherwise unheard. This meant their focus was to represent youth, rather than speak on behalf of all youth. Some couched this as being an advocate for youth. "*It's hard to reach everybody not everybody wants to be reached. We try to reach out to as many people as we can but it is hard…. just get more of a wider youth voice" (Helen).* Council C made it overtly clear to the youth council that it was not their job to speak on behalf of all young people in their city, only to offer up a generic view of what matters to the young people on the youth council and why. Nisha explained her view of this belief, "*well as the youth council we're not really considered to be representing all young people, like we're not supposed to do that…. But if you think, I suppose, their allies count, that's the*

next best thing". The view of Nisha's youth council (Council C) is that people on the youth council were chosen for their ability to be empathetic and respectful of others. Angela described her advocacy role for young people by trying to get their views heard by the city council. "*Well when we do our job properly in an ideal situation, then the (city) council at least should get a very good view of what young people think and what they would like to see happen in their town".* This view was actively promoted and supported by the adults that worked with her youth council.

The value added from youth participation

Even though the respondents were clear they would not be able to provide the views of all young people, they were aware they were able to provide a unique youth perspective that was at times lacking from council decision-making. *"Just so that it's not just adults making the decisions. It's the people who are getting affected by these things are saying what they want and they're getting to do what they want" (Anna).* All of the respondents thought youth councils provided them with a useful platform to do this and meant they were achieving their intended impact on civic activities. "*I think the advisory part is really important because that's the part that gives youth a voice. You know the video projects are interesting and engaging but they are not, you know, advice as such" (Nisha).* This impact included reflecting an otherwise unheard perspective and enabling better decisions, because the youth council considered the impact of policies on young people. "*I think mainly because young people have different priorities and viewpoints than council might have, or like the older generation" (Angela).* In particular they focused on their ability to engage with other youth in a way that an adult or city councillor would not be able to. "*If another youth comes up and talks to them, it gets them talking, it gets them thinking. Whereas if a city councillor tries to do it, they're not that interested" (Emily).* It was this diversity that they believed set them apart from the city council and as such was their point of difference.

There was also a very strong feeling, described by six of the respondents, the information and advice they were able to offer the city council, either through submitting on issues, or being representative of young people in other ways, led to better decisions. "*They set up youth council cos they wanted the youth voice…. they kinda [sic] trust us to make the connections with the youth and then tell them what the youth want" (Helen).* They felt the policies implemented by all of the city councils, which reflected young people's views, were of a high quality and benefited the wider community. Neil and Nisha expressed this view as follows. "*I'd like to think that generally better quality decisions are*

being made and more representative decisions are being made, because we have a direct say on polices and because we are taken seriously" (Neil). Nisha explained their point of difference as, *"sometimes there are things that affect youth in certain ways that don't affect adults in the same ways. And we just make sure that that distinction is brought out".* In this way the respondents were clear they were strengthening civic decision-making.

Involvement in civic activities

The respondents also spoke about the impact youth participation in civic activities had on them personally. This included learning about democratic processes, having opportunities to participate in local and national government and preparing them for future civic activities. By virtue of their involvement in the youth council, all of the respondents discussed their engagement in democratic processes such as voting; standardised board processes such as chairing and minute taking; submitting deputations to the council; writing submissions or presenting them orally; and developing their knowledge of the policy development process. "*We have our meetings in the council chambers so seeing what it's like and sort of going through the process and getting a taste of what politics and things like that is like" (Emily).* In particular their involvement supported their understanding of political processes and they felt they are able to engage at the 'coalface' of civic activities. "*There is a range of stuff that we hear and I think it's important to get some of the young people focused on that sort of stuff. So that's the two main things for me, political engagement and youth voice" (Nisha).* The respondents were engaged in learning these new skills and experiences.

Five of the respondents cited an interest beyond the issues raised at a local level. Two of the youth councils (Councils B & C) had some involvement with local Ministers of Parliament (MPs) to discuss national issues.

> *Oh so they [councillors] attend meetings every once and a while and come and ask us how we are and that sort of thing…. And (name) our electoral MP, he came to our meeting the other week and said about how he wanted to set up a direct link where we can come and talk to him about things that are going on in parliament. (Emily)*

Other respondents thought youth councils were an excellent training ground for learning about democratic processes and understanding the importance of involvement in civic life through activities such as voting. Nisha was particularly passionate about this area. "*So yeah we don't [learn about politics in school] and yeah it's just sort of either you care or you don't and most young people*

don't because they don't see, you know taxes at this point don't matter to you". She also voiced her frustration when young people did not take up the opportunity to be involved in civic activities as soon as they are able. *"For me, this year most of my peers could vote in the election, they were 18 and I was only 17 and I couldn't. And I was really surprised by how few people had any engagement in the political process".* The respondents' active engagement and participation in civic activities strengthened their interest in this area.

Evidence of becoming the next generation's leaders

A key outcome from the respondent's involvement in youth councils was their development as the next generation's leaders. All of the respondents noted a number of personal development gains that supported their development in a number of ways, as well as a range of experiences that supported their development or engagement in civic activities. Or as Angela put it "*the only limits are the limits they put on themselves*".

The respondents noted a range of areas of personal development, because of their different personalities and experiences their outcomes were all unique. The personal skills they identified were confidence, leadership, team work, and responsibility, all in a fun environment. "*Well I'm getting personal development, leadership, responsibility, a lot of personal development. And working in a team, working to deadlines its really good general experience, really good holistic development" (Neil).* Alongside this respondents spoke of learning about communication including written and oral skills, and the ability to speak out on unpopular or contentious topics. "*I've personally got so much more confidence, talking to people and having my ideas heard. It has really helped with my people skills and all that" (Anna).* They also developed organisational skills including planning, coordination and generating new ideas. "*You have a lot of organisational skills and communication skills and it's a good thing that you can put on your CV that you've been part of a youth council. And you actually do learn skills through being on it" (Angela).* Finally they also developed social skills such as meeting new people, getting along with others and having new experiences.

While the respondents developed personal skills from being part of the youth council, this was not their initial motivation. Anna gave a clear example of the need to have the right motivation to be on the youth council.

When I first applied I got my friend to go with me. She didn't get in cos [sic] she just didn't have the right approach to it, I don't think. She was just like 'oh yeah it will be cool to have this on my CV'. She was more just thinking about her own benefits, rather than the fact that when she's there she can just help everyone.

It appeared the personal gains were secondary to the civic benefits the respondents achieved from helping others and being actively engaged in civic activities.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented the results from the semi-structured interviews and outlined the respondents' views about youth participation and involvement in civic activities. The first theme provided an overview to young people's involvement in civic life with a discussion of the type of activities the respondents were involved in. The types of participatory activities fell under three broad categories of setting up youth friendly events in the community; submitting on council processes and policy changes; and establishing networks and connections with young people in their community. The respondents shared their views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. In particular they liked having adult support to run their meetings and learn about their responsibilities. In contrast they were unhappy with mechanisms they viewed as unfair or unequal.

The second theme addressed the difference between adults and young people during the participation. The respondents outlined the nature of adult support they found tolerable such as behind-the-scenes support and linking them with the city council. However, they did not like it when adults took-over, or relied on overly adult centric processes such as application forms and process heavy interviews. They discussed how they felt they were viewed by adults and the impact this had on their level of participation; and how this shaped the perception of youth generally in their community. The respondents felt if they were actively involved this would present a positive youth image. However they were concerned that all young people could be generalised as positively engaged, ultimately ignoring disengaged youth by not developing mechanisms for them to engage in civic activities. Several respondents offered examples of processes that were childish or tokenistic. However, positive examples were offered regarding processes that were not watered or 'dumbed-down', and delivered through a variety of media to ensure it was accessible for a wide group. Once

the young people got onto the youth council the respondents found processes far more assessable and 'youth-centric'.

The final theme considered the impact of young people's participation in civic activities. Many of the respondents were concerned about the lack of engagement across all young people, while others felt they could be allies or advocates for a wide range of youth, even if those views had not been directly sought. All of the respondents reflected on the benefit they were able to make to enhance decision-making and civic activities through offering up a youth perspective that would otherwise be unheard. All of the respondents were also able to reflect on the personal skills they were developing by being part of a youth council. This supported learning about civic activities and developing their skills as the next generation's leaders. In the next chapter these findings are compared to earlier chapters by considering previous literature and research into young people's participation in civic activities and the theoretical frameworks that underpin young people's participation.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Introduction

This research analyses young people's views on the facilitators and barriers to their participation in civic activities using a deductive thematic approach[17] from themes identified in the literature and the underpinning theoretical framework. In the first section of this chapter (young people's participation in civic activities) the nature of the young people's participation is discussed, along with young people's views of the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. The second section (adults' roles in young people's participation during civic activities) explores the role adults play in young people's participation in civic activities. In this section there is particular reference to how adults view young people and the impact this has on young people's participation and the need for adults to develop youth centric processes for young people's participation in civic activities. The third and final section (the benefits from young people's participation in civic activities) includes an analysis on whether young people can successfully represent a wider youth perspective that benefits all young people, the impact of youth participation on civic activities, and the personal benefits for young people from being involved in civic activities.

Section One: Young people's participation in civic activities

The key research question explores young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. Some argue that young people are disinterested, while others point to the fact that civic participation is not actively encouraged and supported (Alfred et al., 2007; Banaji, 2008; Barber, 2009; Collin, 2008; Graham et al., 2006; Gray, 2013; Harris et al., 2010; O'Toole, Lister, et al., 2003). In this first section young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation are explored including the initial induction and training young people receive, the role the adults play to support participation, the ability to be involved in shaping the participation process, or having valid avenues to complain, how young people assess or judge their own participation, young people's perception of success, age appropriate processes, and adults who 'take-over'.

[17] Chapter Four: Methodology page 43

The Culture of Participation[18] offers a framework for understanding the nature and culture of participation supported by the three youth councils represented in this research (Kirby et al., 2003). Council A, whose main activity was organising youth friendly events, falls into the category of 'children / young people's views are taken into account by adults'; but Angela from this council was unclear on the impact her youth council had and voiced concern they had *'not really done anything*'. Angela's youth council was supported by a community organisation and not directly linked to the city council and this slight removal from the main council may account for Angela's perception that the youth council had not been as successful as she would like. Angela felt the adults often gathered the young people's views, but then made their own decisions on how to involve young people in civic activities or how they would use the information they gained from young people's participation. Council B's main activity was also organising youth friendly events. They would considered as moving from the culture of 'children / young people are involved in decision-making (together with adults)', to children/ young people make autonomous decisions', where young people will make decisions and then inform the adults of what they have decided. This was borne out of a level of frustration of '*requesting permission'* anytime the youth council wanted to do something. Finally Council C's main activity was submitting on council policy. This youth council falls into the culture of 'children / young people share power and responsibility for decision-making with adults'. As a youth council they are provided with information and advice from the adults supporting them and the youth council decides what they want to submit on and how to present that information. What is interesting about the range of participation cultures is that regardless of their youth council's culture of participation, the respondents had very similar views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation and the outcomes they achieved. As described all respondents felt the council made better decisions because of their input, because of the unique view they offered. While there were times when all feel their involvement was tokenistic, they also identified positive experiences where they could recognise the impact of their involvement. Processes and outcomes must feel relevant to the participants rather than trying to force or contrive a particular process or to reach a certain outcome (Allard, 1996; Percy-Smith, 2006; Wynn et al., 1987).

Facilitators of participation

In the previous chapter respondents discussed their facilitators for youth participation. This included the initial training and induction processes, behind-the-scenes support from adults, and regular communication with the council and local community. The respondents were unanimous in their

[18] Chapter Three: Theory, page 35

feedback on what facilitated youth participation and this is consistent with findings of previous research (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003; Hil & Bessant, 1999; Nolas, 2014; Sinclair, 2004; Taft & Gordon, 2013). This included their initial induction and training, the support they received from adults, and regular communication avenues.

Initial induction and training

Access to initial training and induction support is identified as being important to successful participation (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003). Three of the respondents spoke about feeling unsure about the purpose of their youth council before signing up. The fear of the unknown was quickly dissipated when they met the rest of their youth council members and started to build relationships and friendships. The initial training and induction they received provided them with a framework for the skills they needed for their new role. While many respondents spoke of continuing to learn through 'doing', all mentioned the importance of these initial processes. This induction and training was useful to help break down initial power imbalances, between adults and young people or the 'haves and have-nots' described in Arnstein's research, and because the young people felt confident in the participation processes, it supported a high level of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003). Arnstein's theory of participation is based on the premise that when the 'haves' or adults hold all the knowledge they have power over the 'have-nots' or young people. By sharing knowledge through training and induction, young people are enabled to share power and have active engagement in the participation process. Induction and training was described as an important tool by the research respondents, as it broke down barriers and increased the respondents' confidence. This ensures adults and young people co-construct the participation processes so that everyone has a shared understanding of the aims and objectives (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003).

Behind-the-scenes support from adults

Roger Hart, developed one of the first youth participation frameworks, the *Ladder of Participation*[19] (Hart, 1992). Hart's Ladder is built on the premise that adults should be encouraged as animators, promoters and facilitators of young people's participation (Head, 2011). All of the respondents unanimously agreed the role adults play, in terms of behind-the-scenes support, was a key facilitator for youth participation, with one respondent describing adult support as being '*wrapped in a*

[19] Chapter Three: Theory, page 25

blanket'. Treseder's *Model of Youth Participation*[20] also supports adult involvement by developing strong ties to others in three of the five prerequisites to participation: having access to people in power, working with adults who create the right environment, and developing trusting relationships. The respondents described how the involvement of adults taught them new skills and enabled them to do well in their role as youth councillors. All of the respondents spoke highly of these supports, describing how they gave stability and structure for youth participation. This confirms that the processes uses to induct and train young people are important facilitators for young people's participation in civic activities.

Shaping participation process and valid complaint avenues

The two other prerequisites for successful youth participation described in the *Model of Youth Participation* are having real choice and having valid avenues to complain (Treseder, 1997). These prerequisites are important because they enable young people to be directly involved in the design and development of the ways they carry out youth participation in civic activities. None of the respondents were aware of avenues they could use to complain or to define the participation processes. Nor could they remember adults asking their views on what they felt was a facilitator or barrier for youth participation. Research suggests participation models should include space for young people to discuss their views on their preferred models of engagement (Harris et al., 2010); but none of the respondents had experienced this. Quite contrary, models and methods of participation were pre-established in the youth councils and young people were taught through their initial induction and training how to access and use these processes. So while the respondents found the initial induction and training a facilitator for youth participation, research suggests that young people's participation will be more successful if they have real choice on the methods and processes used and a valid avenue to complain if the participation process do not support their involvement in civic activities.

Young people's assessment of the impact of their participation

Seeing the impact of their personal contribution to youth participation was not identified as a facilitator by the respondents. However, the importance of young people seeing the impact of youth participation, through evidence of the impact their views make in shaping civic activities, generally facilitates participation (Checkoway et al., 2003; Faulkner, 2009; Sinclair, 2004; Taft & Gordon,

[20] Chapter Three: Theory, page 28

2013). This awareness motivates young people to participate in civic activities, when they see evidence of how their views shape policies and procedures that positively impact on other young people (Martínez, Peñaloza, & Valenzuela, 2012). Successful participation processes involve young people envisioning the impact they have and the changes they can bring into the participation process (Nolas, 2014; Taft & Gordon, 2013). As discussed later in this chapter young people are very aware of the external impact of youth participation and believe that better civic decisions are made as a result of youth participation, because they offer an otherwise unheard or unexplored perspective that adults do not generally have. The facilitators identified by the respondents: initial training and induction processes, behind-the-scenes support from adults, and regular communication with their councils and local communities; are all processes done to or for young people by others. This meant that young people did not perceive the personal impact they made, as a facilitator. Research suggests that this can inadvertently reinforce a negative societal view that positions young people as passive players in civic activities where adults continue to hold the power; rather than seeing themselves as equal active participants (Hil & Bessant, 1999).

This could point to the fact that while young people are actively involved, they are still influenced by the power imbalances described in the *Empowerment Model*[21] and are involved in civic activities as passive participants (Arnstein, 1969). In this research the respondents involved in civic decision-making could benefit from active encouragement and support to see the personal impact they made during their participation, through formal feedback processes. Feedback from adults and other young people may have encouraged these young people to reflect on their active contribution to the participation process, rather than considering participation in civic activities as something being done to them, rather than done with them. This does not detract from the importance of the facilitators identified in this research.

This section highlights the importance of supporting young people in their role as an active civic participant, including a strong induction and initial training process and supportive adults. What differs is while the respondents recognise external facilitators, they do not see themselves or their own actions as facilitators. Active participation supports the use of initial induction and training processes, adults as key facilitators to young people's participation, and the ongoing implementation of regular communication channels to support young people's participation in civic activities.

[21] Chapter Three: Theory, page 22

Barriers to participation

Through the course of this research, respondents also identified the processes they considered to be barriers for their participation. This included feeling frustrated at the group's perceived lack of success and other members not contributing an equal share of the workload; concerns about the age appropriateness of activities and the likely pressure on younger group members; and aggravation when adults tried to 'take-over' the group's processes (Barber, 2009; Greig et al., 2013; Rayner, 2003; Wyn & Harris, 2004). While the facilitators identified by the respondents in this research were consistently identified, the barriers were not as clearly defined. The barriers identified here were raised by four or more of the seven respondents. Six of the seven respondents, described their frustration if their group is not being as effective as it could be and the inequality of effort from other participants. All of the respondents identified concerns about the age appropriateness of participation process and in particular thought the time and intensity of the work risked disengaging younger members. Four of the seven respondents described adults who try to take-over, as a further barrier for youth participation in civic activities.

The perceptions of success

The respondents were apologetic when they spoke about not being as effective as they could be. The sociological viewpoint of adolescence (Wyn & Harris, 2004) that defines young people as a reflection of their collective group identity could account for some of this frustration, because the respondents believed if they were ineffective, adults would view them negatively. Young people want others in their community to see them as effective because they believe this will encourage adults to seek out their opinion and take account of their views to inform civic activities (Matthews et al., 1999). The way that adults conceptualise young people also influences the likelihood that adults will support their engagement and Section Two (adults roles' during young people's participation in civic activities), later in this chapter, explores this in greater detail. The respondents believed the effectiveness of their youth council's impact on civic activities, reflected on how others viewed them personally. The respondents in this research had a strong desire to be effective and viewed positively, and had a range of ideas about how they could do this by gathering other young people's views. But without valid avenues to introduce these ideas and opinions, the respondents felt unable to progress their ideas and feared they were seen as ineffective.

Age appropriate processes

All of the respondents experienced generic youth participation processes, or a one-size-fits-all approach, rather than the use of personalised methods and processes. Research into youth participation describes successful models as employing a range of methods to cater to the ability, interests and views of the young people, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach (Emond, 2006). Hart (1992) notes for participation to be truly democratic, planning, design and delivery need to be both fair and transparent. These propositions were tested in this research and account for some of the frustration voiced by these respondents including their perceived lack of group effectiveness, and their frustration that not all members of the group contributed equally. In this research all of the respondents stated when group members did not contribute equally it created a barrier to their successful participation in civic activities. If these respondents had been offered a transparent process where the group members could contribute to the design and planning of the processes, the respondents would have had opportunities to engage in a range of processes that catered to the interests and abilities of the young people in the youth council, and would have ensured an even distribution of tasks (Eruera, 2010). The democratic nature of this type of engagement, enables young people to voice frustration over inequality, and to help shape and plan methods of participation to ensure everyone can participate.

Successful participation should take place as part of natural real world processes and settings, rather than forcing or contriving a scenario (Greig et al., 2013). Alongside this participation processes need to have realistic timeframes; and resources, such as written reports, should be age appropriate (Rayner, 2003). The respondents were concerned about how well younger members of their youth council could actively participate if they did not have a full understanding of the processes and content. Employing methods that suit individuals' interests and abilities such as delivering messages through a variety of media and providing a range of ways for young people to be involved, rather than generic models, is one way that young people's participation in civic activities can be strengthened (Kay & Tisdall, 2012; Rayner, 2003). The respondents felt many of the younger members could not fully participate because information and processes were to complex, or the nature of the content and discussions were too '*intense*'; therefore not linked to the interests or abilities of the entire group. The respondents were concerned these factors placed an undue burden on younger participants. Many of the formal democratic structures described by the respondents included formal meeting structures and council meetings that were held at inaccessible times (i.e. during school hours) and not providing unique opportunities for young people to engage with councillors, were processes they believed ostracised the younger members of the youth council.

These formal adult structures did not provide them with information in a way they could easily understand, and tried to engage them in a process they had little or no interest in. This reinforces the need to implement age appropriate processes and structures.

Adults who 'take-over'

A further barrier identified by four of the seven respondents, were processes where adults took-over, made decisions on behalf of the young people, or did not consult with them on key decisions. This is congruent with Arnstein (1969) who describes tokenism or non-participation, as processes that inform, consult or placate without any meaningful engagement. This also aligns with earlier comments about processes that do not take account of the ability, interests and views of young people. Providing young people with the skills and abilities to be active participants is rated highly as a key facilitator for young people's participation (Barber, 2009). The respondents felt in these instances the adults did not believe they were capable of being active participants in civic activities, despite receiving adequate training to do so. Adults who continue to take-over the participation process by placing themselves in positions of power that do not support or encourage young people's involvement, is counterproductive. This was clearly identified in Angela's example where the Youth Council (Council A) provided their views on the content of a conference they were developing, but the adults did not take their views on board and designed the conference based on what the adults believed should be included. Young people are more inclined to participate when they feel listened to and when civic activities have relevance for their age, interests and opinions (O'Toole, Marsh, et al., 2003).

In summary, the findings of this research are consistent with other research into the barriers for young people's participation into civic activities. They point to the need for adults to ensure they provide enough support to guide and encourage young people, while ensuring they do not take-over. In a similar vein to the facilitators for young people's engagement, the respondents appeared to be their own harshest critics, and not only did not see their own success as a facilitator, but young people were worried they could be viewed as unsuccessful. Similar to seeing facilitators only as those features external to themselves, they felt a high degree of responsibility if they were seen as ineffective, or did not adhere to the high standards they placed on themselves.

Section Two: Adults' roles in young people's participation in civic activities

This section discusses how adults conceptualise the period of adolescence and the impact this has on young people's successful participation in civic activities; including why adults should create youth centric models to support young people's participation in civic activities. The importance of adults and young people working well together is a key finding from this research, and is a key feature of the facilitators and barriers discussed earlier.[22] Similarly, the relationship between adults and young people is a key feature described in youth participation theories.[23] These theories outline the significance of adult support for the facilitators and barriers of young people's participation in civic activities (Arnstein, 1969; Burford et al., 2012; Hart, 1992; Keelan, 2002; Kirby et al., 2003; Shier, 2001; Treseder, 1997).

Conceptualising adolescence

Adolescence is conceptualised in one of two ways, either from a sociological viewpoint that suggests young people are a reflection of their peers and environment (Batsleer, 2008; Buckingham, 2008; Holliday et al., 2010) or from a developmental perspective that defines the emotional and physical growth of children into adults (Freeman & Aitken-Rose, 2005; Wyn & Harris, 2004). When adolescence is viewed positively, it encourages adults to open up more opportunities for young people's active participation in civic activities (Matthews et al., 1999; Sanders & Munford, 2014; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011; Wyn & Harris, 2004). The young people in this research believed the way adults viewed them influenced their opportunities to participate. While some respondents felt valued by the council, because their views were listened to and encouraged, others thought their council viewed them as a '*nuisance*' by giving little attention to their views or ignoring suggestions they made. This was not a static feeling and three of the respondents (Zach, Angela and Anna) described feeling both valued and a '*nuisance*' depending on what their youth council was doing. Zach describes attendance at Council meetings with some councillors looking bored or angry, compared with councillors who he believed were genuinely interested in what the youth council was doing. Zach noted that he felt encouraged and supported by those engaged councillors.

[22] Chapter Six: Section One: young people's participation in civic activities, page 66
[23] Chapter Three: Theory, page 21

The Culture of Participation[24] describes the culture required by an organisation to enable youth participation to occur; this includes unfreezing barriers that shape negative adult perceptions, encouraging adults to become change catalysts to role-model change, developing clear internal processes for encouraging change and institutionalising this change into practice (Kirby et al., 2003). To be successful, participation requires a culture that unfreezes people's attitudes and organisations that create an environment where adults keep an open mind on how they conceptualise or view young people. Likewise, the Culture of Participation suggests that to support and enable youth participation adults need to create an environment where young people are viewed in a positive light. The respondents did not always agree that a positive representation was the most helpful stance. Two of the respondents (Angela and Neil) voiced concern over positively generalising young people, as they felt it gave a skewed perception of young people in the community, meaning disengaged youth could easily be overlooked. They were concerned the process to get onto a youth council and the consultation processes used, targeted the '*higher echelon*' of youth and did not provide opportunities to hear an all-inclusive representative youth voice. This generated a sense of responsibility for the respondents who felt their actions shaped adults' view of them; thereby setting the tone for how communities viewed young people and ultimately impacting on how well civic activities were tailored for this age group.

Five of the respondents felt they were viewed positively by the council because they offered a unique view or opinion to the council that would otherwise be unheard. Nisha described their ability to offer opinions from a different point of view was based on the fact they had a better understanding of how a policy, such as changes to public transport, would affect young people. Valuing this unique perspective aligns with viewing adolescence from a strength based perspective that considers adolescence as an important stage in the life of a person (Matthews et al., 1999). This positive view suggests to adults that young people are able to offer a point of view adults are either unaware of or do not have any other access to. This is vital when developing a process for young people to contribute and participate in civic activities as it enables adults to recognise the important role young people play in supporting and shaping positive behaviour change (Batsleer, 2008; Buckingham, 2008). Using strength based approaches also supports participation by reinforcing the need for young people's involvement in civic activities (Matthews et al., 1999; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2011). Ultimately, this positive view goes some way to reduce one of the barriers cited earlier,[25]

[24] Chapter Three: Theory, page 35
[25] Chapter Six: Section One: barriers to participation, page 70

where adults take-over and provide tokenistic opportunities for young people to participate, instead of recognising the positive and unique perspective that young people have to offer.

The Culture of Participation also suggests that adults should avoid the more harmful practice of negatively generalising young people. There is a danger in generalising young people in a negative light; as the negative behaviour of a few does not suggest how the many behave or react (Buckingham, 2008; Holliday et al., 2010). Multiplicity is when generalisations are made and the opinions of a group are clumped together, without recognising the uniqueness of each participant (Batsleer, 2008; Buckingham, 2008; Holliday et al., 2010). To avoid multiplicity and to successfully encourage young people's participation, methods and processes must be tailored to individuals' strengths and abilities. This supports their active participation and reduces the power imbalances described earlier,[26] by ensuring everyone feels able to be involved. Six of the seven respondents expressed concerns about processes and engagement methods that they felt were time consuming, contained overly heavy content, or focused solely on serious issues, that potentially excluded some of the group, especially younger members, from feeling comfortable participating. Helen described how she thought a heavy or serious topic such as drug use or disaffected youth could make younger members feel awkward and uncomfortable.

When adults view adolescence negatively, there is a risk that young people become disengaged (McGachie & Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). In this research five respondents felt they were a *'nuisance'* to their council and were viewed negatively. This included respondents who thought their council did not like them, or they were a nuisance and spent money unnecessarily. It should also be noted that three of the respondents described adults as having fluid perceptions of them, ranging from positive to negative, depending on the nature of the activities they are involved in. However far from disengaging them, the respondents felt negative perceptions made them want to work harder and prove they have a positive contribution to make. For Zach, being told he did not have support for an action by his council, prompted him to take independent action, without the backing of the rest of his peer group; while for Emily and Helen, when adults did not allow them to be in charge, it encouraged them to find ways to make their youth council run without the involvement of adults, this included developing direct lines of communication with the main council or starting up their

[26] Chapter Six: Section One: barriers to participation, page 70

own projects without adult support. This is supported by Arnstein's Empowerment Model,[27] where empowerment comes from acting independently, rather than participation being led by others.

In summary, while there were times where young people felt they are conceptualised negatively by their council, generally the respondents felt they were viewed positively and were encouraged to participate, to offer a unique youth perspective. In practice, this suggests positioning young people as unique, from a strength based framework, acknowledging each young person has something to offer. This moves away from unhelpful generalisations of young people, such as a multiplicity view that generalises young people, even if this has a positive slant.

Being youth centric

As described earlier to be effective at supporting young people's participation in civic activities, a one-size-fits-all model needs to be avoided and youth centric processes need to be identified.[28] Organisations need to have different approaches or practices in place to support young people's involvement (Partridge, 2005). This is in line with Participatory Action Processes[29] where adults need to let go of some of their power and let young people get involved and lead where possible (Kumpulainen et al., 2013; McNeish, 1999). Six of the respondents described some examples of youth centric approaches such as creating a more relaxed space during their initial recruitment interviews, and relaying information about council activities using different communication styles. The respondents appreciated processes that were not 'dumbed-down' for them, instead delivered in a way they could relate and understand. In practice adults need to integrate youth centric processes that make young people feel included, by presenting information in a way that respects their intelligence, ultimately reinforcing their role and encouraging them to participate in civic activities.

Using youth centric processes aligns with the use of Participatory Action Processes, which encourages youth involvement in all stages of the design and delivery of participation in civic activities (Scherer et al., 1993). Participation Action Processes also appropriately targets the group facilitators are trying to engage, by using approaches designed to engage that cohort (Kumpulainen et al., 2013; McNeish, 1999). In this instance it means the use of youth centric processes that give

[27] Chapter Three: Theory, page 22
[28] Chapter Six Section One: barriers to participation, page 70
[29] Chapter Two: Literature Review, page 17

meaning to participation, so that it is clearly understood by all of the participants involved. This can be achieved by providing initial training and induction, and involving young people from the first stage of their engagement in civic participation. All of the respondents, described their induction and initial training processes as platforms to fully understand processes, and learn about their role in a fun and safe environment, which resonates with Participatory Action Processes.

Participatory Action Processes also use young people's own words to honour their view point (Smyth & McInerney, 2013); as the respondents were able to do when they wrote their own submissions, used surveys to gather other young people's views, and set up youth specific communication channels such as ideas mailboxes, social media pages and youth spaces. Concurring with the findings of Emond (2006) this research found being youth centric did not imply a 'dumbed-down' version of adult processes. What was important to the respondents was that methods and techniques to engage or provide them with information, took account of individual learning styles and preferred methods of participation. As Nisha described, this was important as it enabled her to confidently participate in a way that made sense, and she did not feel like information had to be watered down or messages changed to enable her to engage.

Conversely, adult centric processes require young people to develop skills in existing adult frameworks (Wynn et al., 1987). If processes and activities are framed as an adult activity young people are less likely to engage with them (Matthews et al., 1999). Respondents offered many examples of adult centric processes including overly formal meeting structures, written policy submissions, and formal applications and interviews. As discussed the respondents were concerned that an overly positive representation of young people could inadvertently reinforce the view that these adult centric processes or models were targeted appropriately and no change was required. Without a formal method to reflect thoughts back to the council or adults involved, these insights and reflections could be lost or unaddressed (Allard, 1996). Previous research notes a facilitator for young people's successful participation in civic activities is to implement review or complaint systems (Treseder, 1997).

In summary, as none of the respondents were part of a review or complaint process, the respondents were not aware of any mechanism for them to provide feedback on the models and techniques they found helpful, or to determine what, in their view, was youth centric. While the

respondents enjoyed methods of engagement that were youth centric, if they did encounter an activity that excluded them or did not engage them, they were unaware of the formal channels to address, or challenge this.

Section Three: The benefits from young people's participation in civic activities

So far this chapter has discussed the facilitators and barriers to young people's participation, the different role young people and adults have during young people's participation, and how this affects young people's participation in civic activities. Research suggests that when participation is successful, young people develop the necessary skills to be the next generation's leaders. This final section discusses how young people are supported to be the next generation's leaders by considering the impact of youth participation in civic activities. This impact is considered over three domains, the impact it has on young people outside of their youth council, the impact it has on councils' decision-making and civic activities, and the personal benefits young people acquire as they develop into the next generation's leaders.

Being the voice of all young people

This first section describes the ability for young people to be a voice for those outside of youth councils. Despite evidence that supports the need to treat each young person as an individual, there was still a belief held by the respondents that they were expected by adults to be the voice of all young people in their community; previous studies into youth participation advisory groups support this assertion (Faulkner, 2009; Roberts, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). The respondents had a varying degree of comfort with this expectation. This ranged from respondents' voicing concern that civic activities exclude disengaged youth, through to respondents who felt they could offer a view that would advocate for other youth, by representing an alternative viewpoint to adults.

Because youth can be described as a culture in their own right, some youth viewpoints can be generalised to represent the whole (Kehily, 2013). However, the question still remains as to whether young people can reasonably be expected to speak up and be the voice of all young people. All of the respondents felt their role was to provide a unique youth perspective that would be otherwise

unheard in civic activities and decision-making. And while some expressed concerns about their role in representing all youth, they all had a range of ideas on the ways they could gather a good cross-section of youth-views to support this function, including widening communication channels through schools, and engaging with others through a range of mediums, including social media. Research describing youth centric processes, suggest these approaches enable a wide range of young people to be involved and have a say (Emond, 2006; Eruera, 2010; Harris et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 1999). So while youth councils may not be representative of all young people, there are many ways to elicit a wider youth voice. The respondents in this research had not experienced opportunities to design and develop the participation processes, which could risk losing the insight this group has on how a wider range of views could be gathered.

Some critics of youth councils say that because only high achieving youth are chosen they are not representative (Faulkner, 2009; Roberts, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). This is also a feature of this research, with four of the respondents questioning if the application processes and day to day participation methods excluded most young people from direct participation in civic activities. These processes included essay based application forms and the council holding meetings during school hours so they were unable to attend. Only Council C clearly identified to the group their role was to provide a youth perspective, and they should not feel obligated to speak up for all young people. Although part of Council C, Nisha's view was slightly different. She believed they inadvertently do speak up for all young people, because they are advocates for youth and their aim is to seek out outcomes that will benefit all young people. This implies that a representative group, with the right motivation, could speak out on behalf of a wider youth cohort, representing more than just those on the youth council.

Approaches that involve seeking young people's views on preferred methods of engagement, utilising new technologies and implementing participatory action processes align with the ideas expressed by the respondents. By involving young people at all stages of the processes, and developing formal feedback loops, there are greater opportunities gather a wide range of youth voices.

In summary, developing regular feedback loops to review processes and enquire how the participation processes facilitate or create barriers for young people's participation, will enable

improvements to seek a wider youth voice and ensure young people's involvement informs civic activities that affect them. Because all of the respondents had ideas on how a wider youth voice could be sought, and to ensure greater numbers of young people have a say in civic activities, methods and processes in each of the three youth councils could be improved by generating young people's views on ways to ensure they provide a wider youth perspective, representative of a larger number of young people.

How youth participation benefits civic activities

Respondents viewed their involvement in youth councils as an opportunity to provide an otherwise unheard youth perspective, which in turn improved the decisions made by the city council and positively impacted on civic activities for young people. Arnstein's *Empowerment Model* is developed on the principle that when people share power and a range of people are involved, especially the 'have nots', better decisions are made (Arnstein, 1969; McNeish, 1999). In this research young people would be considered the 'have-nots', and the adults or those in positions of power as the 'haves' (Barber, 2009). For all of the respondents, they saw youth participation as successful because of the unique view point they offered and they all believed that better decisions were being made because of their involvement. They felt they engaged with other youth in a way that adults would not be able to, and they could suggest how policy proposals, such as a change to a key public services like transport or libraries, could affect young people in a way that may not be considered by adults. This ability to see the impact of their involvement is a key facilitator for young people's participation in civic activities (Checkoway et al., 2003; Faulkner, 2009; Sinclair, 2004; Taft & Gordon, 2013) as it provides them with an opportunity to see the impact of their involvement.

Kay and Tisdall (2012) describe two external or organisational discourses on motivation for civic organisations to involve young people in civic participation. These discourses are legal compliance, including compliance with UNCROC;[30] and a consumerist model, where young people have a direct say in the services they receive to influence service delivery. This research found the motivation for supporting young people's participation in civic activities was more about compliance with policy with less regard given to the outcome or a consumerist focus. A greater focus on enabling young people to comment on policy and legislation change, such as those used by Council C by asking the youth council to submit on every proposed policy change, reinforces a greater emphasis on the

[30] Chapter One: Introduction, page 2

impact of service delivery, or a consumerist model, and directly enables young people to have a say in civic activities.

The motivation to comply legally is key driver for youth councils and internationally youth councils are generally established to support compliance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). UNCROC states that young people should have a say in decisions that affect them (Sinclair, 2004; Youth Law, n.d.). In New Zealand there is an expectation from government that civic organisations should involve young people in civic activities, set out by the Ministry of Youth Development in their publication, *Keepin it Real* (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009). Arguably the respondents' role in contributing to civic activities by engaging in council decisions goes some way to meeting this obligation. However, only Council C's members described processes to regularly submit on policy change; the respondents from the other two youth councils were rarely provided with an opportunity to meet this legal obligation and were often unaware of policy changes they may wish to submit on.

The *Pathway to Participation*[31] describes the environment required for organisations to comply with UNCROC (Shier, 2001), but the findings from this research suggest this definition is misleading. For example, the Pathway sets out when an organisation complies with UNCROC by showing where on the continuum an organisation 'is required by policy to take young people's views into account' (Percy-Smith, 2006). Arguably the two councils who do not regularly submit on council policies (Councils A & B) take young people's views into account because of a policy requirement, but these views are not generally related to civic decisions that affect the young people, instead they are often related to youth focused events. This provides a loophole for this framework, because young people's views are taken into account by providing avenues to present their opinion, but unless these views relate to civic actions that affect them, the council complies with Article 12 without adhering to the intent of Article 12.

How young people benefit from participation

When young people are supported to participate in civic activities, they develop skills as the next generation's leaders (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003; Yeung et al., 2012). The benefits described by the

[31] Chapter Three: Theory, page 30

respondents such as increases in confidence, and a greater understanding of civic activities support this premise. All of the respondents described how they learnt about democratic processes and had opportunities to participate in local and national government, this included learning about voting rules and formal structures for running boards and meetings. The respondents felt these experiences prepared them for future civic activities, by developing their leadership skills and introducing how local and central government operate. Alongside this, the respondents noted a number of personal gains such as developing their written and oral communication skills to support their development. They also described a range of experiences that supported their development and engagement in civic activities. This included developing their confidence, leadership abilities, team work skills, and learning about rights and responsibilities (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2009; Ule, 2013).

All of the respondents described their personal enhancements, including improving their confidence, as a positive outcome from successful participation. The *Indigenous Ladder of Participation*[32] which is built on the premise that young people's education is more effective when they can fully participate, supports the notion that participation done well provides personal development benefits (Burford et al., 2012; Harder et al., 2014). In this research, young people's participation has not been defined using any of the hierarchical frameworks. Without a hierarchy, one type of participation is not preferred over another. However as described earlier[33] all of the councils were providing the young people with an opportunity to participate that was not tokenistic or non-participatory, as determined by Harts (1992) *Ladder of Participation;*[34] and all of the respondents cited benefits that align with previous research into successful participation. This included developing strong relationships with others, providing advice that led to better decision-making and ensuring services were appropriately targeted (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003; McGachie & Smith, 2003; Smith et al., 2003).

Alongside the external or organisational motivators of legalities and consumerism described above, Kay and Tisdall (2012) describe a further two discourses as motivation for involving young people in civic activities: democratic education and enhancing young people's well-being. These relate to internal or personal impacts like receiving a democratic education and improving a young person's confidence. The internal and personal impacts noted by the respondents, link to these discourses.

[32] Chapter Three: Theory, page 32
[33] Chapter Six: Section One: young people's participation in civic activities, page 66
[34] Chapter Three: Theory, page 25

The respondents' personal gains can be grouped into several themes which include leadership skills, communication skills, organisational skills, and relationship skills. All of these areas are important aptitudes that support this group of young people to emerge as the next generation's leaders, by developing their skills and giving them experiences that support future leadership roles (Matthews et al., 1999).

Understanding youth development and adolescence as part of a linear development process, suggests that young people's involvement in civic activities goes some way to supporting personal development (Matthews et al., 1999; Wyn & Harris, 2004). The respondents all noted a prior interest in politics that motivated them to get involved in their youth council, this implies they were already on a trajectory to become the next generation's leaders because of their existing interest (Harris et al., 2010), like Neil who specifically expressed an interest in working in politics in the future. So while the respondents all cited a range of personal gains, both in learning about democratic process, and developing a greater understanding of civic activities; coupled with a range of personal skill development areas; it is unclear if this group had a prior disposition to develop in these areas, or if their experiences on the youth council were solely responsible.

Young people's development as the next generation's leaders is improved if youth participation in civic activities is part of everyday life and participation is as normalised as possible (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2009; Ule, 2013), but for these respondents youth participation has occurred in a forced or artificial environment shaped by the adults around them. If, like adults they had normalised channels for civic participation such as voting rights and rate payer consultation, their involvement would not have to be artificially generated. The respondents all described the challenge of making time for youth council activities around their regular responsibilities of school and social activities as problematic; suggesting a forced or contrived involvement, rather than part of everyday activities. This is in contrast to the adults involved in the councils, where their civic involvement is their main job or activity. Nonetheless, they all described positive personal benefits such as the skills they are developing and opportunities to practice civic engagement. While development as the next generation's leaders may be improved by participating in civic activities in a natural setting such as voting, the benefits gained by the respondents are not lessened because youth participation occurred in a forced or contrived setting. While young people benefit from involvement in civic activities, they should not be passive recipients of this, and should be actively involved in promoting their own development (Hil & Bessant, 1999).

In summary, the findings from this research, where young people did not see their personal impact as a facilitator for youth participation in civic activities; or their lack of adequate opportunities to review or define their own participation processes; could be problematic. As a passive recipient, allowing others to shape youth participation in civic activities, their potential personal gains could be hindered. Discussing the personal impact they have on civic activities with adults, or having forums to raise concerns over process, or suggesting new methods of engaging them and others, will provide useful mechanisms for young people's active engagement in civic activities.

Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the key research question, namely what do young people see as the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. Often the ability to see the impact of your participation and having valid avenues to complain are cited as facilitators for young people's participation, but these were not identified in this research. Instead, the respondents focused on the factors that were external to themselves, and did not view the difference they made as a facilitator. The respondents felt the barriers for youth participation in civic activities include frustration when they felt their council is ineffective, processes that were inappropriately tailored so not everyone was able to participate, and adults who take-over. The respondents were unaware of any forums or mechanisms to reflect these frustrations back to adults, to initiate change.

This research found the conceptualisation of young people is fluid with young people experiencing both positive and negative views. The concept of 'youth' is important because generally when young people are viewed positively they are provided with greater opportunities to participate. However the respondents expressed concern about the negative impacts of this positive view, such as adults assuming all young people are like them, which potentially further excludes disaffected or disengaged youth. Without the formal review or feedback processes described in Section One, processes remained static with little room for the respondents to help shape the nature of their participation.

In New Zealand and Internationally civic organisations are encouraged to involve young people. This creates challenges ensuring the young people involved in youth councils represent a wide or varying youth perspective. The respondents were fairly comfortable with this task, although they had ideas

on how they could represent a wider youth voice. Again without formal feedback loops, these ideas were not acted on. Despite this the respondents felt they make a positive impact on decisions, and could clearly identify the personal gains they made from their participation in civic activities. Despite orchestrating their involvement in a forced or contrived forum, the respondents continue to benefit and are developing as the next generation's leaders.

The next chapter concludes this research by answering the research questions, outlining the limitations and strengths of this study, the implications for practice, and identifying the scope for further research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

This research explored young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities. These facilitators and barriers are important as a driver for this research was when youth participation is successful it contributes to shaping young people as the next generation's leaders (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003). Therefore to ensure youth participation is successful adults need to understand what participation processes young people find helpful and what they do not. This research involved seven semi-structured interviews with young people who were all involved with youth councils. The qualitative data was thematically analysed using a deductive approach, this was underpinned by the Culture of Participation framework (Kirby et al., 2003) and relevant literature. This chapter summarises the key findings from this research; outlines the implications for policy and practice when developing participation processes for young people; sets out the limitations and strengths of this research; provides recommendations arising from this research; and sets the framework for potential ongoing research in this area.

Key findings

This research explored young people's views on the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities, through seven semi-structured interviews. It considered the techniques that facilitate young people's participation in civic activities, the impact of adults in the participation process, and explored how these experiences support young people to be the next generation's leaders. This research generated the following key findings.

1. Youth councils provide young people with a forum to learn and develop skills as the next generation's leaders;

2. Young people need and appreciate the involvement of adults who support their participation;

3. Young people should be able to contribute to the design and development of youth centric participation processes; and

4. The way that adults conceptualise young people impacts on their ability to participate in civic activities.

1. Youth Councils provide young people with a forum to learn and develop skills as the next generation's leaders

Through this research a number of examples emerged of the skills and attributes that young people developed, helping to shape them as the next generation's leaders (Barber, 2009; Craig, 2003; Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2009; Ule, 2013). Through their participation the respondents cited a number of internal and intrinsic motivators, including building their confidence in working in a group and feeling able to voice a youth perspective. They learnt leadership skills as they led working groups and attended council meetings and events. They developed their communication skills through a range of mediums including written and spoken messages. They also developed skills through training and events, and learnt to negotiate and ensure everyone had an opportunity to be involved.

Alongside skill development they experienced a range of new activities that provided them with a foundation knowledge base of civic activities. This included their meetings where they used democratic processes such as chairing, mooting new ideas, moving and debating suggestions. They also experienced a range of council processes such as policy changes and submission processes, attendance at regular council meetings, and reporting on a regular basis to account for their youth council activities. Finally they were exposed to the challenges of speaking up on behalf of a cohort, and the need to consult and gather a wide range of views and opinions. All of these skills and experiences are key assets for developing as the next generation's leaders, and is supported by existing research.

2. Young people need and appreciate the involvement of adults who support their participation

A strength of youth participation in civic activities is the potential for young people to learn and develop skills based on the guidance and support of adults. The respondents saw direct links between the support they received from adults, the success of youth participation and ultimately the skills they developed as a result. Consequently any model seeking to exclude adult involvement or input would be counterproductive.

In this research the respondents offered a clear and consistent view the involvement of adults is necessary, particularly concerning behind-the-scenes support and guidance, without any desire for

them to remove themselves altogether. The respondents also gave a clear message there are limitations to this involvement, and whilst young people require support from adults and their involvement is appreciated, they should not lead decision-making processes, nor take power away from the young people to run processes as they chose. Many of the youth participation theoretical frameworks suggest a hierarchy of participation. The lower levels of the hierarchy suggest adults are in control and run any participation models, with the top of the hierarchy suggesting that young people take full control of the participation process (Arnstein, 1969; Burford et al., 2012; Hart, 1992; T J Keelan, 2002; Shier, 2001). This research fits with the theoretical frameworks that do not use a hierarchical model, which instead suggest organisations and adults should use a model that best fits the intended results or outcomes of the participation process and confirms the importance of adult engagement and support (Kirby et al., 2003; Treseder, 1997).

3. Young people should be able to contribute to the design and development of youth centric participation processes

What was not available to the respondents, were any formal avenues to make suggestions and offer ideas for their engagement and that of a wider youth cohort. The respondents had a range of ideas for wider youth engagement by involving others in civic activities, but had no formal avenue to suggest or put ideas forward.

The respondents were very clear they did not want any processes to be 'dumbed-down' for them. In fact several of them mentioned they enjoyed engaging in participation processes without any change to accommodate them. Likewise the respondents spoke about the danger of having formal adult centric process such as formal application and interview processes. The respondents felt these adult centric processes excluded many young people from applying to be on the youth council and meant youth councils could be fairly one-sided with what they described as the *'high echelon'* of youth. However once young people were involved, they noticed that processes were changed or adapted to accommodate their engagement. This included things like relaxed interview processes, induction and initial training to develop an understanding of their role; and providing information to them through a range of mediums. Young people can tell when adults are trying to get them to fit into adult processes and this risks patronising young people (Harris et al., 2010; Treseder, 1997). Young people do not want a simplified or dumbed down adult process, they want youth specific processes.

4. The way that adults conceptualise young people impacts on their ability to participate in civic activities

There are benefits and risks to how adolescence and young people are viewed. A positive representation can benefit the young people actively involved while also ignoring those who are not. Likewise a negative view can minimise the contribution young people can make or prompt them to try harder and be more actively involved (Batsleer, 2010; Buckingham, 2008; Holliday et al., 2010). However what is most important is viewing each young person as unique, and enabling young people to engage in a youthful way so you do not lose the benefits of young people's participation, be expecting young people to think like adults.

This research found that the respondents felt the way they were perceived by adults, impacted on youth participation in civic activities. When they were viewed positively, the respondents felt more inclined to be involved and give time to civic participation. They also felt a positive view meant that adults were prepared to give their time to support youth participation and to encourage their involvement. However, they also had concerns about being viewed positively. The respondents felt this skewed the view of young people generally. They were concerned their high level of engagement, led adults to assume that all young people in the community were like them. This has the potential to further disenfranchise disengaged youth, because the adults making civic decisions may not consider them. The respondents were concerned that this provided another reason for disengaged youth to miss out on participating in civic activities.

Alongside this when viewed negatively, it provided some of the respondents' motivation to become more involved in civic participation. For some young people, being told they could not do something, made them want to achieve even more. So while it meant that adults were not providing them with opportunities to participative in civic activities, for some this encouraged them to try harder. This avenue is fraught, with some young people taking action themselves, and working against the wishes of their wider youth council.

Limitations of the research

While this research produced a number of key findings it should be noted that this was a small scale study with a limited sample size, from a limited geographic location. Likewise, only young people who were actively involved in participating in civic activities were invited to be part of the research, so it did not take account of the reasons why a young person would not want to participate in civic activities. Due to resource and time constraints it was not viable to engage a larger group of young people who had experienced participation in civic activities. This was because thought was given to selecting appropriate participants who could confidently respond to the research questions outlined in this study (O'Leary, 2009). The data gathered was systemically analysed, using a sound research methodology, to help mitigate sample concerns.[35]

Strengths of this research

This research was a qualitative study, while the sample size was small, the research delved into individuals thoughts and experiences on their views of the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in civic activities, by asking young people their opinion and to share their own personal experience. At times differing views were gathered concerning the same experience, as personal interactions shape each individual's experience, their own relationships and their past experiences (May, 2011). To respect the integrity of the contribution of the participants their thoughts were accurately recorded, using an audio tape and validated transcripts. Their own words and language were used in the transcription, to honour them and their viewpoint (Smyth & McInerney, 2013).

During this research an open and safe space for young people was created to support their engagement in the research. To lessen any perceived power imbalances full disclosure of the aims and processes involved in this research were given to the participants prior to their interview, respondents were given their typed transcript to correct or change, and summaries of the research findings were given to the respondents prior to publication (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010). The research benefited from the unreserved cooperation of the respondents. The respondents displayed a high

[35] Chapter Four: Methodology, page 40

level of interest and a strong sense of purpose throughout the interviews that is evident in their responses.

This research provided young people with a space to discuss and reflect on the facilitators and barriers to their participation. The key findings present clear messages for civic organisations and adults wishing to support young people to participate in civic activities, with guidance on how to successfully facilitate young people's participation. This includes things organisations and adults must do, alongside things to avoid.

Implications for policy and practice

Throughout this research a number of findings emerged that suggest how to best facilitate young people's participation in civic activities. This section provides adults who are facilitating youth participation with implications for the development of policy and practice that facilitates youth participation in civic activities.

1. Initial training and induction

Adults must provide young people with opportunities for initial induction and training before they start their involvement with a youth council. This is not just to introduce a new way of working to new members, but also provides an important initial platform to help the group develop relationships and trust in their new team environment. It ensures young people have a safe place to ask questions and learn about new processes, especially if they have some level of initial apprehension about the unknown task ahead of them. It also supports the premise that young people are not passive recipients of participation process but have the skills and confidence to be actively involved in their own development.

2. The boundaries of adults' involvement

Adults must continue to be involved in providing adequate behind-the-scenes support and guidance. This support includes organising the venue and meetings dates, providing a pivotal link to the council and council activities; providing training and guidance for new processes; and ensuring they

encourage young people to think for themselves and make their own decisions. These actions will ensure adults or adult processes do not take over the young people's civic participation. In this way adult involvement becomes focused on the outcome adults and young people are hoping to achieve through youth participation, the active engagement of young people in civic activities; rather than merely ensuring a tokenistic youth participation process exists.

3. How young people are conceptualised

Young people must be viewed positively in a way that encourages youth participation. This includes implementing a formal feedback and review process. This involves listening to young people's views about the policies and processes that work, the ones that do not and their suggestions on changes that will encourage wider youth participation, and support the development of tailor-made youth friendly process to support individual engagement. This means viewing adolescence positively as part of an integral process of development and learning, rather than seeing adolescence as a period of being 'childish' or not quite 'adult enough'.

4. Activities to avoid

There are a number of things that adults and civic organisations must avoid to ensure young people's participation in civic activities is successful. They should avoid tokenistic participation process or models that ask young people what they think and then do not take account of young people's views when decisions are made. Alongside avoiding tokenistic processes, adults must not take-over the participation process either by making decisions for the young people involved, or assuming youth will not have anything to offer and therefore do not seek their views or opinions. And finally youth councils must avoid dumbed-down versions of adult processes that imply young people will not understand or be able to fully participate in civic activities.

Recommendations

This study highlights the need for young people to be active participants in civic activities. This means going beyond engaging them in the process, and ensuring they have opportunities to help design, develop and review the process and consider how to act upon the outcomes and information they identify.

This research also highlights the need for adults to remain active supporters of young people's participation. This includes advocating for their involvement, and believing in the positive contribution they can make. But also continuing to support, encourage and guide their involvement, while enabling them to lead the process and make their own decisions.

Recommendations:

1. New youth council members should be provided with initial training and induction;
2. Adults must support youth councils with behind-the-scenes support, but must let young people lead the design and development of process and review and direct the nature and content of the participation; and
3. Youth participation processes must be youth centric and directed at the intended outcome of the participation to avoid being tokenistic.

Future research in this area

There are a number of further research avenues that this study suggests. In particular, the need for young people to be active participants in civic activities also highlights the need for larger scale research studies that makes use of Participation Action Research processes so young people can be involved in all stages of the research. This includes young people's involvement in shaping the research questions, designing the research processes, and active involvement in the dissemination of the research.

Further research questions that can be explored include investigating the personal impact young people have on participation in civic activities, the influence of their own attitude and commitment, and the ways in which they personally support active participation. Personal involvement can also be explored to consider the impact of the high expectations young people place on themselves and the likely impact of this self-imposed pressure.

The respondents also identified what they considered to be the negative consequences of viewing youth positively, namely a misrepresentation of young people in the community generally,

potentially ignoring or excluding disadvantaged young people. And the positive consequences of viewing youth negatively, which in some instances drove young people to work harder, or take action to address these perceptions. While many research projects have addressed the positive consequences of viewing youth positively and the negative consequences of viewing youth negatively, little research has offered this countered view.

Conclusion

Positive youth participation supports young people as the leaders of the next generation, and must be facilitated in thoughtful and meaningful ways to ensure its success. Young people need and appreciate adults who support their participation through behind-the-scenes support and encouragement, which does not take over or lead processes. Young people must be able to contribute to the design and development of youth centric participation processes through regular reviews and evaluations. And finally adults must view youth positively as their perception of adolescence affects the success of young people's participation.

This research identified key facilitators and barriers for young people's participation in civic activities. Acting on these findings will continue to support the young people's development and ensure the success of their participation in civic activities. This research has opened up opportunities for further research in this area, using participatory action research approaches, to ensure young people are engaged at all stages of the research, design through to dissemination of the findings. The respondents in this research were incredibly passionate about their role in civic activities and will no doubt become successful leaders of future generations.

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Appendixes

Appendix A - Potential Contact List

Secondary Schools including:

Any school with students above Year 12 who have an elected Student Representative for the Board of Trustees

- [redacted]

Chair – Wellington and Wairarapa Region

New Zealand Schools Trustees Association

[redacted]

District and City Council youth representatives including:

- Youth Voice – Horowhenua Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Horowhenua District Council

[redacted]

- Kapiti Coast Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Kapiti Coast District Council

[redacted]

- Porirua Youth Advisory Group

[redacted]

Chief Executive Porirua City Council

[redacted]

- Wairarapa Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Officer – Masterton District Council

[redacted]

- Wellington Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Officer Wellington City Council

[redacted]

- Youth Infusion Hutt Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Hutt City Council

[redacted]

- Palmerston North Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Palmerston North City Council

[redacted]

National organisations including:

- Ministry of Youth Development National Youth Advisory Group

[redacted]

Chief Executive Ministry of Social Development

[redacted]

- The Office of the Children's Commissioner's Young People's Advisory Group

[redacted]

Children's Commissioner

[redacted]

- Save the Children's Child and Youth Council

[redacted]

Chief Executive Save the Children New Zealand

[redacted]

- UNICEF's Youth Ambassadors

[redacted]

Chair of the Board UNICEF New Zealand

[redacted]

- UN+Youth Regional Council

[redacted]

National Executive UN+Youth

[redacted]

Appendix B – Initial Letter to Organisations

{Print on Massey University letterhead}

{Name of Service / Agency}

{Address}

{Date}

Tena koe {name of contact person}

My name is Zoey Henley (nee Caldwell) and I am a Master of Social Work student. As part of my studies I am undertaking a small scale research project as part fulfilment of my degree.

I believe that young people, who are supported to participate, develop skills that enable them to participate in social and civil activities later in life. Therefore, this research aims to gather the views of young people, on what the facilitators or barriers are for youth participation in civic activities. This research is not intended as a review of what your organisation does or does not do and your agency will not be named in the outcomes of this research. Instead the focus will be on the views of young people when participating in organisational and strategic decision-making.

You have been approached as an organisation that has either a youth advisory group, a youth council or youth representatives. This initial contact is to see if you are happy to pass on details of my research to the young people involved in your organisation.

I hope to speak with 4-6 young people to undertake in-depth interviews of their views of participating in civic activities, provided they meet the following criteria.

- They are a current member of an advisory group; youth council or board representative;
- They are aged between 16 and 24 years of age;
- They live in the Lower North Island; and
- They are able to participate in a face to face interview conducted in English.

I would appreciate an indication of whether you would be happy to pass on the details of my research to young people by {date}. If you are happy to do so I will send you a cover letter and information sheet for potential participants, where they can make contact with me directly.

If you have any questions you can contact me at:

[redacted]

Ph: [redacted]

Alternatively you can contact one of my supervisors:

Dr Michael Dale

[redacted]

Ph: [redacted] ext: [redacted]

or Dr Nicky Stanley-Clarke

[redacted]

Ph: [redacted] ext: [redacted]

Thank you for your assistance

Nāku noa

Zoey Henley

Appendix C – Thank-you Letter

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

{Name of Service / Agency}
{Address}

{Date}

Tena koe {name of contact person}

Thank you for responding to my request to act as an intermediary for the recruitment of participants for my research project as part fulfilment of my Masters in Social Work degree.

Attached is an information sheet for you to pass to participants. If they are interested in participating I would ask they contact me directly.

Nga mihi, Zoey

Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet

Speaking up and being heard: An analysis of young people's participation in civic activities.

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher(s) Introduction

My name is Zoey Henley (nee Caldwell) and I am a Master of Social Work student undertaking a small scale research study as part of the requirements for this degree. I am a qualified social worker who has spent the majority of her career working with adolescents. During this time I have become increasingly interested in the part that young people play to support strategic and civic activities.

Project Description and Invitation

This piece of research investigates young people's views of the facilitators and barriers to participation in civic activities. This is not intended as a review of what works merely an exploration of what young people think and as such their comments will not be linked to any particular organisation.

There is no obligation to participate in this research and your contribution will be presented anonymously. While absolute confidentiality cannot guaranteed, all available steps will be taken to ensure your confidentiality. This includes not informing the organisation that helped recruit you of your participation in the research and using pseudonyms to report your views in the research.

Participant Identification and Recruitment

Organisations that actively engage with young people, either as part of a youth advisory group; a youth council; or youth representative on a board have been approached as a vehicle for participant recruitment.

In order to participate in this research you must be a current member of an advisory group, youth council, or board representative; aged between 16 and 24 years of age; live in the Lower North Island; and be able to participate in a face to face interview conducted in English.

Project Procedures

Participants will be accepted on a first come first served basis assuming they fit the above criteria. I will travel to meet the participant at a mutually agreed time and place. It is expected the interview will take between 60-90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. All participants will be able to review the transcript approximately one month following the interview and correct any inaccuracies.

Anyone who participates in this research will have the right to:

- withdraw from the study (up until the approval of the transcripts);

- decline to answer any particular question;
- ask any questions about the study at any time;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- provide information on the understanding that your name nor the name of the organisation you are connected with, will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded; and
- bring a support person with you to the interview, if you chose.

Data Management

The data collected for this research will be used for the purposes of this study and any subsequent papers written as a result. All transcripts will be kept in password protected files and deleted after use.

Project Contacts

If you wish to participate (or if you have further questions) please contact me at:
Zoey Henley
[redacted]
Ph: [redacted]

Alternatively you can contact one of my supervisors:
Dr Michael Dale
[redacted]
Ph: [redacted] ext: [redacted]

or Dr Nicky Stanley-Clarke
[redacted]
Ph: [redacted] ext: [redacted]

Committee Approval Statement

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 14/46. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Prof John O'Neill, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone [redacted] x [redacted], email [redacted]

Appendix E – Participant Consent Form

Speaking up and being heard: An analysis of young people's participation in civic activities.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....

Appendix F – Interview Schedule

Questions for semi-structured interviews

Introduction:

Whakawhānaungatanga - Brief introduction to me and the research

Go through consent form and answer any questions and then gain written consent.

1. How long have you been part of this organisation?
2. How did you become part of this organisation? Or alternatively how were you chosen for this position?
3. What do you understand is the purpose of this organisation and how and when are young people involved?

Are there different techniques that organisations use to support young people to participate in strategic and civic activities in New Zealand?

1. What ways can young people participate in this organisation?
2. Do the staff, or young people, get any specific training to participate in this organisation?
3. What are some of the things that adults do to support your participation?
4. What participation techniques do they use (can offer examples such as surveys, consultations, forums, presentations, oral or written submissions etc.)?
5. What are the things this organisation does well to make young people's participation successful?
6. What things could this organisation do better to ensure that young people can participate within it?
7. How often does the organisation ask you about what you find helpful when you are participating or engaging with them?

Do young people feel youth participation influences how the organisation makes strategic and organisational decisions?

1. In what way is the organisation successful in engaging with young people?

2. What are the best things about young people's participation in this organisation (outcomes for the organisation / young people / community / sector)?
3. What are the benefits to young people by participating in this organisation?
4. What are the benefits to adults within this organisation to have young people's involvement?

Do adult's attitudes influence how they support young people to participate in strategic and civic activities in New Zealand?

1. How do you think young people are viewed within this organisation?
2. Why are young people involved in this organisation?
3. Do young people and adults have different roles to play in this organisation; if so why; and are these differences appropriate?
4. Why would a young person want to be involved in this organisation?
5. Would you encourage other young people to be part of this organisation?

Does the organisation comply with legislation and international conventions when supporting young people participate in strategic and civic activities?

1. Does this organisation have any policies or procedural manuals that support young people's participation?
2. Why do you think this organisation has chosen to support young people to participate?

General comments

1. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Note: General prompts to include: difference based on age, gender, location, socio-economic status

Conclusion

1. Thank the young person for their time
2. Explain what will happen next
3. Explain how the results will be disseminated to them

Appendix G – Human Ethics Application

Human Ethics Application

FOR APPROVAL OF PROPOSED RESEARCH/TEACHING/EVALUATION

INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

(All applications are to be typed and presented using language that is free from jargon and comprehensible to lay people)

SECTION A

1 Project Title Speaking up and being heard: An analysis of young people's participation in civic activities

Projected start date for data collection September 2014 **Projected end date** December 2014

(In no case will approval be given if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun).

2 Applicant Details *(Select the appropriate box and complete details)*

ACADEMIC STAFF APPLICATION (excluding staff who are also students)

Full Name of Staff Applicant/s

School/Department/Institute

Campus *(mark one only)* **Albany** ☐ **Palmerston North** ☐ **Wellington** ☐

Telephone **Email Address**

STUDENT APPLICATION

Full Name of Student Applicant Zoey Allen Caldwell Henley

Employer (if applicable) Department of Corrections

Telephone [redacted] **Email Address** [redacted]

Postal Address [redacted]

Full Name of Supervisor(s) Dr Michael Dale and Dr Nicky Stanley-Clarke

School/Department/Institute School of Health and Social Sciences

Campus *(mark one only)* **Albany** ☐ **Palmerston North** ✓ **Wellington** ☐

Telephone **PH:** [redacted] **ext:** [redacted] **PH:** [redacted] **Ext:** [redacted] **Email Address** [redacted]

GENERAL STAFF APPLICATION

Full Name of Applicant						
Section						
Campus *(mark one only)*	**Albany**		**Palmerston North**		**Wellington**	
Telephone		**Email Address**				
Full Name of Line Manager						
Section						
Telephone		**Email Address**				

3 Type of Project *(provide detail as appropriate)*

Staff Research/Evaluation:		**Student Research:**		**If other, please specify:**
Academic Staff		**Specify Qualification**	✓	**Master of Social Work**
General Staff		**Specify Credit Value of Research**	✓	**120 credits**
Evaluation		**(e.g. 30, 60, 90, 120, 240, 360)**		

4 Summary of Project

Please outline in no more than 200 words in lay language why you have chosen this project, what you intend to do and the methods you will use.

(Note: All the information provided in the application is potentially available if a request is made under the Official Information Act. In the event that a request is made, the University, in the first instance, would endeavour to satisfy that request by providing this summary. Please ensure the language used is comprehensible to all.)

The central premise of this research is that supporting young people to participate is an important step in developing the next generation's leaders. Getting participation right is important because poor participatory mechanisms become effective in training young people to become non-participants and therefore reinforce negative stereotypes and representations of adolescence (Matthews et al., 1999).

This research will look at what support civic and community organisations offer to enable young people to participate in strategic and civic activities. This research will seek the views of young people to answer this question, by investigating what young people find helpful and what they do not.

The participants in this research will be young people that have involvement with an organisation that routinely works with this section of society (such as Youth Councils, Advisory Boards, Advocacy Organisations, or School and Trustee Board members). The research will be a qualitative piece of work that uses on four to six semi-structured interviews with young people asking how organisations support them to participate in decision-making. Participation theories developed by Arnstein, Hart, Treseder, Shier and Kirby will be used as analytical frameworks to discuss the level of participation (Barber, 2009).

5 **List the Attachments to your Application**, e.g. Completed "Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure" (compulsory), Information Sheet/s *(indicate how many*), Translated copies of Information Sheet/s, Consent Form/s *(indicate of how many)*, Translated copies of Consent Form/s, Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement, Confidentiality Agreement *(for persons other than the researcher / participants who have access to project data)*, Authority for Release of Tape Transcripts, Advertisement, Health Checklist, Questionnaire, Interview Schedule, Evidence of Consultation, Letter requesting access to an institution, Letter requesting approval for use of database, Other *(please specify)*.

- Potential contact list (Appendix A)
- Initial letter to potential organisations and participants (Appendix B)
- Cover letter (Appendix C)
- Information sheet (Appendix D)
- Participant consent form (Appendix E)
- Interview schedule (Appendix F)
- Authority to release transcripts (Appendix G)

Applications that are incomplete or lacking the appropriate signatures will not be processed. This will mean delays for the project.

Please refer to the Human Ethics website (http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz) for details of where to submit your application and the number of copies required.

SECTION B: PROJECT INFORMATION

General

6	**I/We wish the protocol to be heard in a closed meeting (Part II).** *(If yes, state the reason in a covering letter.)*	**Yes**		**No**	✓
7	**Does this project have any links to previously submitted MUHEC or HDEC application(s)?** **If yes, list the MUHEC or HDEC application number/s (if assigned) and relationship/s.**	**Yes**		**No**	✓
8	**Is approval from other Ethics Committees being sought for the project?** **If yes, list the other Ethics Committees.**	**Yes**		**No**	✓
9	**For staff research, is the applicant the only researcher?** **If no, list the names and addresses of all members of the research team.**	**Yes**		**No**	

Project Details

10 State concisely the aims of the project.

The aim of this research will be to develop a better understanding of what young people see as the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in the agency's strategic decision-making; by gathering their views.

11 Give a brief background to the project to place it in perspective and to allow the project's significance to be assessed. *(No more than 200 words in lay language)*

For the past four years the researcher worked in an advocacy organisation, the Office of the Children's Commissioner, where the views of children and young people were sought on a regular basis to inform assessments of statutory services and provide policy advice. This engagement added the voice of the young person to bring to life advice provided to others. As a result of these experiences, it was clear that organisations who worked collaboratively with children and young people developed better service delivery, though listening and responding to what children and young people want and need.

Through this research a greater understanding of what young people see as the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in the agency's strategic decision-making will be developed by gathering their views.

The research will involve 4 – 6 qualitative interviews with young people. The young people will be recruited from separate organisations where they have participated in civic activities. Participation theories including the culture of participation (Kirby et al., 2003) will form the framework for data analysis.

12 Outline the research procedures to be used, including approach/procedures for collecting data. Use a flow chart if necessary.

1. The researcher will make initial contact with a range of civic and community organisations (appendix A) to determine if they would be interested in passing on the research details to participants (Appendix B).
2. Interested agencies will then be sent a cover letter (Appendix C) and information sheet for interested participants (Appendix D).
3. Interested young people will be asked to make direct contact with the researcher.
4. The student researcher will then agree a convenient time and location with the young person to conduct the interview.
5. Participants' views will be gathered during a semi-structured interview.
6. If approval is given these interviews will be recorded via a digitally recorded.
7. Transcripts will then be transcribed.
8. Participants will have an opportunity to confirm the contents of the transcription and confirm release of their interview.
9. The results will then be analysed using qualitative research methods.

13 Where will the project be conducted? Include information about the physical location/setting.

The interviews will be conducted at a time and location convenient to the participants. The Lower North Island of New Zealand (Manawatu – Wellington) will provide a catchment area for this project.

14 If the study is based overseas:

i) Specify which countries are involved;

ii) Outline how overseas country requirements (if any) have been complied with;

iii) Have the University's Policy & Procedures for Course Related Student Travel Overseas been met? *(Note: Overseas travel undertaken by students – refer to item 5.10 in the document "Additional Information" on the MUHEC website.)*

N/A

15 Describe the experience of the researcher and/or supervisor to undertake this type of project?

The researcher has 16 years' experience as a social worker and has undertaken several projects where the views of children and young people have been gathered through a series of consultations designed to inform policy decision-making. This experience has equipped the researcher with the necessary skills to develop rapport with young people, work within ethical and safe guidelines and practice in a non-judgemental and open manner.

This will be research will be undertaken as part of post-graduate studies for a Master of Social Work. The researcher will be supported by two experienced Supervisors nominated by Massey University.

16 Describe the process that has been used to discuss and analyse the ethical issues present in this project.

Ethical issues have been discussed with peers, Massey staff and supervisors at a Massey student contact course. Ethical issues have been discussed as part of thesis supervision.

Participants

17 Describe the intended participants.

Young people between the ages of 16-24 years.

18 How many participants will be involved?

4-6 young people

What is the reason for selecting this number?

(Where relevant, attach a copy of the Statistical Justification to the application form)

Time and resource constraints limit the study to this number. This number is considered adequate to provide for the depth of data collection in line with a qualitative approach.

19 Describe how potential participants will be identified and recruited?

Initial contact will be made via the Chief Executive, Chair of the Board or Manager of civic and community agencies that seek the views of young people either through representation on boards, youth councils or advisory groups. The initial approach will be to inform them of the research and seek initial confirmation of their willingness to pass on the details of the research to the group of young people they work with.

Once an organisation has indicated they would be interested in assisting recruitment of participants, they will be sent a cover letter and information sheet for them to pass onto the young people they work with.

Interested young people will be asked to self-select participation in the research project by making contact with the researcher.

The researcher will then make contact with the young person to arrange a convenient location and time to conduct the interview.

20 Does the project involve recruitment through advertising? **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

(If yes, attach a copy of the advertisement to the application form)

Cover letter and information sheet for young people attached.

21 Does the project require permission of an organisation (e.g. an educational institution, an academic unit of Massey University or a business) to access participants or information? **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

If yes: i) list the organisation(s)

ii) attach a copy of the draft request letter(s) to the application form, e.g. letter to Board of Trustees, PVC, HoD/I/S, CEO etc (include this in your list of attachments (Q5).

(Note that some educational institutions may require the researcher to submit a Police Security Clearance.)

Potential contact list is attached along with a copy of the initial contact letter to these organisations (Appendix A & B).

22 Who will make the initial approach to potential participants?

The researcher will make initial contact via agencies through an introductory letter. Once organisations have shown an interest in helping to recruit participants for this research, they will be sent a cover letter and information sheet that can be distributed to potential participants (Appendix C & D).

23 Describe criteria (if used) to select participants from the pool of potential participants.

Participants will be accepted on a first come first served basis, the first 4-6 participants who meet the following inclusion criteria will be used: must be aged between 16-24 years; live in the Lower North Island; be able to participate in a face-to-face interview conducted in English; and be a member of a board, panel or advisory group that participates in agency decision-making.

24 How much time will participants have to give to the project?

Participants will be expected to participate in up to two hours of activities made up of the following. Participants will partake in an initial introduction session where they will be given a chance to ask questions and sign consent forms (Appendix E) this is expected to take approximately 15 minutes. Immediately following this they will participate in a semi-structured interview (Appendix F) which will take approximately 1 hour. Finally they will asked to review the transcript, correct any errors and sign a release form (Appendix G), this will take place approximately one month later once transcripts have been completed and is expected to take them approximately 30 minutes.

Data Collection

25 Does the project include the use of participant questionnaire/s? **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

(If yes, attach a copy of the Questionnaire/s to the application form and include this in your list of attachments (Q5))

If yes: i) indicate whether the participants will be anonymous (i.e. their identity unknown to the researcher). **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

ii) describe how the questionnaire will be distributed and collected.

(If distributing electronically through Massey IT, attach a copy of the draft request letter to the Director, Information Technology Services to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5) – refer to the policy on "Research Use of IT Infrastructure".)

26 Does the project involve observation of participants? If yes, please describe. **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

27 Does the project include the use of focus group/s? **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

(If yes, attach a copy of the Confidentiality Agreement for the focus group to the application form)

If yes, describe the location of the focus group and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer).*

28 Does the project include the use of participant interview/s? **Yes** [✓] **No** [ ]

(If yes, attach a copy of the Interview Questions/Schedule to the application form)

If yes, describe the location of the interview and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer)*

It is expected the information and interview will take between 60-90 minutes and will be conducted at a mutually agreed time and place, where the researcher will travel to a venue agreed to by the young person.

29	**Does the project involve sound recording?**	**Yes**	✓	**No**	
30	**Does the project involve image recording, e.g. photo or video?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

If yes, please describe. *(If agreement for recording is optional for participation, ensure there is explicit consent on the Consent Form)*

31	**If recording is used, will the record be transcribed?**	**Yes**	✓	**No**	

If yes, state who will do the transcribing.

The researcher will transcribe the interviews.

(If not the researcher, a Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement is required – attach a copy to the application form. Normally, transcripts of interviews should be provided to participants for editing, therefore an Authority For the Release of Tape Transcripts is required – attach a copy to the application form. However, if the researcher considers the right of the participant to edit is inappropriate, a justification should be provided below.)

32	**Does the project involve any other method of data collection not covered in Qs 25-31?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

If yes, describe the method used.

33	**Does the project require permission to access databases?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

(If yes, attach a copy of the draft request letter/s to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5). Note: If you wish to access the Massey University student database, written permission from Director, National Student Relations should be attached.)

34 Who will carry out the data collection?

The researcher.

SECTION C: BENEFITS / RISK OF HARM (Refer Code Section 3, Para 10)

35 What are the possible benefits (if any) of the project to individual participants, groups, communities and institutions?

The potential participants may find it an enriching and interesting experience to be part of a research project. It will provide a useful forum for them to reflect on their experience and have their views heard and acknowledged concerning the facilitators and barriers for youth participation in an organisation. This research will identify positive ways for organisations to support young people in civic activities or point to future research need to support this area of work, so the views of these young people will also benefit other young people.

36 **What discomfort (physical, psychological, social), incapacity or other risk of harm are individual participants likely to experience as a result of participation?**

The questions in this study are unlikely to cause any discomfort to the participants. However there may be some risk the young person feels there may be some discomfort arising from discussing an agency they work with, especially if they do not have a positive experience to report.

37 **Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q36.**

Young people's identity will be known only to the researcher and their names will not be identified in the study. The organisations they engage with will not be informed of youth participation nor will the agencies be identified in the research. This will be explained to the organisations prior to recruitment and to the participants so they know their views will be held confidentially.

The information sheet and consent form will inform the participants of their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any stage if they feel uncomfortable, without any consequence. The researcher will offer to stop the interview or allow for a break should the participants become distressed at any stage.

38 **What is the risk of harm (if any) of the project to the researcher?**

None is anticipated, however the researcher will take all reasonable precautions to ensure their physical safety. This includes taking a cell phone so someone can be contacted should they feel unsafe, letting someone know the research plans such as where the researcher is going and how long they intend to be there.

39 **Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q38.**

Anything that arises will be discussed in depth with the thesis supervisors.

40 **What discomfort (physical, psychological, social) incapacity or other risk of harm are groups/communities and institutions likely to experience as a result of this research?**

None is anticipated.

41 **Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q40.**

Anything that arises will be discussed with the thesis supervisors.

42 **Is ethnicity data being collected as part of the project?** **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

If yes, please describe how the data will be used.

(Note that harm can be done through an analysis based on insufficient sample or sub-set numbers).

Ethnicity data will be collected to present demographic information to describe the anonymised participants when reporting the findings.

43 **If participants are children/students in a pre-school/school/tertiary setting, describe the arrangements you will make for children/students who are present but not taking part in the research**.

(Note that no child/student should be disadvantaged through the research)

The interviews will be conducted individually and it is not intended that other students or young people will be present, unless requested by the participant as a support person.

SECTION D: INFORMED & VOLUNTARY CONSENT (Refer Code Section 3, Para 11)

44 **By whom and how, will information about the research be given to potential participants?**

The researcher will provide agencies with information sheets about the research to be given to potential participants. This provides information on the nature of the research, the confidential nature of youth participation and how the information they provide will be used.

45 **Will consent to participate be given in writing?** **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

(Attach copies of Consent Form/s to the application form)

If no, justify the use of oral consent.

46 **Will participants include persons under the age of 16?** **Yes** ☐ **No** ✓

If yes: **i)** **indicate the age group and competency for giving consent.**

ii) **indicate if the researcher will be obtaining the consent of parent(s)/caregiver(s).** **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

(Note that parental/caregiver consent for school-based research may be required by the school even when children are competent. Ensure Information Sheets and Consent Forms are in a style and language appropriate for the age group.)

47 **Will participants include persons whose capacity to give informed consent may be compromised?** **Yes** ☐ **No** ✓

If yes, describe the consent process you will use.

48 **Will the participants be proficient in English?** **Yes** ✓ **No** ☐

If no, all documentation for participants (Information Sheets/Consent Forms/Questionnaire etc) must be translated into the participants' first-language.

(Attach copies of the translated Information Sheet/Consent Form etc to the application form)

SECTION E: PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 12)

49 **Will any information be obtained from any source other than the participant?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, describe how and from whom.

50 **Will any information that identifies participants be given to any person outside the research team?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, indicate why and how.

51 **Will the participants be anonymous (i.e. their identity unknown to the researcher?)** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If no, explain how confidentiality of the participants' identities will be maintained in the treatment and use of the data.

As the research will be conducted via a face to face interview, their identity will be known to the researcher. However, while absolute confidentiality cannot guaranteed, all available steps will be taken to ensure their confidentiality. Including not informing the organisation that helped recruit them of youth participation in the research and using pseudonyms to report their views in the research.

52 **Will an institution (e.g. school) to which participants belong be named or be able to be identified?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, explain how you have made the institution aware of this?

53 **Outline how and where:**

i) the data will be stored, and

(Pay particular attention to identifiable data, e.g. tapes, videos and images)

Data will be stored in a password protected computer at the researcher's home.

ii) Consent Forms will be stored.

(Note that Consent Forms should be stored separately from data)

Consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home.

54 **i) Who will have access to the data/Consent Forms?**

The researcher and supervisors (if necessary).

ii) How will the data/Consent Forms be protected from unauthorised access?

Only the researcher has a key to the locked cabinet and will not disclose the computer file password to others.

55 **How long will the data from the study be kept, who will be responsible for its safe keeping and eventual disposal? (Note that health information relating to an identifiable individual must be retained for at least 10 years, or in the case of a child, 10 years from the age of 16).**

(For student research the Massey University HOD Institute/School/Section / Supervisor / or nominee should be responsible for the eventual disposal of data. Note that although destruction is the most common form of disposal, at times, transfer of data to an official archive may be appropriate. Refer to the Code, Section 4, Para 24.)

Once the project has been finalised and the final report graded, consent forms will be officially shredded and electronic files will be deleted from the researcher's computer.

SECTION F: DECEPTION (Refer Code Section 3, Para 13)

56	**Is deception involved at any stage of the project?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

If yes, justify its use and describe the debriefing procedures.

SECTION G: CONFLICT OF ROLE/INTEREST (Refer Code Section 3, Para 14)

57	**Is the project to be funded or supported in any way, e.g. supply of products for testing?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

If yes: **i)** **state the source of funding or support:**

- **Massey Academic Unit**
- **Massey University (e.g. MURF, SIF)**
- **External Organisation (provide name and detail of funding/support)**

ii) **does the source of the funding present any conflict of interest with regard to the research topic?**

iii) **identify any potential conflict of interest due to the source of funding and explain how this will be managed?**

58	**Does the researcher/s have a financial interest in the outcome of the project?**	**Yes**		**No**	✓

If yes, explain how the conflict of interest situation will be dealt with.

59 **Describe any professional or other relationship between the researcher and the participants? (e.g. employer, employee, work colleague, lecturer/student, practitioner/patient, researcher/family member). Indicate how any resulting conflict of role will be dealt with.**

None is anticipated; however any potential relationships will be discussed initially with the researcher's supervisors and the potential participant will be asked if they want to proceed in participating, confidentiality will be guaranteed and they will be given the choice to withdraw.

SECTION H: COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 23)

60	**Will any payments, koha or other form of compensation or acknowledgement be given to participants?**	**Yes**	✓	**No**	

If yes, describe what, how and why.

(Note that compensation (if provided) should be given to all participants and not constitute an inducement. Details of any compensation provided must be included in the Information Sheet.)

Participants will be given a small koha, such as a petrol voucher or movie ticket, to thank them for giving up their time to participate. This will be given following completion of the interview and will be unknown to the participants, so will not constitute an inducement to participate in the research.

SECTION I: TREATY OF WAITANGI (Refer Code Section 2)

61 **Are Maori the primary focus of the project?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes: Answer Q62 – 65

If no, outline: i) what Maori involvement there may be, and

A young Māori may offer to participate in this research.

ii) how this will be managed.

As a social worker, the researcher's practice is informed by bi-cultural competent practice framework. This means the researcher has a general knowledge of basic tikanga and kawa to ensure a culturally respectful space is provided in which to conduct the research, such as opening and closing with karakia and starting the interview with whakawhānaungatanga.

62 **Is the researcher competent in te reo Maori and tikanga Maori?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

If no, outline the processes in place for the provision of cultural advice.

63 **Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned and describe the consultation process.**

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form, e.g. a letter from an iwi authority)

64 **Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.**

65 **Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s consulted?**

SECTION J: CULTURAL ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 15)

66 **What ethnic or social group/s (other than Maori) does the project involve?**

This research is interested in the views of young people and so will be conducted solely with members of a youth social group.

67 **Are there any aspects of the project that might raise specific cultural issues?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, explain. Otherwise, proceed to Section K.

68 **Does the researcher speak the language of the target population?** **Yes** [✓] **No** [ ]

If no, specify how communication with participants will be managed.

69 **Describe the cultural competence of the researcher for carrying out the project.**

(Note that where the researcher is not a member of the cultural group being researched, a cultural advisor may be necessary)

The researcher is a qualified and registered social worker and as such subscribes to a bi-cultural code of ethics. The researcher has over ten years frontline social work experience working with people from the youth culture and will be sensitive to both cultural and ethnic needs of the intended participants.

70 **Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned.**

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form)

N/A

71 **Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.**

N/A

72 **Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s consulted.**

N/A

73 **If the research is to be conducted overseas, describe the arrangements you will make for local participants to express concerns regarding the research.**

N/A

SECTION K: SHARING RESEARCH FINDINGS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 26)

74 **Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with participants and disseminated in other forums, e.g. peer review, publications, and conferences.**

(Note that receipt of a summary is one of the participant rights)

Participants will review transcripts and will be provided with a summary of the research once it has been finalised. Abstracts may be submitted to journals for future publication following the finalisation of the thesis.

SECTION L: INVASIVE PROCEDURES/PHYSIOLOGICAL TESTS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 21)

75 **Does the project involve the collection of tissue, blood, other body fluids; physiological tests or the use of hazardous substances, procedures or equipment?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, are the procedures to be used governed by Standard Operating Procedure(s)? If so, please name the SOP(s). If not, identify the procedure(s) and describe how you will minimise the risks associated with the procedure(s)?

76 **Does the project involve the use of radiation (x-ray, CT scan or bone densitometry (DEXA))?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [✓]

If yes, has the Massey Licensee been contacted and consulted? **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

(A copy of the supporting documentation must be provided with the ethics application, i.e. relevant SOP, participant dose assessment calculation sheet and approval of the dose assessment from the relevant authority). NOTE: See "Additional Information for Researchers" (Item 4.2) document for further detail.

(If yes to Q75 and/or Q76, complete Section L; otherwise proceed to Section M)

77 **Describe the material to be taken and the method used to obtain it. Include information about the training of those taking the samples and the safety of all persons involved. If blood is taken, specify the volume and number of collections.**

78 **Will the material be stored?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

If yes, describe how, where and for how long.

79 **Describe how the material will be disposed of (either after the research is completed or at the end of the storage period).**

(Note the wishes of relevant cultural groups must be taken into account)

80 **Will material collected for another purpose (e.g. diagnostic use) be used?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

If yes, did the donors give permission for use of their samples in this project? **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]
(Attach evidence of this to the application form).

If no, describe how consent will be obtained. Where the samples have been anonymised and consent cannot be obtained, provide justification for the use of these samples.

81 **Will any samples be imported into New Zealand?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

If yes, provide evidence of permission of the donors for their material to be used in this research.

82 **Will any samples go out of New Zealand?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]

If yes, state where.

(Note this information must be included in the Information Sheet)

83 **Describe any physiological tests/procedures that will be used.**

84 **Will participants be given a health-screening test prior to participation?** *(If yes, attach a copy of the health checklist)* **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

Reminder: Attach the completed Screening Questionnaire and other attachments listed in Q5

SECTION M: DECLARATION *(Complete appropriate box)*

ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH
Declaration for Academic Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this research. The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Staff Applicant's Signature ..... Date: .....

STUDENT RESEARCH
Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student Applicant's Signature ..... Date: .....

Declaration for Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project. As supervisor of this research I will ensure the research is carried out according to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

Supervisor's Signature ..... Date: .....

Print Name .....

GENERAL STAFF RESEARCH/EVALUATIONS
Declaration for General Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Line Manager. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

General Staff Applicant's Signature ..... Date: .....

Declaration for Line Manager

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this application complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Line Manager's Signature ..... Date: .....

Print Name .....

TEACHING PROGRAMME
Declaration for Paper Controller

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the teaching programme as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this teaching programme. The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Paper Controller's Signature ..... Date: .....

Declaration for Head of Department/School/Institute

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this application complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Head of Dept/School/Inst Signature ..... Date: .....

Print Name .....

Appendix H – Authority to Release Transcripts

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]

[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

Speaking up and being heard: An analysis of young people's participation in civic activities.

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Full Name - printed .....