Effective Participation for Children and Young People in Council Decision-Making

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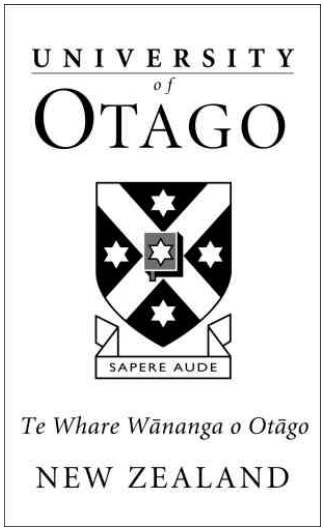

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Abstract

Local councils in New Zealand are entrusted with the task of making decisions for the communities they represent. Public participation provides an opportunity for groups and individuals that have a justifiable interest in a matter to have their thoughts and opinions legitimately considered by those making decisions. The extent to which decision makers are aware of the consequences of their decisions, is then dependent on the effectiveness of the participation undertaken by local councils. Public participation is now an obligation on behalf of local councils and is increasingly encapsulating the diversity of communities that exist in New Zealand. Despite these developments, local councils frequently fail to provide appropriate methods of participation for children and young people.

Children and young people value and make use of their surrounding environment in ways that differ from that of an adult. The inclusion of children and young people in planning processes provides an opportunity to establish this unique perspective and cater for it in the built environment. Despite the benefits of including of children and young people in council decision-making being well established in planning theory, methods of engagement continually fail to provide for their needs. The way in which children and young people interact with their environment plays a fundamental role in their development as citizens. It is therefore essential that children and young people be given the opportunity to fully participate in decisions that impact upon these interactions.

This research explored the extent to which children and young people are being appropriately engaged with in local council decision-making. In achieving this, three case study councils were critically examined on their approach to engaging with children and young people. Key informant interviews were carried out at each case

study council and at the Central North Island Office of the Ministry of Youth Development. Research also involved questionnaires given to each case study council's associated youth council members.

Four key findings were established through an analysis of data collected from key informant interviews and questionnaires. The first finding is that children and young people have the necessary capacity to contribute in a meaningful way to council decision-making. The second finding is that the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making remains inadequate, primarily due to challenges associated with council procedure and the frequent incorrect choice of method for engagement. The third finding is that planners believe their role in council does not require a direct relationship with children and young people. The fourth finding is that there exists a gap in what is being promoted in theory and what is being implemented in practice.

Four recommendations have been formulated on a basis of key findings. The first is to promote the use and implementation of strategies and staff dedicated to participation involving children and young people. The second recommends the modification of council procedure to better provide for the needs of children and young people. Recommendation three is to increase community awareness of the benefits associated with participation involving children and young people. The final recommendation is to encourage the use of diverse, flexible and targeted methods of participation when engaging with children and young people.

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List of Abbreviations

UNCROC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
RMA	Resource Management Act 1991
LGA	Local Government Act 2002
LTCCP	Long Term Council Community Plan
CBD	Central Business District
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
AEE	Assessment of Environmental Effects

1

Introduction

1.1 The research problem

Planning has evolved from notions of blueprints and master planning to a process of consensus building through communication and collaboration. Public participation has played a fundamental role in providing an opportunity for the general public to become involved in what Healey (1997:3) describes as "managing our co-existence in a shared space". The obligation for local councils to consult is engrained in council procedure, however, only recently have children and young people been considered as potential participants. Their capacity to offer a valuable and unique perspective on their surrounding environment is increasingly acknowledged by planning professionals. What this research seeks to explore is the extent to which children and young people are being appropriately engaged with, to allow for their participation in council decision-making.

1.1.1 Defining children and young people

This research focuses on the experiences of a group defined by their age. There exists however, different interpretations of what age range constitutes belonging to this group. Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), a 'child' is considered to be any individual under the age of eighteen. The Ministry of Youth Development defines 'youth' as people aged between twelve and twenty-four. For the purpose of this research, the term 'children' describes individuals aged between 5 and 12, while the term 'young people' is used to describe those aged twelve to twenty.

1.2 Public participation – an overview

Participation is a broad term that describes the process in which all those that have a justifiable interest in a matter are given the opportunity to express their opinion and have it legitimately considered by those making decisions (Sewell, 1977). In a planning context it is "about local communities being actively involved in the decisions that affect them" (Driskell, 2002:32). Participation is now considered an obligation on behalf of local councils, shifting the focus of planning and decision-making towards the public (Driskell, 2002).

Effective public participation allows for problems that arise from divergent thinking to be dealt with in the early stages of a project. Often this process of establishing people's perspectives on issues, results in benefits associated with combining expertise, increasing efficiency, expansion of opportunities, accessing limited resources and improving organisational legitimacy (Head, 2006). Cameron and Grant-Smith (2005) describe contemporary planning as increasingly recognising the diversity in which communities exist, motivating planners to reflect on their methods of approaching participation. It widely accepted in the planning profession that it is more efficient to establish and resolve potential problems during the appraisal of a proposal, than attempt to offer solutions to a community once an atmosphere of mistrust has been created. Despite this growing appreciation for participation and its potential to improve planning processes, authors such as Freeman et al., (2004), Matthews et al., (2001) and Sandercock (2000) argue the exclusion of minorities remains a primary concern for the planning profession.

1.2.1 Public participation in New Zealand

New Zealand has mirrored international trends regarding the significance of participation to planning processes in local councils. The obligation to consult with the public has increased, however, council procedure and methods of engagement still promote the exclusion of minorities. The Local Government act 2002 (LGA) and the

Resource Management Act 2001 (RMA), together with strategy and policy at national and local levels, provide a framework for participation with the public. The framework in New Zealand, similar to other developed nations, is criticised for its lack of provision for the inclusion of children and young people (C. Freeman, 2005).

Council decision making

Under the LGA local councils in New Zealand are expected to carry out full participatory processes for decisions that have the potential to impact upon community wellbeing. Decisions in local councils are made by councillors, elected by communities to represent their best interests. This system of decision-making relies on the participation process to educate councillors on the various issues and different perspectives that must be taken into account when making decisions. Children and young people make up a significant proportion of the communities councillors represent, however, the majority of this group are below the age of eighteen and therefore have no way of influencing the selection of their representative. Children and young people rely on the ability to inform those making decisions so equal consideration can be given to their wants and needs. The process for the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making however, is often marked by tokenism, meaning the perspective of children and young people often goes unheard.

1.3 Participation involving children and young people

Children and young people have been repeatedly excluded from decisions that have significant consequences for the way in which they interact with their environment. Those entrusted with the task of obtaining information from children and young people, are frequently not in a position to do so, or carry out participation on a highly tokenistic level (C. Freeman & Aitken-Rose, 2005). The way in which children and young people experience the environment has been viewed by professionals as irrelevant or of minimal importance compared to issues faced by the older demographic. In more recent times, planning professionals have begun to recognise and act on a growing

appreciation for the importance and the potential contribution of children and young people (Gollop & McCormack, 2002).

Although the planning profession is beginning to recognise children and young people as equal citizens, all too often planners misinterpret their responsibility. Planners have a tendency to focus only on providing facilities such as playgrounds and youth centers, ignoring the way in which children and young people interact with the wider environment. Frequently flawed attempts at gathering information relating to children and young people utilize parents as method of detailing the experiences of children and young people in a particular environment (Hoffmann-Ekstein et al., 2008). Where planners fail to "identify with children is how in every aspect of the city's urban design, built fabric, organisation of streets, or architectural forms will be experienced by children"(Lennard, 2000:98).

The inclusion of children and young people provides an insight into the built environment that cannot be expressed by adults. Children and young people interpret, evaluate and use their environment in diverse ways and therefore value it for different reasons. Adults are entrusted to "create community environments that promote health and safety, but children and youth are experts on what fosters or fractures their personal sense of well being" (Chawla, 2002:220). Without the inclusion of children and young people, experiences of restriction, fear and hostility experienced go unheard and environments are inevitably designed and built that alienate their demographic (Lennard, 2000).

The effective inclusion of children and young people within the participation process plays an important role, not only in the development of the city, but also in the development of characteristics that allow for their interaction with other age groups (Lennard, 2000). Environments where children and young people have contributed to design and function offer opportunities for social interaction. Interaction allows for children and young people to observe and learn social practice and become contributing members of their community, essentially providing them with a means to understand citizenship (Gollop & McCormack, 2002).

1.4 Rationale for Research

Children and young people are increasingly acknowledged as equal citizens within the planning profession, who have the right to voice their thoughts and opinions in the public forum. Flekkoy and Kaufman (1997) and MacNaughton et al., (2007) attribute this growing appreciation for the capacity of children and young people to participate, to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). Adopted in 1989, UNCROC saw the formalisation of rights for children and promoted the acceptance and provision of their unique needs. In 1993 New Zealand ratified the convention, motivating central and local government to implement policy, strategy and laws to protect and provide for children and young people.

Developments on the rights of children and young people have been accompanied by an increasingly complex commentary, highlighting various theoretical aspects of participation involving children and young people. From this commentary principles and models of participation with children and young people have been developed and now provide guidance for engagement. The value of participation with children and young people is better understood and best practice has been established, making it increasingly obvious that council practice lacks the necessary level of inclusiveness to channel the voice of children and young people in council decision-making.

In response to concerns over the exclusive nature of participation in New Zealand, highlighted in the first periodical report by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 1997), various documents were released such as the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa' (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002) and 'New Zealand's Agenda for Children' (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). Since their release a number of examples of effective participation with children and young people by planners in local councils have been documented. However, these examples are limited and more effort is required to ensure planning professionals are consistently implementing appropriate methods of engagement.

Children and young people are routinely faced with challenges they must overcome to be included and have their opinions legitimately considered in the decision-making process. These challenges stem from the failure of councils to recognise and act on those rights of children and young people stated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. To investigate methods of improving the effectiveness of participation with children and young people in council decision-making, three councils will be critiqued on their approach to participation with children and young people.

1.5 Research Aims, Questions and Objectives

The aim of this research was to evaluate the inclusion of children and young people within council decision-making in New Zealand. To address this aim the following research objectives have been formulated:

1. To review existing theoretical and empirical literature on the participation of children and young people.
2. To analyse key themes from this literature and use these to guide key informant interviews.
3. To establish the extent to which children and young people are included in council decision-making.
4. To establish the way in which children and young people are perceived in local councils and how this perspective affects the way in which local councils approach participation with children and young people.
5. To explore different methods of participation used to engage with children and young people and highlight their relevant success.
6. To determine the challenges planners encounter when engaging with children and young people, and highlight ways of overcoming these challenges to better provide for their participation in council decision-making.

1.6 Research design

The aim of this research is to explore the complexity associated with children and young people's participation in council-decision making, identifying the challenges planners face in implementing effective methods of engagement. It is imperative that research be guided by a methodology that supports the collection of qualitative data, allowing for key informants to freely express their thoughts and opinions. A critical approach to has been selected in order to evaluate the way in which planners approach participation with children and young people. Methods used to collect data included semi-structured interviews with key informants and questionnaires given to youth council members. A review of relevant theory associated with children and young peoples participation was also carried out as a method of secondary data collection.

1.7 Case study approach

Research was carried out at three case study councils; Hamilton City Council, Waipa District Council and Invercargill City Council. Each case study council engages with children and young people using a variety of methods, framing their approach to participation with different levels of policy and strategy. Research also involved key informants from the Ministry of Youth Development. The location of case study councils can be seen below in Figure 1.

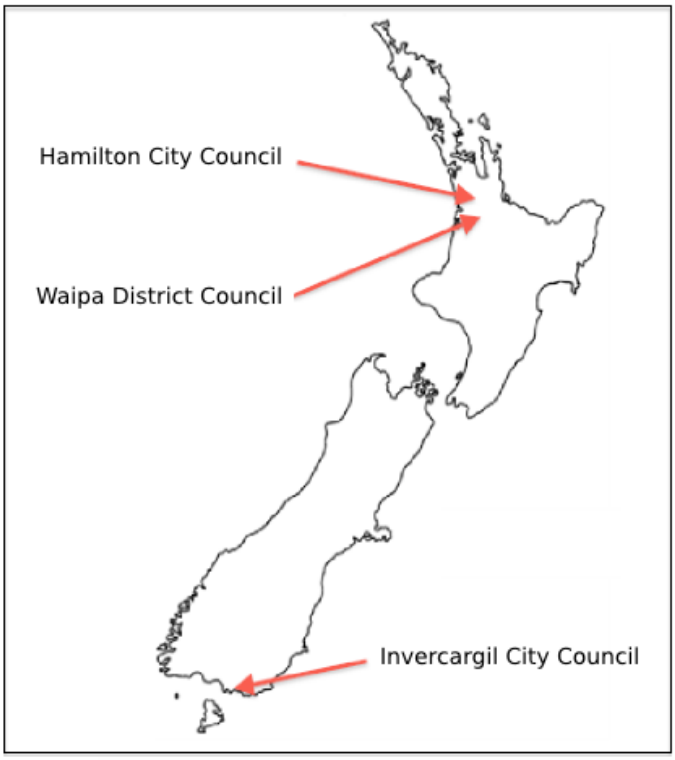

Figure 1: Map showing case study locations

1.8 Structure of Thesis

This thesis will be divided into eight chapters to best address the research objectives. The present chapter has introduced the research problem and the scope of the research, while briefly outlining the intended research design. Chapter Two will review the theoretical basis of participation, ultimately focusing on the involvement of children and young people within the participation process. An explanation of the methodology adopted to approach research and the methods used to gather data is provided in Chapter Three. Chapter Four will place the research within the context of New Zealand and specifically highlight its application within local councils, introducing documents produced by local councils that will be used as case studies. Chapters Five, Six and Seven include the results of data analysis, and their discussion. Recommendations and concluding comments will be made in Chapter Eight, where results will be summarised and expressed as a succinct explanation of what the research has achieved.

2

Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Chapter Two explores existing theory and practice relevant to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making, placing the research within an academic context. This exploration allows for the identification of key concepts and the relationship between theory and practice as it applies to the investigative component of this research. In addition, by reviewing existing practice and theory, significant themes can be identified and a discussion on the extent to which this research can support, challenge and extend these can be constructed in later chapters.

Section 2.2 explores the rights of children to participate in council decision-making, as stated in key documents produced at various international gatherings, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development. Theories of social justice, social exclusion and social capital will be detailed in Section 2.3. Participation as a process will be explored in Section 2.4. Section 2.5 will focus on participation involving children and young people. Section 2.6 helps to develop an understanding of what constitutes a child friendly environment. Different methods of involving children and young people in the participation process are explored in Section 2.7. This Chapter will finish with a conclusion summarising key themes identified in each section.

2.2 The right to participation for children and young people

2.2.1 Rationale for the rights of children and young people

It has been argued that the rights of children and young people are less important than those of adults (M. Freeman, 2007). Kleinig (1982) proposed that the rights of children and young people should be focused on values of love, friendship, compassion and altruism. By focusing on these values it was claimed relationships would be more conducive to happiness. O'Neill (1988) contends that to improve the lives of children and young people, we must focus on the obligations of parents, teachers and the wider community in relation to children and young people. The model O'Neil (1988) provides for childhood, frames children and young people as lacking in capacity to think and act on their own. Guggenheim (2005) does not contest establishing rights for children and young people, but believes that the rights of parents are superior to children and young people's. These arguments are supported by the myth that stress and pressure associated with making decisions would detract from the experience of childhood, a period in ones life that is suppose to be a time of innocence, freedom, adventure, play and joy (M. Freeman, 2007).

Arguments that seek to discount the value of formalised rights for children and young people are outnumbered by those in favour of the concept. Arguments proposed by Kleinig (1982), O'Neil (1988) and Guggenheim (2005) all place emphasis on the parent as an individual representing children and young people, ensuring their health, safety and enjoyment. When children and young people are "considered the property of parents or when they are only viewed as potential adults, they are not seen as individual human beings with their own very special but equal value as humans" (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997:23).

The acceptance of formalised human rights for children and young people has resulted from developments in legislation, a growing appreciation for child development and the general advancement of human rights (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997; Lyon, 2007). Those

writing in support of rights for children and young people base their arguments around recognising the unique way in which children and young people perceive an environment, the importance of childhood experiences for community wellbeing, and recognising the potential for meaningful participation with children and young people (MacNaughton, Hughes, & Smith, 2007).

2.2.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) represents a significant progression in the development of the rights of children and young people. In 1949 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights made no mention of children and young people. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959), along with various other documents of the same nature, included specific provision for children and young people. Finally, in 1989 UNCROC was established and now holds the 154 countries that ratified the convention accountable under international law should they fail to provide for children and young people (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

UNCROC seeks to protect the rights of children and young people in a broad range of areas including education, healthcare, safety, and of most relevance to this research, participation (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997; Lyon, 2007). A number of articles in UNCROC are of particular importance to planners. The following is a discussion of these.

Articles 1, 2 and 3 provide the foundation for the more targeted articles to follow. Article 1 clarifies the definition of a child, for the use of the convention, as any individual under the age of eighteen. Article 2 ensures that rights of children stated in the convention are not implemented with any type of discrimination. Article 3 makes the 'best interests of the child' a primary concern for private and governmental organisations. This however, has been a point of contention, as the article provides no direction on who determines a child's best interests (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

Articles 12 and 13 are of particular relevance to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. Article 12 provides the basis for the following articles relating to participation. Article 12 states:

> *1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
>
> *2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.*

Importantly, the article provides children and young people who are capable of forming their own opinion, the right to have this heard at any judicial hearing or administrative procedure. Article 13 expands on this stating:

> *1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."*

Article 13 then provides the right of freedom of speech and allows for information to be received and expressed in whatever method children and young people see fit (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997). Traditionally, participation has been carried out in an inherently formal way, excluding those that cannot understand or communicate information in this manner. Article 13 allows for children and young people to overcome this formality, and communicate their thoughts using a variety of methods (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

Although not to the extent of Articles 12 and 13, Articles 14, 15 and 16 also influence the potential for children and young people to become engaged in the participation

process. These articles ensure the rights of children with regard to freedom of thought, gathering in both formal and informal settings and their freedom from unlawful interference. In the context of participation, these rights translate to children and young people having the freedom to express whatever concern they may have, ensures that they will not be ejected from gatherings such as hearings or public meetings on a basis of age, and allows for the formation of their own opinions free from the influence of adults (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997).

Authors have questioned the extent to which UNCROC has influenced the inclusion of children and young people in public participation. King (1994) questioned the motivation for placing the rights of children and young people in the context of law. King saw the concept of rights as imposing statements and examined the perceived necessity for these statements to be transformed into rules and regulations. Freeman (2007: 17) views law as an "important symbol of legitimacy" with the power to change attitudes and behaviour. The ability to hold governments accountable under international law means those that ratify the convention are motivated to adhere to articles within it (Flekkoy & Kaufman, 1997). Freeman, Aitken-Rose and Johnston (2004) however, question the ability of central government to respond to articles in UNCROC, and for local government to react to any subsequent changes to policy (C. Freeman, Aitken Rose, & Johnston, 2004).

2.2.3 Agenda 21 and the rise of sustainable development

In 1992 Agenda 21 was adopted by over 178 countries at the United Nations conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro (United Nations, 2009). Agenda 21 was aimed at addressing concerns relating to increasing environmental degradation resulting from development and looks to ensure the future healthy state of the environment by focusing on the concept of sustainable development (United Nations, 2009). A major component of what Agenda 21 achieved was placing an emphasis on the importance of participation, making special mention of children and young people (Picolotti, 1999).

Within Section 3 of Agenda 21 titled 'Strengthening the Role of Major Groups', Chapter 25 outlines the role of children and young people within sustainable development. In advancing the role of children and young people in the protection of the environment and the promotion of economic and social development, Agenda 21 states that as a basis for action:

> *It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for their futures. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.*

Agenda 21 then recognises the significance of engaging children and young people in participation to ensure successful decision-making. By highlighting the unique way in which children and young people perceive their environment, Agenda 21 helped to legitimise children and young people as valuable and effective contributors to decision making (Renton & Butcher, 2010).

The concept of sustainable development provides the foundation on which matters in Agenda 21 are established. Sustainable development describes an approach to the use of resources that seeks to ensure future generations can meet their needs (Renton & Butcher, 2010). Agenda 21 acknowledges the fundamental role children and young people play in the promotion of sustainable development. It is these younger generations that stand to inherit the responsibility of caring for the environment, in addition to past environmental degradation (Picolotti, 1999). In Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 participation is outlined as a basis for addressing the needs of children in relation to sustainable development:

> *The specific interests of children need to be taken fully into account in the participatory process on environment and development in order to safeguard the future sustainability of any actions taken to improve the environment.*

Sustainable development as a concept continues to grow and diversify, making its definition progressively harder to establish. However, children and young people as future generations continue to play a role in whatever context it is applied (Renton & Butcher, 2010).

2.2.4 Recent global movements in the rights of Children and Young People

UNCROC and Agenda 21 played a pivotal role in bringing the rights of children and young people into the public arena (Lyon, 2007). Since UNCROC and Agenda 21 there have been a series of international conventions and documents aimed at further defining this framework, in an effort to encourage implementation at a community level (Driskell, 2002).

The Habitat II 'City Summit' in Istanbul 1996 emphasised the importance of engaging with children and young people in participation in an effort to better inform the decision making process. The international initiative 'Mayors, Defenders of Children' established by UNICEFF encourages city leaders to make the needs of children and young people a priority by increasing the inclusiveness of participation (Driskell, 2002). The 'Growing up in Cities' project funded by UNESCO has provided guidance for the production of strategy and policy documents aimed at children and young people. This guidance has proved valuable in countries both directly involved with the project and those that were not (Chawla, 2002; C. Freeman, et al., 2004).

Resources that target children and young people's participation provide useful guidance for local councils, however, it is up to central and local government to implement initiatives. This commitment to children and young people's participation is dependent on the availability of resources to invest into projects at a local level, most notably time and money (C. Freeman, et al., 2004). Local councils may accept the right for children and young people to participate, however, until they are viewed alongside issues of transport, health and housing, which dominate local council budgets, children and young people will continue to be overlooked (Hart, 1997).

2.3 Theories associated with the participation of children and young people

Theories of social capital, social justice and social exclusion provide the underlying concepts associated with the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. This section will explore the relevant theories and the various perspectives authors have documented regarding them.

2.3.1 Social Capital

The concept of social capital was introduced by Coleman (1988:95) and described as "introducing social structure into the rational action paradigm". In the context of participation, social capital describes the strength of social networks, levels of civic engagement and people's sense of belonging and identity within communities (Morrow, 2000). Social capital is essentially based on the concept that social networks have value, where the worth of an individual is related to the extent to which they are connected through formal and informal relationships with others (Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007).

In the past social capital has been used predominantly in the field of health related research. The application of the theory to participation targeting children and young people has been a relatively recent development. Previous work concerning social capital held children and young people as passive recipients of social capital. Rarely have they been viewed as contributing to a community in manner that would increase social capital (Morrow, 2000). Morrow (2000) highlights the difficultly in which the theory is applied to children and young people who identify with numerous social identities and experience the benefits of social capital in different ways.

As children and young people increasingly become recognised as equal citizens and contributing members of society, their role as contributors to social capital grows in significance. Participation is outlined by Hoffmann-Ekstein (2007) as a process to reduce the exclusion of children and young people and increase levels of social capital.

Dimensions of social capital include bonding, bridging and linking. Each dimension represents a different type of relationship and requires a varied approach to participation (Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007).

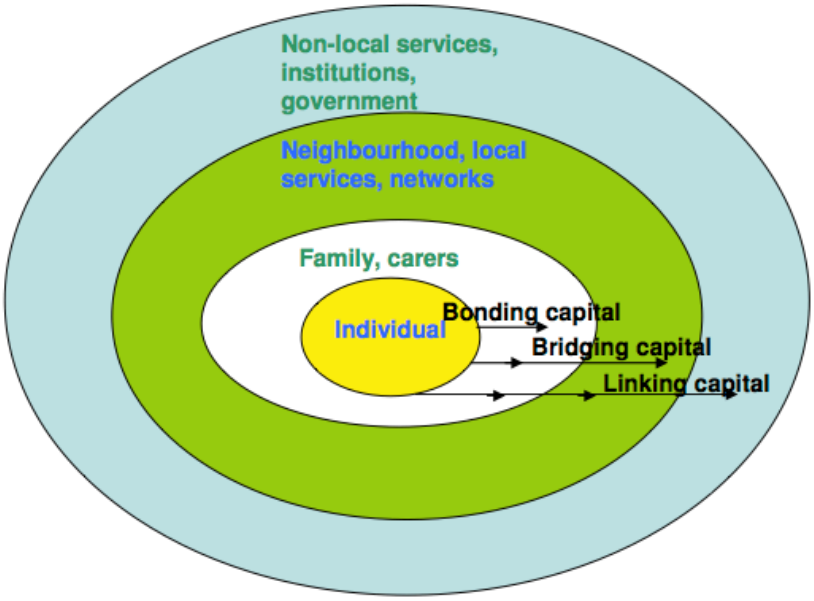

Figure 2: Dimensions of social capital in an ecological framework (Source: Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007)

Figure 2 displays the dimensions of social capital as they relate to different areas of local communities. Bonding relates to an individual's relationship with their family. Bridging extends to one's neighbourhood and local services, whilst linking goes further to involve those non-local services, institutions and government departments. Decision-making by local councils is focused around dimensions of bridging and linking, both of which children and young people have little input into. Barriers to participation significantly decrease the potential for children and young people to 'bridge' generational gaps and 'link' with influential people or decision makers (Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007). Until these barriers are overcome, social capital will continue to suffer from the exclusion of children and young people from public participation.

2.3.2 Social Justice

Social justice describes a "commitment to fairness in our dealings with each other in the major public aspects of our lives" (Weil, 2005:8). In the broadest sense social justice should promote a 'just society'. This concept is however, inherently hard to define, with one's perspective of a just society varying according to a large variety of factors (Weil, 2005). My exploration of social justice in the context of this research will therefore be limited to how the concept relates to public participation and the involvement of children and young people within this process.

In regard to participation, principles of social justice describe a process that is characterised by fairness, and where individuals are given equal opportunity to have their opinions heard and legitimately considered by those making decisions (Weil, 2005). This idea of equal opportunity is widely regarded as a key principle to effective participation (Hill, Davis, Prout, & Tisdall, 2004; Reeves, 2005). The difficulty to instill this principle of equality in the participation process is demonstrated by the challenges associated with engaging with children and young people.

Reisch (2005) explores the idea of 'radical community organising' as a method to achieve levels of equality that underlie the concept of social justice. Radical community organising is said to encompass "a dynamic set of theories, goals, ideologies, values, and practices that are focused on the attainment of social justice" (Reisch, 2005:287). Radical tactics and strategies are often associated with conflict as a method to enforce change. This type of action is out of the scope of children and young people. 'Radical' could however, encompass less conflict-orientated goals such as providing children with more power within their community or providing them with new avenues to participate. The notion of radical community organising in this sense, could act as a viable method to address the limited participation of children and young people in council decision-making.

Social justice plays a fundamental role within the concept of sustainable development that seeks to ensure future generations have the ability to meet their needs (Grower,

1995; Hampton, 1999). Grower (1995) summarises this with the statement, "we recognise, too, that the burdens and benefits of steps taken to exploit the environment, as well as to protect it from exploitation, should be distributed fairly between people who live at different times" (Grower, 1995:50). It is unreasonable to single out one generation that must sacrifice for the greater good of the environment and generations to follow. In regard to participation any decisions made in relation to sustainable development should surely involve those generations that must live with the consequences of those decisions (Grower, 1995). Social justice as a theory then demands that children and young people be given the right to contribute to the state of the environment as they move through adulthood.

2.3.3 Social Exclusion

A broad range of discourses underpin social exclusion as a theory. The diverse nature of thinking associated with social exclusion makes the theory difficult to define and is often criticised for being too vague (Davis, 2007). Social exclusion is generally thought of as marginalisation in relation to either poverty or a particular feature of a group or individual (Hill, et al., 2004). Like social justice, my exploration of social exclusion will be limited to its application to public participation and the level to which children and young people are excluded on a basis of their age.

Participation plays an important role in any discussion of social exclusion. In essence, "participation can be thought of as the opposite to the process of social exclusion" (Stevens, Bur, & Young, 1999:3). The connection between social exclusion and the participation of children and young people in council decision making has been widely documented. Where perspectives differ on the issue, is in how this exclusion is carried out and the consequences of it for children and young people.

Prout (2000) highlights the social exclusion of children and young people from public participation, but goes further to criticise the methods aimed at reducing it. Despite the rights of children and young people being increasingly recognised by local councils,

policy and practice has become concerned with their control, regulation and surveillance. Prout (2000) argues that by controlling children and young people it could be possible to influence the decisions they make as adults. This is perhaps a radical perspective of participation, however, manipulating how children and young people perceive their environment could easily influence decisions made later in life.

Like Prout (2000), Davis et al., (2004) recognises the fundamental role children and young people have come to play in policy that seeks to reduce social exclusion. Despite a growing concern for the exclusion of children and young people, initiatives and policies intended to address their inadequate participation are still designed by adults. Commonly these initiatives address issues of protection but ignore power relations, leaving children and young people no closer to establishing any real influence over decision makers and only reinforces their social exclusion (Hill, et al., 2004).

2.4 Participation

This section will explore public participation by investigating its history within the planning profession, the inclusion of key principles to determine its effectiveness and the development models that represent the process.

2.4.1 The growth of Public Participation – from blue prints to collaboration

The history of participation has been documented by a number of authors that conceptualise the process in different ways. Commonly these authors comment on the way in which planning has varied in response to the changing nature of environmental issues (Healey, 1997; Kolbe, 2009; Lane, 2005). Early planning visionaries were concerned almost entirely with the production of blue prints and master plans as a method of creating new settlement forms. This mode of thinking developed in response to industrialisation, urbanisation and reconstruction post World War Two (Lane, 2005). Modern day planning is increasingly focused on notions of sustainability and equality

(Amado, Santos, Moura, & Silva, 2010; Hampton, 1999). Sandercock (2000:1) describes this as a more "therapeutic approach to planning practice", involving increased levels of mediation and negotiation to resolve issues. One of the most significant developments in planning has been the introduction of public participation, leading to a growing expectation that planning should be carried out with increased levels of public input (Lane, 2005).

A significant shift in thinking from which public participation has since grown, is described by Sandercock (1998) as a move away from a rational comprehensive model of planning towards a model characterised by advocacy. The rational comprehensive model is characterised by decisions made on a basis of knowledge from professional expertise. However, communities became frustrated and disappointed with a system where their opinion was of little value (Sandercock, 1998). From this dissatisfaction, advocacy planning developed and planners were increasingly called upon to represent those who lacked the resources and skills to influence decisions of significance to them (Davidoff, 1965).

Since the introduction of advocacy planning, the perceived necessity for public participation has grown in strength as notions of communication and collaboration increasingly dominate the modern planning paradigm (Amado, et al., 2010; Hart, 1997; Sandercock, 2000). Healey (1997) promotes planning as a consensus building process, in which all stakeholders involved come to a agreement that best suits the needs of each individual and group. Planning theory associated with communication and collaboration has provided the basis from which public participation has been employed in practice (Healey, 1997).

2.4.2 Models of participation

The growth of public participation as a component of decision-making required the development of frameworks through which the process could be understood in practice. The first was Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation seen below in Figure 3.

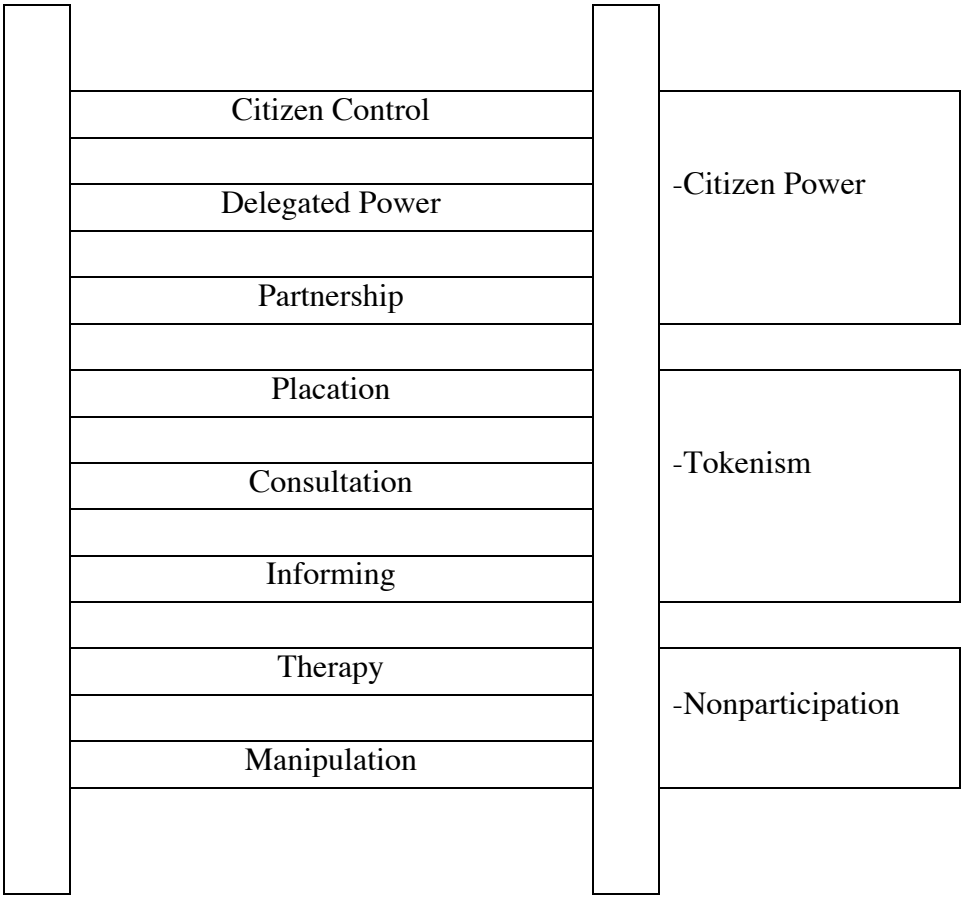

Figure 3: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Source: Adapted from Arnstein, 1969)

The ladder includes eight levels, each representing a level of participation. At the bottom of the ladder 'Manipulation' and 'Therapy' suggest levels of non-participation, where the public remains excluded. The middle of the ladder includes levels of 'Informing', 'Consultation' and 'Placation' that represent a limited level of public involvement. At these levels much of the power remains in the hands of the decision maker, meaning participation becomes token and ineffective. At the top of the ladder are levels of 'Partnership', 'Delegated Power' and 'Citizen Control' that suggest varying levels of citizen empowerment. Partnership provides citizens with the capacity to enter discussions with decision makers and have their opinions legitimately

considered. Delegated power and citizen control grant the public the authority to make their own decisions concerning their respective communities (Arnstein, 1969).

Numerous models of participation have been based on the principles of Arnstein's (1969) 'Ladder of Citizen Participation', and although created forty years ago, it is still used as a basis to implement public participation. The South Lanarkshire Council adapted Arnstein's (1969) 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' to produce the 'Wheel of Participation', essentially a more detailed version of the ladder (Davidson, 1998). The outer rim of the wheel is dissected into four sections including 'Information', 'Consultation', 'Participation' and 'Empowerment'. Within each section are three descriptions of varying degrees of involvement, as you move round the wheel in a clockwise direction the degree of involvement increases, starting with 'Minimal Communication' and ending with 'Entrusted Control' (The Mecury Centre, 2010). Like the ladder, the wheel aims to display the variation in which public participation can be carried out, but it goes further to suggest there are legitimate users at each level and that participation need not always be aimed at the highest level of public involvement (Davidson, 1998). The Wheel of Participation is shown below in Figure 4.

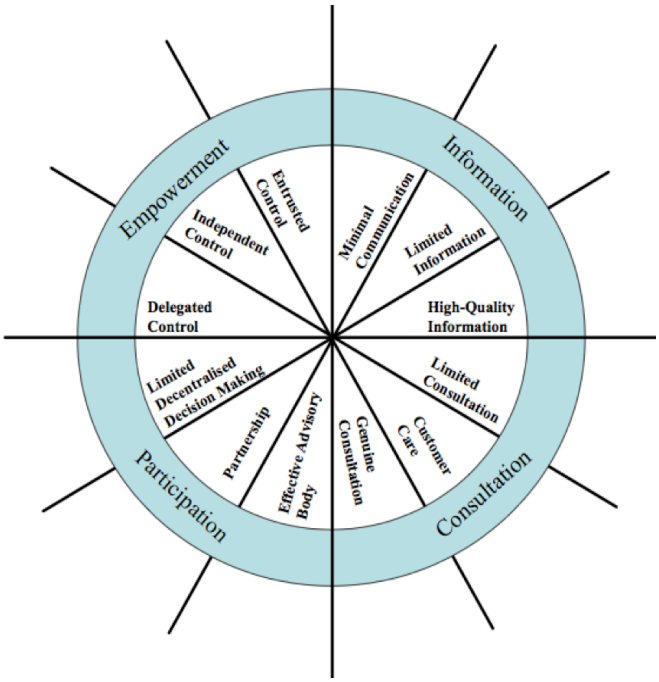

Figure 4: South Lanarkshire Council Wheel of Participation (Source: The Mercury Centre, 2010)

2.5 Children's participation

Children and young people, despite making up 34% of the worlds population, have traditionally been overlooked when decisions have been made concerning their environment (Hinton, 2008). A growing appreciation for public participation was not necessarily paired with inclusive methods of carrying it out (Roe, 2007). More recently the planning professional has responded to criticism of exclusive methods of participation and has taken notice of a growing body of knowledge concerning the value of increased participation involving children and young people in council decision-making (Hart, 1997).

2.5.1 Benefits of inclusion

Driskell (2002) provides an in-depth description of the benefits of inclusive participation involving children and young people for planners and policy makers, members of the community and children and young people themselves. These benefits as experienced by each group are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Benefits of participation with Children and Young people (Source: Adapted from Driskell, 2000)

Benefits for Young People	Benefits for other members of the community	Benefits for planners and policy makers
Participate in a new and exciting activity.	Interact with young people in positive, constructive ways, helping to overcome the misperceptions and mistrust that often exists between generations.	More fully understand the needs and issues of the communities they serve.
Look at and understand their local community and environment in new ways.	Understand how young people in their community view the world, their community and themselves.	Make better, more informed planning and development decisions.
Develop new skills and knowledge.	Identify ways in which the quality of life for local young people can be improved.	Educate community members on the inherent complexities and tradeoffs involved in policy and development decision-making.
Help create positive change in the local environment and other aspects of the community.	Build stronger sense of community and pride and place.	Implement at the local level the directives and spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Develop a sense of stewardship and civic responsibility.	Appreciate the ideas and contributions of young people.	Involve young people in efforts to implement sustainable development, there by helping to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda.
Develop confidence in their abilities to accomplish the goals they set.	Invest time and energy in the future of the community.	Create urban environments that are more child-friendly and humane.
Strengthen their self-esteem, identity and sense of pride.		
Learn about democracy and tolerance.		

2.5.2 Limitations to the participation of children and young people

Despite the benefits of participation involving children and young people being widely documented by respected academics, their absence from public participation is still common (Matthews, 2001). Factors limiting the inclusion of children and young people relate to attitudes held by practising professionals and their ingrained relationships throughout society, perceived immaturity, and the current planning structures that

influence and often dictate practice (C. Freeman, Nairn, & Sligo, 2003; Hinton, 2008; Lyon, 2007; Matthews, Limb, & Taylor, 1999). The following is a review of these factors.

Traditionally children and young people have been viewed by professionals associated with the decision making process as passive recipients of care (Hinton, 2008). Until recent developments in the rights of children and young people and the growth of theoretical discussion on inclusive participation, their place within society was held firmly within the family unit. Issues concerning children and young people were dealt with by adults and any attempt at consultation was limited to parental figures (Prout, 2000). Freeman, Nairn and Sligo (2003) argue that this perspective held by professionals is derived from a participation agenda that has little or no relevance to their educational background, and instead this agenda has been imposed upon them with a lack of guidance and training as to how to implement the process (C. Freeman, et al., 2003). Driskell (2002) outlines a series of misconceptions relating to the gap between adulthood and childhood that fuel the argument that children and young people should be excluded from the decision making process. The first of these suggests that because adults were once young, they are in a position to act on behalf of children and young people. A second misconception is that children and young people should be left to enjoy a time in their life when they are free from the responsibilities and stress associated with making decisions.

The variation in maturity of children and young people and how this affects their capacity to act as participants is an issue of great complexity. Those in opposition to the inclusion of children and young people in decision making claim that they have a tendency to change their minds often, are characteristically naive and inherently unreliable (Hinton, 2008). Hart (1992) contends that the effectiveness of participation is reliant on an understanding between adult facilitators and the children and young people involved. This relationship extends not only to children and young people understanding their role, but also to those adults involved understanding the potential capabilities and context of information presented by younger participants (Hinton, 2008). The belief that children and young people lack the maturity, competence,

technical background and ability to evaluate the long-term consequences to participate in decision-making is increasingly absent from modern public participation practice (Driskell, 2002; Hinton, 2008). Matthews (2001) argues that the extent to which contributions made by children and young people are valuable, is dependent on the methods employed by facilitators to engage with them, as opposed to their maturity and competence.

Local councils are generally characterised by a hierarchical structure in which a group of individuals are entrusted to use their better judgment to make decisions. This hierarchical structure has negative consequences for notions of equality and inclusiveness, fundamental to successful participation involving children and young people (C. Freeman, et al., 2003; Hampton, 1999). Essentially these power relations support the idea that children and young people exist at a position of lower significance to other contributors, a principle underlying their exclusion. Hampton (1999) argues that participation plays a key role in providing minority groups, such as children and young people, with the right to be held on an equal standing with groups that have traditionally played a dominant role in decision-making.

Local councils are to a large extent constrained by institutional systems that limit the degree to which professionals can commit to improving the inclusiveness of participation methods. Councils have established procedures through which participation is carried out, but often these procedures are outdated and promote the exclusion of children and young people. The ingrained nature of the procedures makes it difficult to encourage change to accommodate children and young people (C. Freeman, et al., 2003). Professionals are under pressure to complete tasks in small time frames and this often results in token attempts at participation in an effort to merely fulfill a requirement. Frequently children and young people are the first to be excluded from participation as a method to meet these deadlines. Professionals are also constrained by budgets and limited resources. Commitment by local councils to participation involving children and young people suffers from a lack of resources. Local councils are forced to balance their funds and resources between the numerous areas local councils govern. Frequently participation involving children and young

people is overlooked when in competition with areas such as infrastructure and tourism (C. Freeman, et al., 2003).

2.5.3 Principles

The principles that underlie successful participation involving children and young people have been discussed in some detail by authors and organisations. Failing to accord these principles adequate attention would inevitably result in the manipulation and deception of participants, regardless of the intended results (Hart, 1997). Head (2006) used the diagram below in Figure 5 to present those elements of effective collaboration that the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) consider to be of importance.

Figure 5: Elements of Effective Collaboration (Source: Head, 2006)

Before children and young people become actively involved in a project they must fully understand what they are contributing to, and must volunteer to participate (Steinitz, 2009). Along with an understanding of the project, facilitators must also explain the organisational structure, power relations and rules involved to the children and young people before information is sought (Head, 2006). A common point of failure in attempts at involving children and young people in public participation results from leaving their inclusion to the final stages of the process. This approach to involving children and young people will inevitably result in the process being marked by a high degree of tokenism. It is unlikely that children and young people will be fully involved throughout the process, instead, they may choose to participate in just one or two phases. Regardless, children and young people should be given equal opportunity to participate at whatever stage they wish (Hart, 1997).

2.5.4 Models for the participation of children and young people

A number of public participation models constructed have been tailored towards the needs of children and young people. Hart's 'Ladder of Children's Participation' has many similarities with Arnstein's (1969) 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'. Both include a scale of eight levels of involvement. Where the two models differ significantly is at levels six, seven and eight of the ladder. In Hart's (1997) model these levels are adapted to explicitly address the needs of children and young people. Harts (1997) 'Ladder of participation' can be seen below in Figure 6.

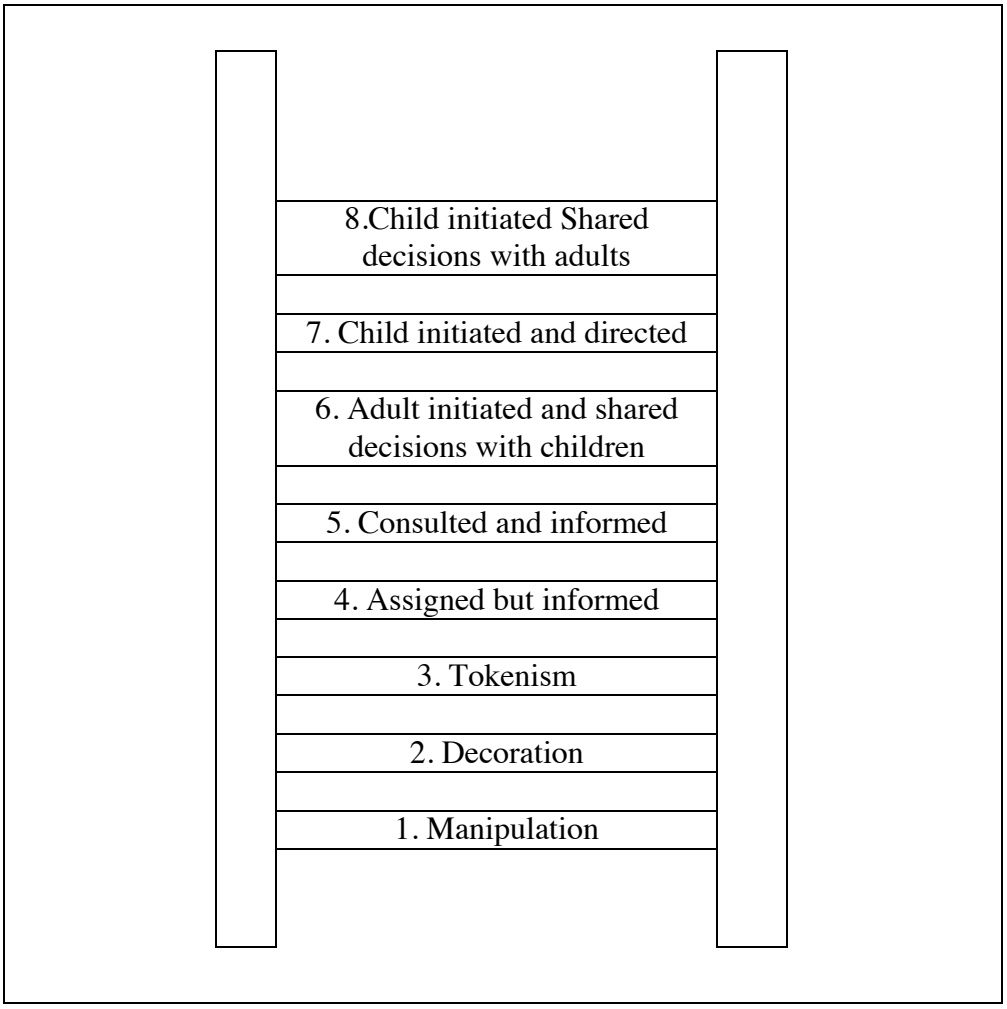

Figure 6: Hart's Ladder of Participation (Source: Adapted from Hart, 1997)

Hart's (1997) model is not intended to imply that children and young people should operate at the highest level of participation. Instead the ladder should be used as method of allowing children and young people to establish the level at which they would like to participate as they leave and re-enter at various phases of the decision-making process. Adults facilitating public participation must provide the flexibility required for children to select their preferred level of involvement. This flexibility should not be used as a method of avoiding the inclusion of children and young people, and at no point should the participation of children and young people be described by one of the bottom three layers of the ladder (Hart, 1997).

Shier (2001) constructed a second model in aid of increasing the participation of children and young people in decision-making. Titled 'Pathways to Participation' the model draws on principles of Hart's (1969) 'Ladder of Children's Participation'. The model however, takes a new approach and includes a method for participation facilitators to address their responsibility to include children and young people. The model works by providing a series of linked questions that establish a facilitator's position on one of five levels of participation. At each level three questions are used to define the facilitator's openings, opportunities and obligations in relation to the participation of children and young people. The model itself is seen below in Figure 7, displaying its five levels of participation and the questions relating to openings, opportunities and obligations at each level (Shier, 2001).

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for making decision-making	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4.Children are involved in decision-making processes.	Are you ready to let children join your decision making process?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decisions making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decisions making processes?
3. Children's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Does your decision making process enable you to taken children's views in to account?	Is it a policy requirement that's children's views must be given due weight in decisions making?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to.	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

Figure 7: Pathways to Participation (Source: Adapted from Shier, 2001)

In both Hart's and Shier's models the progression of children and young people to increasingly higher levels of involvement is dependent on adult support (A. B. Smith, 2002). Where Shier's model is of particular value is in allowing adults to verify their own motivations for involving children and young people in participation. The model provides a sense of clarity for participation facilitators, helping maintain honesty, a key component of participation involving children and young people (Sinclair, 2004).

Francis and Lorenzo (2002) produced a third model for the participation of children and young people. Their model still draws on principles from the work of Hart and Shier, but finds new direction through a historical approach to categorising attempts at

participation involving children and young people. The model identifies seven realms that represent a period in history in which planners and decision makers held varying perspectives of participation involving children and young people (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002). Francis and Lorenzo's (2002) 'Seven Realms of Children's Participation' can be seen below.

Realm of participation	Description of realm
Romantic	Where children and young people can define your own future and create their own environment without the assistance of adults. Described as a ideological in approach to planning.
Advocacy	Where planners act as advocates for children and young people. Lacks any attempt at consensus building with children and young people.
Needs	Where the needs of children and young people are addressed through research based methodology. Often overlooked the value of children and young people in creating sustainable environments.
Learning	Where participation occurs through education. Must occur alongside other realms of participation to be effective.
Rights	Where children are considered participants as part of their rights as citizens. Can result in the environmental needs of children being overlook and attempts at participation are often token.
Institutional	Where children and young people play an integrated role in the decision making process, but in a environment that is controlled by adults
Proactive	Where children and young people play a valuable role in decision-making, by combining research, participation and action to engage children and young people.

Figure 8: 'Seven Realms of Children's Participation' (Source: Adapted from Francis and Lorenzo's, 2002)

Francis and Lorenzo acknowledge the contribution of previous models and highlight their continued value to facilitators of participation involving children and young people. Where their model plays an important role, is in first recognising past approaches and then developing a more inclusive way to involve children and young people (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002).

2.6 Child friendly environments

The New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People defines a child friendly built environment as a space that "welcomes all children and young people and supports their needs. It respects their rights as citizens to access community services and facilities and to participate in community development processes." (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2009:8). The concept of child friendly cities grew in prominence after 'The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative' was released as part of the UN Conference on Human Settlement. The concept has been used by academics to link aspects of an environment that children and young people benefit from to planning and the associated decision making process (Nordstrom, 2010).

2.6.1 Why we need child friendly environments

Rapid urbanisation has forced an increasing level of competition for resources in the urban environment. Spaces in urban environments in which children and young people can roam freely are now rare and those in existence are often hard to access (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2009). The way in which children and young people interact with their surrounding environments has then been modified with significant consequences for their health, the development of citizenship and their spatial competence and confidence (Wilks, 2010).

2.6.2 How they improve a child's wellbeing

A child friendly environment promotes a positive sense of self, in which children and young people can feel confident and have that same feeling respected by their peers. The built environment contributes to this experience by offering an accessible, fun, welcoming and supportive space that offers emotional restoration and enjoyment (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2009)

Society has become increasingly obsessed with the notion of fear (Tranter & Sharpe, 2008). The freedom experienced by older generations in their youth is perceived as a comfort no longer granted to today's children and young people. Instead children and young people are commonly sheltered from the risks associated with leaving their secure environment (Bessell, 2007). The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2006) has outlined this sheltering as problematic, restricting the ability for children and young people to develop skills linked to decision making, as well as being detrimental to their own general welfare. An increased understanding of how children and young people develop has led to the promotion of safe risk taking (Woolcock, Gleeson, & Randolph, 2010). Child friendly environments play an important role in providing safe and secure environments in which this risk taking can take place (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2009). This simulated freedom allows children and young people to make decisions concerning a range of problems, which not only impacts positively upon their development but also their capacity to act as constructive participants in the decision making process (Wilks, 2010).

The participation of children and young people and the successful construction of child friendly environments are closely intertwined (Woolcock, et al., 2010). Child friendly environments encourage the growth of power and agency that enable children and young people to make changes to their surrounding environment. A child friendly environment not only provides a space for enjoyment but also ensures access to community services, which aid in the development of skills that facilitate children and young people to engage with their local community (NSW Commission for Children & Young People, 2009).

The increasingly popularity of child friendly environments has resulted in benefits that relate to more than simply the construction of built environments that welcome and support children and young people. Rather the processes associated with implementing child friendly environments have worked to modify perspectives of children and young people that in the past have limited the extent to which they have been engaged with. Bessel (2007) agues that the attitudes of adults regarding the sheltering of children and young people, provide one of the largest barriers to their effective participation in

council decision-making. Child friendly environments and the processes associated with their creation help break down the perspective of children and young people as subordinate to adults, encouraging respect and trust (Woolcock, et al., 2010).

2.7 Methods of involving children and young people

This section will focus on the different methods through which children and young people can be included in council decision-making. Despite an increased appreciation for the value of children and young people in the decision making process, the effectiveness of methods used to consult with them is still questioned by many (Inter-Agency Work Group on Children's Participation, 2007). There are numerous methods through which inclusive participation can be achieved, each with its associated advantages and disadvantages. This section will provide an explanation of key methods and the circumstances in which best results can be achieved.

2.7.1 Youth councils

Establishing a youth council has been a common response by local councils to the growing appreciation for children and young people as participants in the decision making process (Matthews, 2001). Youth councils generally describe "groups of young people who come together in committees to discuss issues relating to their communities" (Matthews, 2001:300). A youth council can take the form of a feeder organisation, a parallel body or a freestanding group. In form of a feeder organisation a youth council contributes to existing strategies in a type of partnership with the council. A youth council acting as a parallel body essentially acts as its own council, but carries out many of the same processes to the council with which it is associated. A freestanding group has no affiliation with a local council, meaning it is not influenced by council staff or procedure, however, this limits their access to resources and expertise (Matthews, 2001).

Youth councils have become the primary way of including children and young people in council decision-making. Matthews and Limb (2003) relate this growth in popularity to the perceived benefits of an ongoing relationship with youth, potential tangible benefits and the ease at which they can be established. Research as to the advantages and disadvantages associated with youth councils has concluded quite the opposite, and outlined numerous issues associated with their operation (Matthews, 2001; Matthews & Limb, 2003).

Youth councils are accused of being irrespective of the children and young people who they seek to represent. Youth councils often consist of leading students or individuals that form a close group of friends. The way in which members are chosen, although it may not be intentional, commonly results in the gathering of people that are aligned in their goals for their community or creates a situation in which outsiders are alienated (Matthews, 2001; Wyness, 2009).

The administration of youth councils is typically the responsibility of an adult employed by the associated council. There is potential for this adult to manipulate the youth councils operation, demeaning the sense of ownership and independence under which the council is intended to operate (Matthews, 2001). Youth councils take a top down approach to achieving the increased participation of children and young people. Members of the youth council are entrusted with the representation of all the children and young people in the council's boundaries. This top down approach is in opposition to what would be described as genuine engagement, where a more bottom up, grass roots approach to participation is promoted (Matthews & Limb, 2003; Matthews, et al., 1999).

Although limited, a number of examples exist of youth councils being used effectively to provide children and young people with the opportunity to participate in council decision-making. Keeley (2002) describes the development and operation of the Fermanagh Youth Council. Initially the youth council was perceived as ineffective, however, by learning from mistakes and perseverance the youth council became a "positive, secure and effective organisation" (Keeley, 2002:79). Authors such as

Wyness (2009) and Matthews and Limb (2003), who present little confidence in youth councils, accept that under the right conditions youth councils can provide effective participation for children and young people. These same authors however, maintain that never should youth councils be relied on as the sole method of participation with children and young people.

2.7.2 Drawing

Requiring children and young people to draw pictures of their surrounding environment provides an opportunity for adults to engage in meaningful discussions, where the picture determines the line of questioning as opposed to bias being introduced by an adult (Driskell, 2002). The picture also allows children and young people to express what is important to them in a creative and enjoyable way (UNICEF, 1993). Obtaining useful information through drawing as a method of participation for children and young people is not without its challenges. Drawing is an activity overtly familiar to children and young people, and commonly their drawings take the form of stereotypical images learned over time. Children and young people are therefore open to their own bias, in which they choose to express their ideas using only images that they have trained themselves to draw. This bias introduces the potential for inaccuracies and tokenism to impact upon the usefulness of any data collected (Hart, 1997). Used in absence of other methods of consultation, drawing becomes a relatively ineffective tool in increasing the participation of children and young people. When drawing is used alongside other methods of consultation such as field trips and mapping, it becomes an important step in allowing children and young people to influence the decision-making process (Driskell, 2002; Hart, 1997).

2.7.3 Interviews

Interviews provide a systematic approach to gathering information from children and young people and if used appropriately can be highly effective (Driskell, 2002). Successful interviews with children and young people although hard to achieve, allows

information to be collected directly and can potentially target key issues and questions. It is important that participants feel comfortable enough to express whatever views they might have and be free from any discrimination (Hart, 1997). Facilitators can employ a number of techniques to make children and young people feel more confident during the interview process. A facilitator may allow children to construct the questions to be asked, provide potential participants with opportunities to practice being interviewed or allow the presence of other younger individuals to take notes and even ask the questions (Hart, 1997).

2.7.4 Focus groups

In the past focus groups have been used primarily in relation to market research, however, they are increasingly becoming employed as a method of participation (Hoope, Wells, Morrrison, Gilmore, & Wilsdon, 1995). Driskell (2002:148) describes focus groups as "a particular kind of small group discussion involving a select group of individuals in a facilitated discussion about a topic or a set of topics established either by the facilitator or by the group members themselves". Focus groups involving children and young people generally involve a facilitator to guide proceedings and are often are used to introduce group activities, as opposed to relying on group discussion to draw conclusions from.

Focus groups can be an effective method of identifying key issues in the early stages of a project and in the later stages to gauge success (Driskell, 2002; Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002). Difficulties associated with group dynamics commonly result in focus groups being characterised by inaccuracies. When preparing for a focus group, consideration must be given to the role of the facilitator, selection of participants, techniques to encourage discussion and the introduction of issues considered sensitive (Morgan, et al., 2002). Providing focus groups are designed and implemented with careful consideration for their potential weaknesses, they can be an effective method of participation with children and young people.

2.7.5 The Internet and the use of social media forums

The Internet has provided a new forum for participation in which children and young people are increasingly competent. Kytta, Kaaja and Horelli (2004) recognised the potential of the Internet for participation and created a game through which the views and opinions of children and young people could be obtained and applied to decision-making. The game was a success, providing children and young people with a method of communication that was both effective and fun (Kytta, Kaaja, & Horelli, 2004). This research provides a valuable step forward in creating methods that can effectively target children and young people and draw valuable conclusions as to their perceptions of their surrounding environment.

The growth of social media and its popularity among children and young people could arguably revolutionise the way in which participation is carried out with children and young people. Kariza (2010:28) describes social media as an "effective communications tool for youth activists". Globally there are numerous examples of youth organisations using social media like 'Twitter' and 'Facebook' as a means to gather support on projects and inform children and young people about different events and issues (Kariza, 2010). The extent to which social media has been used as a method to directly engage with children and young people however, appears to be limited.

Although the Internet provides a new forum for communication with children and young people, it has a number of associated limitations. Children and young people often have limited access to the Internet, particularly in areas of lower social economic status. Schools however, are increasingly focused around the use of the Internet as a resource for learning and children and young people are often more confident with its use than many adults (Kytta, et al., 2004). Stafford et al., (2003) argues the perception that children and young people favour the use of online methods to communicate their ideas is not necessarily representative of how they actually feel.

Similarly, Livingstone et al., (2005) portrays the Internet as an effective method of participation for those that have extensive experience using the Internet, but maintain

its of limited use for those without this experience. Presently the motivation for children and young people to leave websites dedicated to their entertainment and explore civic sites is lacking. By providing links from more popular sites to those representing local councils, and creating a more interactive environment to help maintain their interest could develop the internet as a effective method of participation for children and young people (Livingstone, Bober, & Helsper, 2005).

2.7.6 Maps

Maps constructed by children and young people provide a method of establishing their spatial relationship with the surrounding environment, providing information as to use of a space (Driskell, 2002; Hart, 1997). Freeman and Vass (2010:67) describe children's maps as "physical–pictorial representations of cognitive maps", where a cognitive map describes integrated observations of a environment made over time. Spatial activity plays an important role in determining how and why children and young people value different environments. Understanding what makes an environment suitable for a particular behaviour allows decision makers to preserve these characteristics and replicate them elsewhere (Hart, 1997). In order for information to be useful, the process in which maps are created must be carried out correctly, which often takes time and reflection (Driskell, 2002). Freeman and Vass (2010) assert that maps should not be used as a stand-alone method of improving the participation of children and young people and instead maps should be paired with other methods to allow for a more in depth exploration of their relationship with the environment.

2.7.7 Other methods

Methods available for the use of facilitators of participation for children and young people extends much further than the methods described above. Only the facilitator's creativity and available resources limits their ability to engage with children and young people. Table 2 provides a list of methods drawing from Hart (1997) and Driskell (2002).

Table 2: List of potential participation methods (Source: Adapted from Hart, 1997 and Driskell, 2002)

Methods of participation
Youth groups
Drawing
Collages
Story boards
Maps
Models
Simulations Interviews
Surveys
Publications (magazines, news papers, books and articles)
Photography
Video and television
Presentations
Music and dance
Drama and puppetry
Events
Informal observations
Daily scheduled activities
Family and support networks
Guided tours - field trips
Questionnaires

2.7.8 Minimum standards and monitoring

Monitoring plays an important role in the success of any intervention, participation involving children and young people is no different. Throughout participation evaluations should be carried out periodically, in an effort to identify barriers at different stages. Evaluation allows for future attempts at participation to be refined on a basis of past success and failure and better results achieved (Driskell, 2002). Tonucci and Rissotto (2001) discuss the 'Children's City' project in which various participation methods were used. The 'CNR Research and International Co-ordination Group' prescribed a shared working method and provided the required training to facilitators to carry out monitoring. This systematic process of monitoring allowed for the collection of an extensive data set, that now informs future attempts at participation involving children and young people (Tonucci & Rissotto, 2001).

The Inter-Agency Group on Children's Participation (2007) released a report titled 'Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children'. The report recommends that minimum standards should be introduced to council practice in an effort to ensure participation involving children and young people is carried out to an acceptable level without token results. Minimum standards must be transparent, adhered to, non-negotiable, permanent and agreed upon to be effective (Inter-Agency Work Group on Children's Participation, 2007). The introduction of minimum standards to council practice would not only provide motivation to engage with children and young people but also allow for participation to be monitored at each council.

2.8 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has reviewed existing theory and practice associated with the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. It is evident that planning as a profession has undergone significant change since its inception and that one of these changes has been the introduction of public participation. Theories of participation have been widely explored by authors such as Healey (1997) and Sandercock (1998). Developing from this exploration and combined with a growing appreciation for the rights of children and young people, has been a demand for more inclusive methods of participation for children and young people. Authors such as Hart (1997) and Driskell (2002) have provided detailed accounts of what is essentially a subsection of public participation targeted at children and young people.

The benefits of participation involving children and young people are well established in theory. However, the extent to which local councils have benefited from the inclusion of children and young people is limited. Frequently councils fail to provide inclusive participation methods for children and young people when challenged with a lack of resources and expertise. This research seeks to explore he extent to which children and young people are being appropriately engaged with in local council decision-making.

3

Research Framework

3.1 Introduction

A methodology describes those "principles and theoretical perspectives that underpin research" (Burnham, Gilland, Grant, & Layton-Henery, 2004:4). This chapter will discuss the methodology employed for the purpose of this thesis. Following this, those methods, techniques and procedures used to collect data, will be explored. This chapter aims to establish a link between the preceding chapters and the primary results of research yet to be discussed.

3.2 Methodology

In order for valid results to be obtained, research must be approached in manner best suited to the relevant context. This research seeks to explore the ideas and perspectives of individuals on an issue of growing interest and concern to the planning professional. To establish an understanding of the challenges associated with participation involving children and young people, research must target the attitudes and personal insights of individuals most closely associated with the relevant issues. These individuals include professionals working as planners, community and youth development officers and regional and national participation advisors.

3.3 Qualitative Research

Research is generally defined as either qualitative or quantitative dependent on the type of data being collected. A quantitative approach to research uses numerical measurements to collect data under positivism principles in which a strict scientific method is adhered to (Sarantakos, 1998). This approach can be inappropriate when dealing with more humanistic concerns. A qualitative approach to research is a more naturalistic and inductive form of investigation, whereby an individual's personal insights, perspectives, motives, aspirations and attitudes can be established.

Methods associated with a qualitative methodology are "concerned with how the world is viewed, experienced and constructed by social actors…and power relations that account for how places, people and events are made and represented" (S. Smith, 2000:660). An analysis of the complexity associated with children and young people's participation requires a holistic view of the attitudes and perspectives professionals hold in respect to children and young people. A task that can be best achieved through qualitative methods.

3.3.1 Methodological Paradigm

Qualitative research is an immensely broad and inclusive term that is used to describe a range of methodological paradigms. To describe research as qualitative is ambiguous and provides little direction in regard to the researchers perspective of reality and the methods of data collection available to them (Sarantakos, 1998). It is therefore useful to define the methodological paradigm through which research has been carried out.

A critical approach to research aims to understand social processes and then change them (Neuman, 2000). More specifically it involves; an analysis of competing power interests, advantages and disadvantages for various groups involved and outlines the barriers that obstruct these groups from reaching their goals. When identifying a suitable methodological paradigm for research, one should look to traditional

approaches used in the past to establish the correct choice (Sarantakos, 1998). Established in Chapter Two was the difficulty planning professionals encounter when engaging with children and young people. Academics have debated the issues associated with participation involving children and young people, attempting to provide ways to overcome barriers that promote their exclusion. Research associated with these barriers has always sought to induce change, suggesting the use of a critical approach in the past, and would indicate it most suitable for use in this research.

A critical approach to qualitative research is associated with a broad range of theories that influence its application in the research process (Painter, 2000). This variation in application makes a critical approach to research difficult to define. For the purpose of this research, a critical approach will be defined according to five key principles stated by Painter (2000) and seen below in Table 3.

Table 3: Key principles of the critical approach (Source: Adapted from Painter, 2000)

Principles	Application to current research
Opposition to unequal and oppressive power relations	Aims to decrease the perception of children and young people as less capable contributors to decision making compared to adults.
Commitment to social justice and transformations	Aims to increase in inclusivity of participation practice in local councils to allow for children and young people to have year thoughts and opinions legitimately considered.
The relationship theory and practice	To allow for the application of those developments made through academic research to be applied in a professional setting.
Relevant in practice	An appreciation for the challenges associated with the politics and established procedures in local councils must be maintained.
Reflexive	The researcher must be aware of the weaknesses associated with their methodology and methods. This requires a reflection on behalf of the researcher on their personal relationship with the research.

3.3.2 Case Studies

The research aims to investigate the participation of children and young people in local council decision-making. To establish the current state of participation involving children and young people and the challenges associated with engagement, three local councils were investigated. A case study approach has been adopted and includes Waipa District Council, Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council. A case study is defined by Yin (2003) as an "empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context" (R. Yin, 1993:13). For the purpose of this thesis, the participation of children and young people in decision-making could be classified as the phenomenon, and local councils as the real life context. It should be noted that the potential for decisions to be made out of the jurisdiction of local councils exists and these could well impact upon children and

young people. The scope of the current research is however, concerned solely with decisions made by local councils.

Case studies have a number of associated advantages and disadvantages. They provide a method of establishing an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon, but are accused of lacking in accuracy and generalisability (Noor, 2008). To avoid the potential for any weakness to impact upon the value of research, a case study approach must be tailored towards the type of data being collected and the context in which it exists (R. Yin, 2003). There are a number of criteria to be applied to potential case studies in selecting an appropriate context for research. The following is a table depicting a series of criteria from different authors that have been applied to the current research as basis for selection of case study councils.

Table 4: Criteria for selecting case study locations (Adopted from Stake, 2006; 1995 and Neuman, 2000)

Criteria for selecting case studies	Application to current research
Maximise learning	Each council has the necessary staff, and further more demonstrated a willingness to be involved in the research.
Diversity across contexts	Each council differs in its approach to children and young people, both in terms of strategy and the nature of the area under jurisdiction.
Ability to make generalisations	Each council had a similar approach to planning and faced the same challenges in regard to children and young people.
Relevant to objectives	Each objective could be explored through selected cased councils.

Together councils filled the criteria stated in Table 4 and importantly each council displayed a willingness to involve children and young people in their decisions through participation. Details as to each councils policy and strategies, their specific approach to participation involving children and young people and the characteristics of each territory they govern will be outlined in the context chapter.

3.4 Methods

It is widely accepted that the use of multiple methods equates to stronger, more reliable research (Jick, 1979). Triangulation is based on the principle that agreement between two methods provides a greater level of assurance that findings are valid (Neuman, 2000). Essentially the use of two methods allows for cross validation (Jick, 1979). Accordingly triangulation was employed to ensure the quality of results in this research. This section of the chapter will outline the methods used to gather primary and secondary data, detail the methods used to analyse this data and explain the reasoning behind the choice of these methods.

3.4.1 Primary Data Collection

Primary data is information recorded, generated or gained by the researcher (Clark, 2005; Kitchen & Tate, 2000). Data of this nature was collected during visits to each case study council, their associated youth councils and the Central North Island Regional Office for the Ministry of Youth and Development, between the 11th of June and 30th of June 2011. Data collection specifically included key informant interviews and a questionnaire given to youth councillors.

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the aim of understanding how key informants perceive issues related to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. Each interview was conducted under a semi-structured format, whereby broad themes were outlined before the interview to guide questioning (Miller, 2003).

The flexibility associated with semi-structured interviews allows for questions to be tailored towards the expertise of interviewees and provides for the exploration of new themes identified during the interview, previously not anticipated by the researcher. A structured interview, where responses are limited to fixed questions, restricts the exploration of ambiguity, contradictions and the complexity associated with the social

situations (Yates, 2004). Questions were classified as initiating, probing or follow up. Initiating questions were prescribed before the interview and consisted of the main themes to be covered. These questions were designed to be neutral, non-leading, open ended and with minimal jargon (Yates, 2004). The following table presents each key informant's associated organisation and their role within it.

Table 5: Key informant roles and associated councils.

Associated council	Key informant number	Role in council
Hamilton City Council	Key Informant 1 (K1)	Consents planner
	Key Informant 2 (K2)	Policy planner
	Key Informant 3 (K3)	Community development officer
	Key Informant 4 (K4)	Community development officer
Invercargill City Council	Key Informant 5 (K5)	Policy planner
	Key Informant 6 (K6)	Consents planner
	Key Informant 7 (K7)	Community development officer
	Key Informant 8 (K8)	Environmental planner
Waipa District Council	Key Informant 9 (K9)	Council politician
	Key Informant 10 (K10)	Policy planner
	Key Informant 11 (K11)	Policy planner
	Key Informant 12 (K12)	Strategic planning
	Key Informant 13 (K13)	Consents planner
Ministry of Youth and Development	Key Informant 14 (K14)	National participation advisor
	Key Informant 15 (K15)	Regional participation advisor

The use of what is termed 'snowball sampling' was used to identify potential key informants as the research process progressed. Snowball sampling is defined by Neuman (2011:269) as "a type of nonrandom sample in which the researcher begins with one case, and then, based on information about interrelationships from that case, identified other cases, and repeats the process again and again". Although it contradicts principles of conventional sampling, snowball sampling has a number of associated benefits. Primarily, it allows for informants that were not publicly open to communication, to be contacted by utilising a key informant's social and professional ties to people in their area of interest (Miller, 2003). Miller (2003) specifically outlines the value of snowball sampling in making contact with the 'urban elite', and notes its potential to connect with individuals who hold power in a local arena.

Questionnaires

The collection of primary data also involved questionnaires that were filled out by members of each youth council associated with the three case study councils. This method was chosen due to the difficulty associated with carrying out group interviews with a large number of young individuals. Using questionnaires in this situation provided each respondent the opportunity to present their ideas freely.

Questionnaires included open-ended questions and encouraged short explanatory answers. In designing the questionnaire, careful consideration was given to the age of participants. For the purpose of this research, the term 'children' describes individuals aged between 5 and 12, while the term 'young people' is used to describe those aged twelve to twenty. Children were not involved in youth councils and therefore were given no consideration in designing questionnaires. Principles of good question writing, outlined by Neuman (2000), were used to ensure the questionnaire was written in an appropriate manner and ensured the value of research was maintained. These principles can be seen below in Table 6.

Table 6: Principles of good question writing (Adopted from Neuman, 2000)

Principles of good research	Application to current research
Avoid jargon, slang and abbreviations.	Language used was simple and easy to understand.
Avoid ambiguity, confusion and vagueness.	Before the questionnaire was handed to participants they were given an information sheet to provide the necessary background information.
Avoid emotional language and prestige bias.	The use of emotional language was avoided. The nature of the issues being explored meant there was potential for prestige bias. Questionnaires were kept confidential to avoid this.
Avoid double-barreled questions.	Questions were written with the intention of investigating a single topic.
Avoid leading questions	Questions were written so as to not lead the respondent's answers.
Avoid asking questions that are beyond respondent's capabilities.	Questions were targeted at issues well within their capabilities and understanding. Their position as youth councillors meant they had a good understanding of the issues being investigated.

These principles and other design considerations such as; length, order of questions and layout meant the questionnaire was designed to produce valuable responses, which were comparable between youth councils.

3.4.2 Secondary Data Collection

Stewart and Kamins (1993:1) describe secondary data as "information collected by others and archived in some form". This information can be presented in a number of different ways including articles, books, government reports, archived data sets and journals. Information of this nature provides an efficient way to answer questions and offers a platform on which primary data can develop (Stewart & Kamins, 1993).

Chapters Two and Four in this thesis essentially provide a summary of the relevant secondary data. Chapter Two, the 'Theoretical framework', provides a basis for this

research, detailing national and international perspectives, models and key ideas relating to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. Chapter Four, 'Children and Young People's participation in New Zealand', outlines government documents at a national level and local government policy, strategy and plans relevant to each case study council.

3.5 Primary Data Analysis

Qualitative data is rarely analysed through methods of statistical investigation. Instead, data is commonly coded into general ideas, themes and concepts that can then be used as analytical tools to make generalisations (Yates, 2004). This method of establishing new or refined themes from qualitative data is in contrast to quantitative methods of data analysis, in which variables are established before data collection (Neuman, 2000).

3.5.1 Coding

Each interview was recorded, transcribed and later coded for the purpose of data analysis. This process of coding can be spilt into two simultaneous activities, data reduction and analytical categorisation. Raw data in the form of statements made by key informants were placed into conceptual categories, representative of key themes identified by the researcher (Neuman, 2000). This method of coding allowed for a SWOT analysis to be applied and quotes made by key informants to be placed in a series of matrixes.

3.5.2 Matrixes

The use of matrixes reduces data into a more manageable form to determine similarities, differences and trends. Each matrix includes key quotations, the relevant key informant number and their associated organisation. Cargan (2007) and Dooley (2007) promote the use of matrixes as a visual representation of information, allowing

for key findings to be easily extracted from otherwise complex data sets. Accordingly, when analysing data in relation to the current research, matrixes were used when a large number of key quotations were relevant to issues being explored.

3.5.3 Graphical representation of data

A method was required to collate and view data gathered from questionnaires given to youth councillors. Cargan (2007) promotes the use of pie graphs as a method of visual interpretation, allowing for trends and patterns in data to be established easily. According, answers to questions from the youth council questionnaire were grouped on a basis of similarity, each group then equated to a segment of the pie graph.

3.5.4 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a structured approach to analysing qualitative data. This approach is commonly used by organisations when evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in relation to opportunities and threats in the external environment (Piercy & Giles, 1989). In the context of this research, strengths and weakness will be used to present the current situation regarding participation involving children and young people, while opportunities and threats will relate to both external and internal considerations. Table 7 illustrates the way in which a SWOT analysis is presented.

Table 7: Elements for consideration in SWOT analysis

Current Situation	Strengths	Weaknesses
External and internal Considerations	Opportunities	Threats

There are a number of associated advantages with the application of a SWOT analysis as a method of evaluating data. A SWOT analysis allows for proactive thinking in establishing strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. In developing a SWOT

analysis, a framework is formed to view an approach or strategy in a holistic manner, highlighting essential and relevant information (Pahl & Richter, 2009).

The use of SWOT analysis has been criticised for its potential to misrepresent data. A SWOT analysis is dependent on the researcher's subjective position in relation to research. There is also potential for the researcher to over complicate or simplify the SWOT analysis, limiting its usefulness to make valid conclusions and recommendations (Pahl & Richter, 2009). The researcher must have an extensive knowledge of relevant issues to avoid any misrepresentation. In the context of this research, a SWOT analysis was used to evaluate the current situation regarding participation involving children and young people in council decision-making, and identify ways to overcome any barriers to their inclusion.

3.6 Secondary Data Analysis

Scott (1990) defines four criteria to apply when collecting data. These include analysing the authenticity, originality and reliability of the sources used. Reliable governmental documents, peer-reviewed journal articles and published books have been evaluated to adhere to these principles. The fourth criterion is the meaning of the data, ensuring that the information was embedded in the relevant context. Documents included in the theoretical framework and context chapters were chosen on a basis of their relevance to the current research. It is noted that all documents analysed were written from a subjective viewpoint, and care was taken in transferring the thoughts and opinions expressed by different authors into a single document.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

When undertaking research, ethical consideration was given to the way in which findings could impact upon the researcher, the interviewees and children and young people. Neuman (2000) outlines key principles to upholding a high ethical standard of research, these can be seen below in Table 8.

Table 8: Basic Principles of Ethical Social Research (Source: Adopted from Neuman, 2000)

Basic Principles of Ethical Social Research
Do not exploit participants for ethical gain.
Some form of informed consent is highly recommended or required.
Honour all guarantees of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.
Do not coerce or humiliate participants.
Use a research method that is appropriate to the method.
Anticipate repercussions of the research or publication of results.
Make interpretations of results consistent with the data.
Use high methodological standards and strive for accuracy.

To ensure a high ethical standard, the University of Otago requires the researcher to enter a contract with the University of Otago Ethics Committee before research commences. Current research required Ethics A (the highest standard of ethics) to be granted due to the vulnerability of children and young people. The ethics document stipulates the obligations and responsibilities that the researcher agrees to comply with.

The interviewees were provided with an information sheet and a consent form prior to beginning the interview process to apprise the participants as much as possible of their role and register their consent to participate in the study. According to the University of Otago's research policy, the records and transcripts of the interviews have been stored with access being limited to the researcher and his supervisor.

3.8 Reflections on the Research Process

The research process was carried out with a number of limitations, potentially impacting upon the value of results. It is considered that these limitations are adequately compensated for and any findings are accurate representations of situation regarding children and young people's participation in local council decision-making. It is however, useful to acknowledge these limitations and how they relate to the research process.

Research was carried out with monetary and time constraints, meaning the collection of data was not as comprehensive as preferred. Ideally a larger sample size would have been included, both in regard to local councils and key informants. Case study investigations can be carried out in different ways, but generally a smaller sample is compensated for by a more in-depth analysis (Neuman, 2000). A more comprehensive data collection process may have produced more valid results and allowed for the identification of issues not apparent at the chosen case study councils.

The researcher comes from a background of geography and planning. Time spent studying in these areas has inevitably impacted upon the way in which research has been approached. This could be perceived as both a positive and negative influence. Independent views and ideologies point towards the subjective nature of the research (Pratt, 2000). In some aspects this is unavoidable, however it is considered that any limiting factors resulting from subjectivity are minimal.

Research explores issues relating to the participation of children and young people. Although data collection involved targeted questionnaires for youth councils, it is noted that this provides a limited representation of their age group. In regard to children, no attempt was made to gather data directly. Data collection focused on the views and opinions of professionals in attempt to understand their approach to participation involving children and young people. Results could have been strengthened with a larger component of data devoted to understanding the perspective of children and young people.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the qualitative approach and methodological paradigm that underpins the choice of research methodology. It has described those methods used in the collection and analysis of primary and secondary

data sources. Together these elements provide the framework in which data collection was approached and carried out.

4

Children and Young People's participation in New Zealand

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a contextual understanding of each case study council's approach to engaging with children and young people. First, the current state of participation in New Zealand will be outlined. Following this, the chapter will explore the legislation and policy at a national level that supports a framework for participation involving children and young people in local councils. The final section details each case study council's key strategies, plans and policies that guide their specific approach to participation with children and young people. By placing the current research within its real-life context, the necessary background information required to understand the results and their discussion is established.

4.2 The current state of participation with children and young people in New Zealand

New Zealand, similar to international trends, has experienced a growing appreciation for the inclusion of children and young people in the participation process. Despite these developments participation remains marked by elements of exclusion and advocacy. Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005) highlight the lack of initiatives for children and young people that are actually being implemented by planners in New Zealand. Despite a willingness to encompass children and young people's views, planners in

New Zealand have difficulty acting on their personal beliefs. A number of factors restrict a planners ability to commit to participation involving children and young people, these include limited resources, a reluctance to work outside the statutory process and lack of confidence (C. Freeman & Aitken-Rose, 2005). Factors restricting participation in New Zealand, are documented internationally by authors like Hart (1997), Driskell (2002) and Matthews et al., (1999), suggesting these factors are experienced broadly in the planning profession.

Discussed in Section 2.2 was the potential impact of UNCROC on inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. New Zealand ratified the convention in 1993, and in 1997 the first of the required periodical reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (established by UNCROC) was carried out. The committee criticised New Zealand's commitment to the convention on various counts of failing to provide for children and young people (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 1997). In response the New Zealand government released two documents in 2002 titled, 'New Zealand's Agenda for Children: Making Life Better for Children' and the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa'. These two documents represent an increased level of responsibility taken on by central government to ensure the rights of children and young people are upheld (C. Freeman, et al., 2004).

The current research seeks to explore the extent to which the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making has developed since documented by authors like Freeman and Aitken-Rose (2005). This exploration will access the impact strategy and policy promoted in central government has on the way in which local councils engage with children and young people.

4.3 National Policy and Strategies

At a national level, documents are produced that detail strategy and policy in an effort to guide participation involving children and young people at local levels. This section will outline various documents including the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa' and 'New Zealand's Agenda for Children'.

4.3.1 Youth Development Strategy

In 2002 the Ministry of Youth Affairs produced a document called the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa'. The document aims to provide families and communities with the support they need to develop the skills and attitudes to contribute in a positive manner to society. By outlining principles, aims and goals the document provides the necessary framework to establish this support, these can be seen below in Table 9.

Table 9: Principles, aims and goals of youth development (Source: Adopted from the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002)

Principles	Goals	Aims
• Youth development is shaped by the 'big picture'. • Youth development is about young people being connected. • Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach. • Youth development happens through quality relationships. • Youth development is triggered when young people fully participate. • Youth development needs good information.	• Ensuring a consistent strengths-based youth development approach. • Developing skilled people to work with young people. • Creating opportunities for young people to actively participate and engage. • Building knowledge on youth development through information and research.	• All young people have opportunities to establish positive connections to their key social environments. Government policy and practice reflect a positive youth development approach. • All young people have access to a range of youth development opportunities.

Every goal, aim and principle stated above in some way relates to participation involving children and young people. Of particular significance to the current research are Principle 5, Goal 3 and Aim 2. Principle 5 states the importance of participation in youth development, suggesting that only when youth are fully engaged in participation can youth development begin. Goal 3 suggests that local government should be looking

for creative opportunities to actively participate and engage with youth. Principle 5 asserts that government policy and practice should reflect a positive youth approach, in achieving this, local government must ensure that children and young people are engaged in effective and legitimate participation (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002).

The production of the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa' demonstrates a positive development for the way in which children and young people are perceived by national governmental departments. This progress in changing perspectives to recognise children and young people as equal to adults, could be viewed as the first steps in removing gaps between what academics are promoting and what planning professionals are implementing. However, for change to be experienced by children and young people, the principles, goals and aims in the strategy must be adopted by lower levels of government that have the potential to directly influence their lives.

4.3.2 New Zealand's Agenda for Children

New Zealand's Agenda for Children is closely aligned with the 'Youth Development strategy Aotearoa'. Produced in 2002 by the Ministry of Social Development, the document seeks to make New Zealand a better place for children by influencing the decision making process and the way in which child polices and services are developed.

The agenda adopts what is termed a 'whole child approach', focusing on the child's whole life circumstances, acknowledging the need for healthy development and recognising the significance of integration between government sectors in addressing child development. This approach recognises the rights of children stated in UNCROC and their capacity to make decisions, something that is commonly often overlooked in policy drafted at a local level.

Action areas are established through which the vision of the agenda is to be achieved, a number of which have been drafted to be inline with those principles, aims and goals

stated in the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa'. Action Area Two aims to "increase opportunities for children's participation, particularly in government and community decision making processes" (Ministry of Social Development, 2002:3). The agenda recognises that children's participation plays an important role in implementing the whole child approach. Action Area Six targets planning in local government to improve the processes through which children's issues are addressed. Children should play a greater role in decisions concerning the drafting of documents such as LTCCP's, local strategies and best practice guidelines.

Both the 'New Zealand Agenda for Children' and the 'Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa' have the potential to influence the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. Further more, both documents seek to modify traditional methods of participation to better provide for the needs of children and young people. Despite this positive influence, the extent to which these documents provoke change is dependent on their adoption by local councils, without this commitment their potential to encourage change is lost.

4.4 New Zealand's Legislation

The responsibilities of local councils in regard to participation are outlined in the RMA and the LGA. Despite dealing with similar issues, each act takes a varied perspective of participation, with a number of consequences for the inclusion of children and young people.

4.4.1 Resource Management Act 1991

The RMA is an overarching piece of legislation that ultimately determines how the environment is managed in New Zealand. The RMA offers a degree of unity between policies at different levels of government, enforcing a hierarchy system in which standards and policies at a national level must be adopted by regional and district councils. Throughout the RMA numerous references are made to participation or a

related process, detailing the circumstances in which it should be considered and carried out by local councils.

The RMA cannot be reviewed without first considering Section 5, in which sustainable management is outlined as the underlying purpose on which the rest of the RMA is based. Sustainable management and its relevance to participation involving children and young people have already been discussed in Section 2.3.2. It is however, useful to explore the concept in terms of its significance in the RMA. The RMA describes sustainable management as:

> *managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety.*

The relevance of this definition to children and young people is outlined in 2(b) of Section 5 in which the act states, "sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources… to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations" as a key component of sustainable management. The RMA then provides for the participation of children and young people in decisions concerning natural and physical resources. Not only are children and young people considered people, they also belong to communities and will make up the future generations the RMA seeks to protect. While Section 5 of the act provides the conceptual framework for participation involving children and young people, numerous references are made throughout the RMA to submissions, consultation and hearings as methods through which the public can influence the decision making process.

In regard to policy, local councils must evaluate the benefits and costs of objectives, policies and rules under Section 32 of the act. The process through which this analysis is carried out requires councils to consult with a list of people and organisations stipulated in Clause 3(1)(d) of the First Schedule.

Under Section 88 of RMA, an assessment of environmental effects (AEE) is required to accompany any proposal submitted to a local council in application for resource consent. Within the AEE, Clause 1(h) of Schedule 4 requires the applicant to state all those affected persons and the consultation undertaken with them. The decision concerning the notification of applications for resource consent is made at the discretion of local authorities under Section 95A of the RMA. If publicly notified, under Section 308B members of the public may only submit on a project if directly affected as a result of the activity in question.

Fookes (1996) argues that the framework for participation in the RMA is largely misdirected and often restrictive. Despite the significance of children and young people's participation being established in Section 5, its provision throughout the rest of the RMA is largely inappropriate. The bureaucracy and formality associated with processes related to participation often results in their exclusion. The RMA provides no definition of public and leaves it to the discretion of individual councils to decide how participation will be carried out and whom it should involve.

4.4.2 Local Government Act

The enactment of the LGA changed the way in which local councils approach the participation process. The LGA promotes a community approach to participation, encouraging the involvement of the wider community in making decisions. Section 10 describes the purpose of local government as enabling "democratic local decision making and action by, and on behalf of, communities" and to "promote the social, environmental, economic, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future".

This element of community involvement is highlighted throughout the LGA. In Section 82, principles of consultation are stated for the inclusion into council participation practice. A number of these are of significance to children and young people. Councils are required to maintain an open mind in receiving information and must allow for

information to be presented in the manner or format most appropriate for the intended audience. Principles of consultation aid local councils in meeting requirements stated in Section 77 that relate to decision-making. Section 77 states; local councils must "seek to identify all reasonably practicable options for the achievement of the objective of a decision". In accessing these options, local councils must consider the costs and benefits of each option, the extent to which community outcomes would be promoted, the impact on the local authorities capacity to meet statutory responsibilities and any other matters the local council considers relevant.

Under the LGA it is compulsory for local councils to produce a Long term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). The purpose of the LTCCP is outlined in Section 93 as, providing for integrated decision-making, allowing for a long-term focus, providing a basis for accountability and providing an opportunity for participation in the decision making process. The existence of LTCCP's requires local councils to become more responsive to needs of their communities, forcing or at least encouraging councils to invest more resources into participation. Children and young people make up a significant proportion of our communities, and therefore should play a significant role in the formation of policy and community plans under the LGA.

4.5 New Zealand planning processes – the relationship between the LGA and RMA

The LGA, RMA and various strategies and policies interact to provide a framework for planning in New Zealand. Under the LGA local councils are required to identify key community outcomes for both the short and long term future. These community outcomes form the basis of LTCCPs that inform local policy, strategy and district plans. The RMA is used to enforce rules in district plan, steering development and ultimately achieving those goals stated in a LTCCP. The following figure presents this planning framework, showing the various interactions between legislation and council documents.

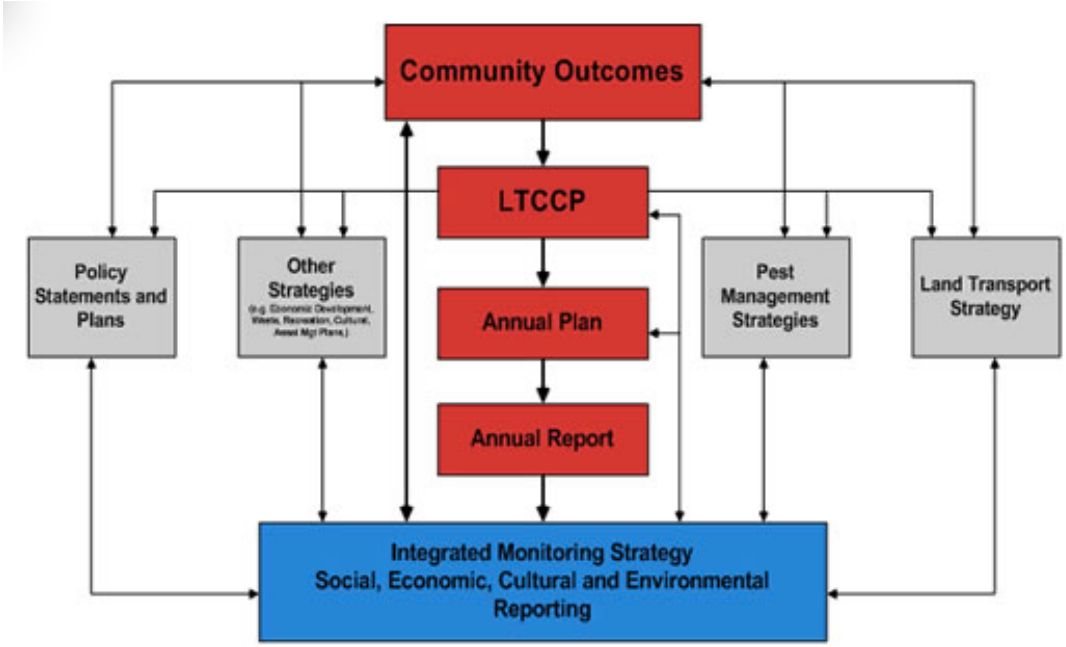

Figure 9: Council processes, the influence of relevant policy, strategy and plans (Source: Quality Planning, 2009).

The figure depicts the flow of community outcomes through the planning framework, ultimately influencing the way in which cultural, economic, social and environmental reporting is carried out (Quality Planning, 2009). The current research seeks to examine the integration of children and young people in the various elements of the above figure. Indentifying their inclusion in policy and strategy and the effect this has on their potential to be included in council decision-making, or what the diagram presents as cultural, economic, social and environmental reporting.

4.6 Case Study Councils

Data collection involved an investigation of how children and young people are included in decision making at three local councils. Each council has an operational youth council, but has taken varying approaches to drafting policy and strategies for children and young people. This variation has allowed for an analysis of the consequences of each approach, regarding the way in which children and young people are perceived and engaged within the decision making process. This section will detail

each council's policy and strategies that relate to children and young people, as well as providing some background information on the area and population each local council governs.

4.6.1 Invercargill City Council

Invercargill is the southern most city in New Zealand, with a population of 51021, of which 10770 are aged between five and nineteen (2006 census data). Invercargill is a city with a strong agricultural industry, however in more recent times has attempted to transform its image, offering free tertiary education and establishing a market for conferences and various cultural and sporting events. The Invercargill City Council is the only case study that has a policy devoted to youth and therefore was considered a preliminary best-case example of participation involving children and young people in council decision-making.

Invercargill City Council Youth Policy

In 2002 the Invercargill City Council released its Youth Policy aimed at supporting and empowering young people aged between twelve and eighteen to seek out a more challenging and rewarding life experiences. The policy includes a series of outcomes and the roles of the council in achieving each one. These can be seen below in Table 10.

Table 10: Invercargill Youth Policy – Outcomes and Roles

Outcomes	Roles
• The diversity of young people is recognised, acknowledged and valued. • The views of young people are sought and taken into account in the development of Council's policies and activities. • Young people have access to the information and resources they need in the areas of: o Health, safety and well-being o Physical environment and design o Entertainment and recreation o Education and training o Employment o Family	• To ensure the views and needs of young people are taken into account in Council activities. • To advocate on behalf of, and with, young people. • To support and resource where appropriate service's for young people in partnership with other agencies. • To be part of a team coordinating activities for youth. • Develop an action plan annually to address the required outcomes.

The way in which this policy has been drafted clearly acknowledges the significance of participation in achieving a functional environment in which young people are included. Outcome 2 states the need for the young people to be engaged with, in an effort to establish their views and include these in the council's policies and activities. Every 'Role' outlined above requires the council to commit to effective participation with young people (Invercargill City Council, 2002). It is recognised that without their involvement any attempt by the council to engage with and provide for youth will inevitably become token and misdirected.

Invercargill City Council Long Term Council Community Plan

Under the LGA the Invercargill City Council is required to produce a ten year plan every three years, detailing how the council will deliver a balanced and affordable response to Invercargill's environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being. The plan provides a comprehensive review of what the communities are asking for and responds to issues such as transportation, urban development and water management.

In the 'Community Outcomes' chapter, the plan forms a more holistic framework of what communities are trying to achieve. Although none of these outcomes are directly related to children and young people, they are written with a strong emphasis on communities, of which children and young people make up a significant proportion. Of particular relevance to the current research are outcomes one, three and six and their associated intermediate outcomes, seen below in Table 11.

Table 11: Invercargill City Council LTCCP – Primary and Secondary Outcomes

Primary Outcomes	Secondary Outcomes
1. Southland is a great place to live.	• We value our history and heritage. • We have a choice of quality places to go and things to do. • We embrace and respect a diverse community. • We are proud to be Southlanders. • We live in a creative place.
2. Safe places in a caring society that is free from crime.	• We have safe roads • We have safe homes • We have public places safe for children and families. • We apprehend and hold lawbreakers appropriately accountable. • We support the victims of crime.
3. A treasured environment which we care for and which supports us now and into the future.	• We have an informed community caring for the environment. • We have a healthy, safe and accessible built environment. • We have an environment protected from the negative effects of human activities.

Outcome 1 relates simply to Southland being a great place to live. In relation to this, Intermediate Outcome 2.3 promotes respect and acceptance of the diverse nature of communities in southland, diversity that children and young people are part of. Outcome 3 seeks to encourage the creation of safe places in which a caring society is fostered. Intermediate Outcome 3.3 relates to the safety of public spaces for children and families, suggesting that the council should provide for those most vulnerable. Similar to Outcome 3, Outcome 6 promotes a treasured environment in which

communities can find support now and in the future. Intermediate outcomes 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 promote caring, accessibility and protection from negative behaviour in creating supportive environments (Invercargill City Council, 2009). If children and young people are not engaged effectively in considering these aspects, their integration into the environment will inevitably be catered for in an unsatisfactory way, most likely resulting in their exclusion.

4.6.2 Hamilton City Council

Hamilton is the largest city in the Waikato region and with a population of 132063 of which 30801 are age between five and nineteen. It is also the largest of the case study councils visited for research purposes. Located in the centre of the North Island, Hamilton is supported largely by a strong dairying industry that has prospered off the fertile plains that surround the city. Hamilton has recently scraped a number of strategies and replaced them with the 'Social Well-being Strategy', an all-encompassing document that addresses issues from various community groups in a collaborative way.

Hamilton City Council Social Well-being Strategy

Hamilton City Council's 'Social Well-being Strategy' was adopted in 2006. The strategy used a cooperative approach by various organisations to address the needs of different sectors of communities in Hamilton. When introduced a number of individual strategies were replaced, including one targeted at children and young people. These changes were based on the philosophy that comprehensive improvement cannot be achieved through the actions of any one sector, but must instead involve collaboration between sectors in making decisions. The Social Well-being Strategy identifies the aspirations of different sectors of communities and identifies ways in which these can be achieved.

The strategy includes a section titled 'vibrant young people', that recognises children and young people as an important element of a healthy city and the significance of

communities in influencing their development and sense of belonging. In terms of participation, the strategy provides little in the way of outlining the importance of engaging with children and young people or the responsibility of the council to do so. The term 'participation' is used not in the context of discussing the collection of children and young peoples thoughts and opinions, but in their involvement in organised activities for their entertainment.

The strategy appears to focus on issues relating to truancy and school suspensions, blaming boredom and a lack of education for increases in both. The strategy outlines a series of 'shared outcomes' that encourage children and young people to take up challenges, promote caring relationships, stress the importance of skills and knowledge and support pride in cultural identity. In the 'Vibrant Young People – 2009 Scorecard' the term participation is used in relation to education, employment and activities, for example the scorecard states, "there appears to be good levels of participation by young people in a range of activities" (Hamilton City Council, 2009:1). There is a complete lack emphasis on participation in relation to gathering information from children and young people as a method to inform the decision making process.

The Hamilton City Council intends to achieve these outcomes through projects, two of which are outlined in the strategy. The first project is titled 'Cool things for youth to do' and aims to provide an interesting and stimulating environment by increasing free or low cost organised activities that children and young people can attend. The project is based on the belief that children and young people engaged a positive activity can build social networks and are less likely to become involved in anti-social behaviour. The 'Tainui rangatahi Summit', the second project included in the strategy, featured various activities aimed at increasing pride and self-identity as Tainui rangatahi (young people).

Hamilton City Council LTCCP

The Hamilton City Council released its LTCCP in to guide the way in which the council approaches community issues and allocates funding to council activities and

projects. Like the Invercargill City Council's LTCCP, the Hamilton City Council has produced a comprehensive document that deals with a range of issues of varying relevance to children and young people.

Section 3.0 of the plan is titled 'The Framework that Shapes Hamilton's Development', and includes what the council has defined as 'Hamilton's Community Outcomes and Community Outcomes Progress Indicators'. Outcome three, 'Unique Identity' includes the most direct reference to children and young people. Community outcomes that relate to the concept of unique identity and the progress indicators associated with children and young people are included below in Table 12.

Table 12: Hamilton City Council LTCCP - Unique Identity - Community Outcomes and Progress Indicators

Framework	Community Outcomes	Progress Indicators
Unique Identity	• Treasures and enjoys the Waikato River. • Acknowledges and celebrates the unique place of Waikato Maori. • Is not too big and not too small, providing everything that makes life convenient without the problems of other cities. • Fosters pride in its natural and built environments and encourages people to work together to keep these clean and tidy. • Is a great place to learn, work and play, where people are proud of the education sector and embrace student culture. • Supports research, education and innovation, and is recognised as a centre of excellence. • Supports its significant youth population by providing targeted activities and services.	• Truancy rates. • School leaver qualifications. • Participation in the enviro-schools programme. • Enrolments with Hamilton tertiary education organisations. • Number of youth enrolled with Hamilton's youth transition service. • Number of modern apprenticeships currently in progress. • Teenage pregnancies. • Youth unemployment. • Participation in school-based community education courses. • Number of students enrolled in alternative education programmes.

The plan includes a total of seven community outcomes, all of which are of significance to children and young people. However, the only outcome that makes direct reference to youth is 3.7, where it states that the people of Hamilton want a city that 'supports its significant youth population by providing targeted activities and services'. A similar philosophy to that adopted in the 'Social Well-being Strategy' is seen in the council's LTCCP, where issues of participation relate not to their influence on council decision-making, but their involvement in activities and education programmes. This is clearly demonstrated by the way in which the council intends to measure their progress. The council lists youth unemployment, truancy rates, participation in various education programmes and teenage pregnancy amongst others,

as appropriate ways to measure the extent to which children and young people are supported.

4.6.3 Waipa District Council

The Waipa District Council bases its operations out of two urban centers in an otherwise rural district. Te Awamutu and Cambridge serve as nodes for a predominantly farming population, although both towns have developed, and now serve a variety of purposes. With a population of 43098, of which 10299 are aged between five and nineteen (2006 census data), the WDC is the smallest of the case study councils visited. The nature of the population in the Waipa district means the council is challenged in a number of ways that larger councils are not. The WDC council must provide for an aging population, whilst they struggle to maintain their younger residents as they are drawn away by the prospect of jobs and tertiary education in larger cities.

Unlike Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council, that have active strategies that in some way seek to provide for children and young people, the Waipa District Council has no such policy or strategy. This lack of guidance has the potential to affect the way in which children and young people are perceived and engaged with by planning professionals in the council. The inclusion of the Waipa District Council as a case study provides an opportunity to investigate the importance of providing a framework for participation involving children and young people.

Waipa District Council LTCCP

The Waipa District Council's LTCCP became active in 2009 encouraging the council "to partner the community in promoting the wellbeing of the Waipa District and its people" (Waipa District Council 2009:4). Section 3 of the plan ' Community Vision', is spilt into four themes; Vibrant and Creative Waipa, Economically Secure Waipa, Environmentally Sustainable Waipa and Healthy and Active Waipa. Each is discussed

in terms of its own community outcomes and associated progress indicators. The table below summarises the outcomes and indicators relevant to children and young people.

Table 13: Waipa District Council LTCCP - Community Outcomes

Themes	Community Outcomes	Progress Indicators
Vibrant and Creative Waipa	• We identify with and take part in our communities and enjoy participating in creative, recreational and cultural activities that build vibrant community spirit, both locally and at District level. • We all have meaningful opportunities to participate in making decisions that help shape the Waipa of the future.	• Percentage of residents perceiving that they are knowledgeable and show respect for the many and diverse cultures of people who live here. • Community satisfaction with the way their Council involves the public in the decisions it makes.
Economically Secure Waipa	• Public buildings and public transport options are safe, accessible to people of all ages and abilities and signage is clear and visible.	• Satisfaction with Council's services/ facilities. • Proximity to work, study and recreation. • Number, type and people attending community based events at key sites.
Healthy and Active Waipa.	• A good range of fun recreational spaces, playgrounds, facilities and family friendly areas are available, well planned, affordable, accessible and youth focused. • Quality educational opportunities at all levels are locally accessible and planned for future growth.	• Community satisfaction with availability of educational facilities. • Residents' perception of access to adequate family services and support networks. • School decile ratings. • School leavers with no formal education. • Rate of notifications to child youth and family services (CYFS). • Community perceptions of quality of life.

The LTCCP takes a similar approach to plans produced by the Hamilton and Invercargill City Councils, emphasising the importance of a community approach by local councils. Of interest to the current research is the extent to which children and young people are considered part of the community and to what level their opinion is sought and valued in council decision making. Under the theme 'Vibrant and Creative Waipa', the importance of meaningful participation in decisions that influence the district is highlighted, however no specific mention is made of participation involving children and young people. The plan does make reference to children and young people, regarding the provision of education, recreational facilities and accessible public spaces and transport options.

4.7 Summary

The following table provides a summary of each case study council's approach to participation involving children and young people, as presented in the documents discussed above.

Table 14: Summary of information in relation to children and young people presented by each case study council in documentation.

	Invercargill City Council	Hamilton City Council	Waipa District Council
Methods of consultation with children and young people.	• Youth Council. • Youth events.	• Youth Council. • Youth events. • Youth website.	• Youth Council. • Youth events.
Key monitoring carried out by the council in relation to children and young people.	• Education participation rates. • Highest qualification attainment. • Number of people participating in continuing education.	• Youth qualifications. • Youth employment/truancy • Youth satisfaction with life. • Involvement in social groups. • Frequency of feeling isolated. • Youth suicide/mortality rates. • Teenage birth rates.	• School decile ratings. • Rate of notifications to Child Youth and Family Services. • School leavers with no formal education.
Key focus for council in relation to children and young people.	• All young people in Invercargill are supported and empowered to take up new challenges and to seek a fulfilling life.	• Truancy, suspensions and providing activities to keep youth entertained.	• A good range of fun recreational spaces, facilities and family friendly areas are available, well planned, affordable, accessible and youth focused.
Includes provision for Children and Young People in the relevant LTCCP.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community policy that includes children and young people.	None	Social Well-being Strategy	None
Operational dedicated policy for children and young people.	Invercargill Youth Policy	None	None
Youth Advocacy Officer.	Yes	Yes	None

The table includes three approaches to providing for children and young people that are similar in some aspects and contrasting in others. Each council appears to engage with children and young people through similar methods of participation, primarily using youth councils to establish their thoughts and opinions. They appear to monitor similar statistics, a common theme being the success of children and young people in achieving some form of formal education or training. Despite these similarities, each council has stated a different focus in relation to children and young people. The Invercargill City Council seeks to support and empower children and young people to take up new challenges, the Hamilton City Council aims to decrease truancy and suspensions by maintaining children and young people's involvement in activities and the Waipa District Council endeavors to provide child friendly environments and facilities. Each case study council also has a varying level of policy and strategy outlining how the council intends to provide for children and young people. The Waipa District Council is the only case study council without some form of policy outside of their LTCCP that seeks to provide for children and young people. Interestingly they are also the only case study council that does not employ youth advocacy officer.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the necessary contextual information through which the results of this research can be effectively discussed in the following chapters. It appears the necessary framework for participation involving children and young people has been established at a national level. However, despite councils fulfilling their legal obligations under the LGA, the extent to which local councils are modifying their procedures to integrate this strategy and policy is questionable.

5

Results and Discussion: Approaches to Participation – frameworks and perspectives

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine and discuss the way in which children and young people are perceived in relation to planning and decision-making in local councils, accessing the awareness of key informants in regard to strategies, policy and monitoring. This analysis addresses Objectives 3 and 4, establishing the extent to which children and young people are included in council decision-making (0bjective 3) and highlighting ways of enhancing their inclusion (Objective 4). In achieving these objectives, the chapter will analyse data collected from key informant interviews and youth council questionnaires, discussing relevant information in regard to the theoretical framework, models and principles presented in Chapter Two.

Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 explore relevant strategy and policy, the use of council staff dedicated to children and young people and the monitoring of participation with children and young people. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 evaluate the way in which key informants perceive children and young people in relation to planning in general, the individual roles of key informants and the capacity of children and young people to participate. Collectively this analysis of results and their discussion provides an indication of the effectiveness of each case study council's approach to participation with children and young people, and the extent to which it is being actively employed.

5.2 Council strategy and policy for children and young people

Outlined in the Chapter Four was the varying level of strategy and policy in place at each case study council. Planners are primarily tasked with drafting strategy and policy and implementing it through the district plan. This strategy and policy effectively provides guidance for local councils in governing their district or city. The way in which the planners perceive policy and strategy in relation to children and young people therefore impacts upon their potential inclusion in the decision-making process. The following table presents the perspectives of key informants on their council's approach to drafting and implementing strategy and policy for children and young people.

Table 15: Key informant perspectives on their council's approach to strategy for children and young people's participation in council decision-making.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant number and role
All of the regional managers sat on a leadership forum and made all the decisions about the focus of the city and what projects would be included in the strategy	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth Development worker
For the things like the social wellbeing strategy we have relied on things like the census data, truancy rates, crimes statistic, quality of life survey, social report, residents feedback survey and health statistics.	Hamilton City Council	K4 - Youth Development worker
I would suspect that most of them with the exception of one or two, don't even know it exists, time passes and staff change.	Invercargill City Council	K7 - Youth Development worker
I think whether we have a strategy or not it is part of the way we work.	Invercargill City Council	K8 – Environmental planner
If you have a strategy for children and young people, do you have a strategy for elderly gay and pacific people as well.	Waipa District Council	K10 – Policy Planner

Only one key informant, who would be considered a planner, was aware that their council had some form of strategy for children and young people. Key informants who were able to make comments regarding a council strategy held community

development roles. Key Informant 7, a youth development worker, recognises this lack of awareness stating, "I would suspect that most of them with the exception of one or two, don't even know it exists, time passes and staff change". The key informant is of the belief that strategies, if not regularly promoted, lose their standing in council due to time and frequent staff turn over.

When referring to the Hamilton City Council's 'Social Well-being Strategy', Key Informant 4 states, "we have relied on census data, truancy rates, crime statistics, quality of life surveys, social reports, residents feedback surveys and health statistics". It appears the drafting of the 'Social Well being Strategy' was informed predominantly by quantitative data, supplemented with feedback from community providers. All the decisions about the focus of the city and what projects would be included in the strategy were made by regional managers from key signatories (K4 – Youth development team leader).

Hill et al., (2004) recognises the increasing consideration children and young people are given in council strategy and policy, but maintain this increased attention has done little to address their exclusion. Strategy and policy designed by adults commonly targets issues of protection, but ignores the power relations that drive exclusion. Although the 'Social Well-being Strategy' has proved a valuable resource for the community development team at the Hamilton City Council, its potential to address the exclusion of children and young people in council decision making is limited, supporting those findings presented by Hill et al., (2004).

This approach to drafting strategy and policy supports notions of childhood and power relations, described by Driskell (2002) and Hampton (1999) as promoting the exclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. The belief that children and young people must be protected relates to the misconception that they should be left to enjoy their childhood, and that adults were once young and can therefore make decisions on their behalf. Power relations force children and young people into a position of lesser importance to other contributors, limiting the influence their thoughts and opinions have in council decision-making.

Key informants in planning roles were typically in opposition to the idea of a strategy specifically for children and young people. Key Informant 8 states, "I think whether we have a strategy or not it is part of the way we work", suggesting a strategy would have little impact on way in which they approach their role in council. Key Informant 10 states, "if you have a strategy for children and young people, do you have a strategy for elderly, gay and pacific people as well", challenging the priority a strategy might give to a certain group.

This opposition to a dedicated strategy for children and young people neglects to account for the unique way in which children and young people must be engaged, something readily promoted by authors such as Driskell (2002), Woolcock et al., (2010) and Hart (1997). The Hamilton City Council's 'Social Well-being Strategy' attempts to collectively address the needs of different groups in Hamilton in a single document. This approach to drafting policy could potentially remove the perception of bias, while providing for the needs of children and young people in participation. The 'Social Well-being Strategy' however, lacks the necessary emphasis on participation to provoke change in council practice.

5.3 Council dedicated staff for children and young people

Each council has a different approach to the management of staff who work directly with children and young people. The Hamilton City Council has a youth development team within its wider community development department. Similarly the Invercargill City Council has a small community development team, of which children and young people are an important focus. Unlike the Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council, the Waipa District Council is without a community development team, instead relying on staff to incorporate this work into their own roles. The following table presents the views of key informants regarding staff devoted to the development and inclusion of children and young people.

Table 16: Key Informant perspectives on the councils approach to managing staff dedicated to the needs of children and young people.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
We should celebrate the fact that these young people are really diverse, have got some really cool things going on and get them involved.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
Its really great to have that link…I think if we didn't have that we would probably do nothing, unless a group approached us from outside of council.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
We don't have staff with specific portfolios so community development is everything we don't have a youth office or a youth advisor its all in one.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
I push every single thing that is happening in council about having youth participation.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
Certainly there are a lot of ideas and willing people, but maybe it requires a more coordinated method through someone who has that responsibility is a way forward with that.	Waipa District Council	K11 – Policy Planner

Key informants collectively took a positive outlook on usefulness of staff dedicated to participation involving children and young people. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, states "its really great to have that link…I think if we didn't have that we would probably do nothing", implying a reliance on the individual who deals directly with children and young people in initiating participation. In referring to the Waipa District Council's lack of staff to manage participation involving children and young people, Key Informant 11, another policy planner, states "there are a lot of ideas and willing people, but maybe it requires a more coordinated method through someone who has that responsibility". The key informant clearly recognises the potential for more inclusive participation through the introduction of someone dedicated to forming connections with children and young people in the Waipa District. It is evident that key informants in planning roles perceive staff dedicated to the children and young as necessary (Invercargill and Hamilton City Councils), or potentially useful (Waipa District Council).

Also apparent is the enthusiasm of key informants in community development roles for establishing the voice of children and young people in council and having it legitimately considered in the decision making process. Key Informant 7, a community development worker, states "I push every single thing that is happening in council about having youth participation", while Key Informant 4, a youth development worker, insists, "we should celebrate the fact that these young people are really diverse, have got some really cool things going on, and get them involved". Key informants who work directly with children and young people hold their capacity to act as participants in the decision making process in high regard.

Key informants in youth and community development roles that require a direct relationship with children and young people displayed an in-depth understanding of key principles required to engage with children and young people effectively. These principles of participation are outlined by Steinitz (2009), Driskell (2002), Hart (1997) and Head (2006) as fundamental in ensuring the legitimate consideration of the thoughts and opinions children and young people contribute to council decision-making. Key Informants 15 and 14, national and regional participation advisors state respectively, "I think officers advocating for youth in the formal structure of a council are absolutely critical and important", and "there should be someone dedicated to youth participation to ensure that they can create the right mechanisms to channel young people's voices against the city council mangers and the community". Having an individual with the skills and knowledge to facilitate the implementation of these principles in participation is clearly a valuable resource for local councils.

Despite strong support by key informants, "youth coordinators are losing their jobs and getting lost in community development roles, which may not have specific youth expertise or networks" (K15 – National participation advisor). Freeman and Nairn (2003) describe local councils as suffering from limited resources. This can result in staff working out of their area of expertise. Often policy planners are required to consult with children and young people and youth coordinators may be forced into writing policy (K15 - National participation advisor). This inevitably results in the use

of inappropriate methods of participation, or the drafting of policy that encourages exclusion.

5.4 Council monitoring of participation involving children and young people

Monitoring of participation involving children and young people plays an important role in promoting best practice. The following table presents the perspectives of key informants on the type of monitoring their council carries out on participation involving children and young people.

Table 17: Key informant perspective on the monitoring of participation involving children and young people

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
It has been reasonably low level, we debrief the working parties and often do surveys with the participants.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
One of the measures for community development is about the youth council…that is no measure of effectiveness, how many kids are on it and how many schools are represented is irrelevant, they might not turn up, I am removing it.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker

It appears planners do not undertake the task of monitoring and they have little awareness of what monitoring their council does carry out. Only those key informants in community development roles could comment on the monitoring of participation involving children and young people at their respective councils. Any reference to monitoring however, generally related to progress indicators in the relevant LTCCP or the cataloguing of census data to inform the drafting of strategy and policy. In regard to participation at the Hamilton City Council, Key Informant 4, a youth development worker, states "it has been reasonably low level, we debrief the working parties and often do surveys with the participants", suggesting there is potential for improvement.

It would appear that minimal monitoring is carried out, and what little effort is invested is largely inappropriate. Key informants however, recognise the need for change. When referring to the inclusion of the youth council as a measure of participation, Key Informant 7 states, "that is no measure of effectiveness, how many kids are on it and how many schools are represented is irrelevant, I am removing it". The informant demonstrates an awareness of inappropriate measuring and a willingness to modify council practice.

The lack of effective monitoring of participation with children and young people could be a significant limiting factor for their future inclusion in council decision-making. Head (2006) outlines the review and evaluation of participation, as an essential component for effective collaboration with children and young people. Without a system of accessing the success of participation, facilitators risk implementing methods that will inevitably fail in providing for the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. The Inter Agency Group on Children's Participation released a report titled 'Minimum Standards for consulting with Children' in 2007, detailing the necessary measures to effectively monitor children and young people's participation in decision-making. Reports like this are a valuable resource for local councils, however their adoption and subsequent use is clearly limited.

5.5 How key informants perceive children and young people

The following is an analysis of the way in which key informants perceive children and young people in relation to council planning, the individual roles of key informants and their capacity to participate in a meaningful way in council decision-making. The following table presents the perspectives of key informants on how planning in their council relates broadly to children and young people.

Table 18: How council staff perceive children and young people in relation to planning

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
If we want to try and grow and develop the next generation, some how if we can get them involved at a younger age, then they tend to be a bit more tentative when they are adults.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community Development worker
Some people that say youth are the future of tomorrow, but actually young people and children are living in today and they are really smart cookies and you get some great ideas because they are not inhibited by anything.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
You have at least got to recognise that while they may not have much of an idea about planning issues, they are the ones that have to live with it once we have moved on, so you have recognise that they are important and relevant	Invercargill City Council	K5 – Policy planner
In the context of what I do, in processing a resource consent, we consider their parents who are their guardians, to make the decisions for their family as a whole. I think they are important but they are being protected more or less by their parents.	Invercargill City Council	K6 – Consent planner
Absolutely, anything that we are planning is for tomorrow, whether tomorrow is next week or in ten years time, and it's there world that we are planning for, they have to be involved	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community Development worker
Extremely, simply because the planning is for them, their future.	Waipa District Council	K9 – Council politician
Personally they should be quite involved, they are like any group they should not be more involved or less involved than any other group.	Waipa District Council	K10 – Policy Planner

The majority of key informants took a positive perspective on the involvement of children and young people in planning. Numerous comments were made regarding the significance of participation for the involvement of children and young people in planning for the future, building citizenship and creating environments that promote continued use. Key Informant 3, a community development worker, states "if we can get them involved at a younger age, then they tend to be a bit more tentative when they are adults", suggesting that participation with children and young people results in more informed individuals later in life. Key Informant 5, a policy planner, states "they are the ones that have to live with it once we have moved on, so you have to recognise

that they are important and relevant", supporting the notion that if the views of children and young people are not considered, environments will be created that fail to provide for future generations.

Key informants appear to derive their perspective of children and young people from the theory of social justice. Social justice is related to the concept of sustainable development (Grower, 1995; Hampton, 1999). Although New Zealand adopted sustainable management in the RMA as opposed to sustainable development, the concept that we must provide for future generations has influenced the way in which children and young people are perceived by planning professionals. The idea that sustainable management and children and young people are interconnected relates to Grower's (1995) findings, promoting the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making through the framework of sustainable development.

Driskell (2002), Hart (1997), Freeman and Nairn (2003) and Prout (2000) have all identified an increasing acceptance in the planning profession for the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. The results from key informant interviews present a similar trend, whereby the majority of key informants took a positive perspective on participation involving children and young people. Only one key informant viewed children and young people as having a minor role in planning, stating "in processing a resource consent, we consider their parents who are their guardians, to make the decisions for their family as a whole" (K6 – Consents planner). This is a relatively narrow view of planning, suggesting that in relation to processing resource consents, children have little or no role to play in participation.

Table 19: How council staff perceive their individual roles relating to children and young people

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
Not a huge amount, a lot of the work we do is based with the RMA, so we have had the occasional submission if something has been publicly notified from kids but generally there's not a lot.	Hamilton City Council	K1 – Consent planner
Indirectly it does, mainly as part of district reviews, plan changes and variations we seek views from a number of groups.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
In terms of children, it is pretty non-existent, apart from those parents that are putting in submissions, and it normally relates to playgrounds and day care centers.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker
Fits specifically with looking at how young people participate in the community and how we can get them engaged.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
Not directly, indirectly.	Invercargill City Council	K5 – Policy planner
I guess it relates to the public, but not directly children.	Invercargill City Council	K6 – Consent planner
I am involved with a range of youth programs and youth activities, and here we don't have staff with specific portfolios so community development is everything.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
Children and young people tend not to be submitters, but we have resource consents which have been granted for activities which young people get involved.	Invercargill City Council	K8 – Environmental planner
Its includes work with the complete spectrum including youth and young children.	Waipa District Council	K9 – Council Politician
Anything that we do in our team effects the whole community and children and young people are included.	Waipa District Council	K10 – Policy planner
In the very broadest of sense I suppose it does, it relates to everyone in the district. Through things like the long term planning process, you take in as many different views as you can.	Waipa District Council	K12 – Strategy planner

The majority of key informants believe their role takes on a predominantly indirect relationship with children and young people, whereby a direct relationship is either not required or has not been established. Only those key informants in community

development roles claimed that, in some way they held a direct relationship with children and young people. Key informants were inclined to portray their roles as relating to the community in its entirety, as opposed to outlining specific groups of interest. Key Informants 9 and 10 describe their roles of importance to the "the complete spectrum" (K9 – Council politician) and "the whole community" (K10 – Policy planner).

This community outlook is a concept promoted heavily in the LGA, a piece of legislation that has significant bearing on the operation of local councils. The ambiguity associated with the term community could be a limiting factor for the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. Matthews (2001) contends that the effectiveness of participation with children and young people is dependent on the methods used to engage with them. The term community is innately general and provides little guidance as to who should actually be involved in participation. Instead it promotes methods of participation that encompass the public, another ambiguous term, as opposed to targeted methods of participation that children and young people respond best to.

Key informants conveyed the extent, to which their roles are bound by processes associated with the RMA, and council documents such as LTCCPs and district plans. Key Informant 8, a environmental planner, states "children and young people tend not to be submitters", while Key Informant 3, a community development worker, describes participation involving children and young people as, "pretty non-existent, apart from those parents that are putting in submissions". The process of drafting a formal submission and having it considered in council appears to be the most common way of expressing your thoughts and opinions in council. The above comments made by Key Informants 8 and 3 suggest a lack of children and young people participating in the formal submission process, essentially promoting their exclusion from the decision-making process.

It appears key informants believe their roles have some bearing on the lives children and young people, but no less or more than any other group in the community. Key

informants make reference to the role of children and young people in "district plan reviews, plan changes and variations" (K2 – Policy planner) and "through things like long term planning" (K12 – Policy planner), suggesting that children and young people have a more involved role in policy planning compared to consents.

This perspective of a indirect relationship does not correlate with those views in Table 18 that indicate key informants generally perceive the inclusion of children and young people in council decision making as a positive initiative. This indirect relationship implies a continued lack of commitment on behalf of planning staff to provide for the participation of children and young people. The following table presents negative perspectives held by key informants on the capacity of children and young people to make valuable contributions to the decision-making process.

Table 20: Negative perspectives on the capacity of children and young people to act as contributing participants.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
In terms of the formal RMA process its probably a bit beyond them, certainly in the back ground stages in education they should be included.	Invercargill City Council	K5 – Policy planner
Without demining their input, there has to be a reality check and sometimes that's just not going to be there, and they are not going to understand the costs.	Waipa District Council	K12 – Strategy Planner
I guess when they are that young it's their parents responsibility to be looking out after them.	Invercargill City Council	K6 – Consents planner

A small number of key informants believe children and young people lack the capacity required to contribute in a meaningful way to council decision-making. This perspective was justified with notions of formality, parental responsibility and a lack of understanding of issues relevant to local councils. Key Informant 5, a policy planner, states "in terms of the formal RMA process its probably a bit beyond them", suggesting that the procedures associated with the RMA require a level of understanding not yet held by the majority of children and young people.

Key Informant 12, a strategy planner, states "there has to be a reality check and sometimes that's just not going to be there, and they are not going to understand the costs". Here the key informant doubts the quality of information received through participation with children and young people, insinuating that their thoughts or ideas are impractical. The following table presents positive perspectives held by key informants on the capacity of children and young people to make valuable contributions to the decision-making process.

Table 21: Positive perspectives on the capacity of children and young people to act as contributing participants.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key Informant
I think you learn something from the perspective child that is often very different from an adult	Hamilton City Council	K1 – Consents planner
The consultation with children is always amazing they have amazing ideas. They don't have the restriction of the adult mind, where reason comes in before they say something. They just go and you get so inspired, they just come up with ideas that have no strings attached, and as we get older we reason with our ideas.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker
They express themselves in a completely different way, they are unique	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
Their ideas and opinions and things are worthwhile, so long as they're not to out there. Its useful to see where they are at, I mean they have to live in the city as well.	Invercargill City Council	K5 – Policy Planner
It was not all necessarily thinking about the skate park or the wants and needs that people often associated with young people. But it was thinking about creating spaces and places where a range of people could meet and use.	Waipa District Council	K11 – Policy planner

The majority of key informants took a positive perspective on the capacity of children and young people to contribute to participation, regardless of the nature of decisions being made. Key Informant 1, a consents planner, states "you learn something from the perspective child that is often very different from an adult", while Key Informant 4, a youth development worker, states "they express themselves in a completely different way, they are unique". Findings from results are similar to those of Driskell (2002),

who asserts children and young people perceive their surrounding environment in a unique way, a perspective that cannot be replicated by any adult.

Positive perceptions held by key informants contrast with negative ones that relate to a lack of grounding, regarding those contributions to council decision-making made by children and young people. Key Informant 11, a policy planner, states when referring to participation involving children and young people, "it was not all…the wants and needs that people often associated with young people, it was thinking about creating spaces and places that a range of people could meet and use". This perspective opposes the view that the thoughts and opinions of children and young people gathered through participation are impracticable and out of touch with reality.

In the past a lack of confidence in the capacity of children and young people to make valuable contributions to the decision-making process encouraged their continued exclusion. Although the majority of planners interviewed portrayed a perspective in opposition to claims of insufficient capacity, a small number maintain that children and young people are inappropriate participants. Lyon (2007), Hinton (2008) and Freeman and Nairn (2003) came to a similar conclusion, asserting that a negative perspective concerning the capacity of children and young people to participate continues to promote their exclusion in the decision-making process.

5.6 Youth Council perspectives on the contribution of children and young people to planning

An analysis of questionnaires given to youth councillors has provided an insight, albeit limited, into the way in which children and young people view their inclusion in council decision-making. Figure 10 below presents a graphical representation of how youth councillors perceive their inclusion in council decision-making, regarding issues of relevance to them.

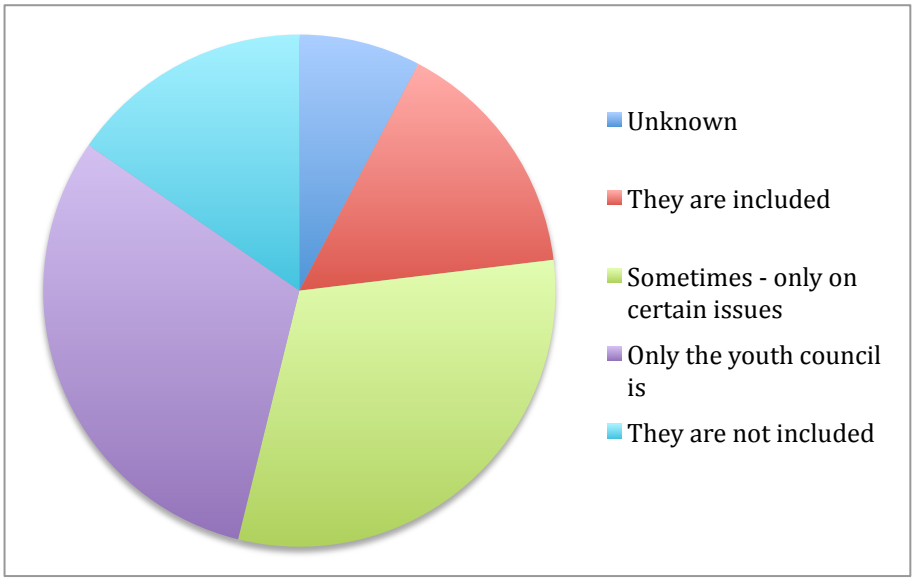

Figure 10: How youth councillors perceive their inclusion in issues of relevance to them

Youth councillors are of the opinion that the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making is primarily limited to youth councils and encompasses only certain issues. Planners are accused of failing to indentify how children and young people interact with every aspect of their environment, instead focusing on issues associated with play grounds and youth centers (C. Freeman, et al., 2004; Lennard, 2000). Youth councils are also widely considered the primary method of participation with children and young people in local councils (Matthews, 2001).

Children and young people value their surrounding environment for different reasons. The following figure presents a graphical representation of what children and young people value in their environment as perceived by youth councillors and key informants.

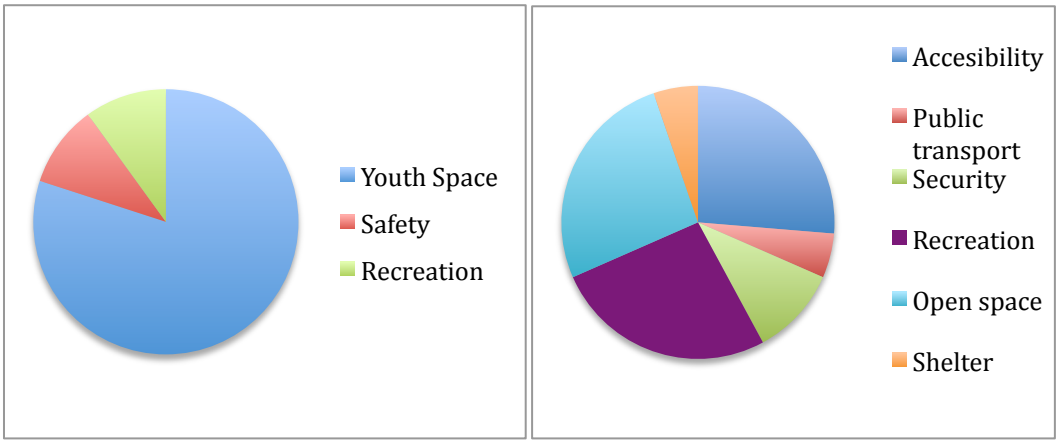

Figure 11: Pie graphs presenting what youth councillors (left) and key informants (right) perceived as important to children and young people.

The graph to the left presents the views of youth councillors from each case study youth council, while the graph to the right presents the views of key informants. The desire for a space in which children and young people can 'hang out' dominates the youth council perspective. In contrast accessibility, open space and recreation opportunities make up over three quarters of the key informant perspective. Assuming youth councils are a representative sample of the wider population of children and young people, these graphs suggest that there is a disjuncture in what they desire and what key informants believe they consider important.

This disjuncture suggests that children and young people perceive and ultimately value their environment for reasons not understood by key informants. The ability to establish this unique perspective is one of the primary benefits of participation with children and young people. Questionnaires filled out by youth councillors present findings similar to those stated in relevant theory, presented by authors like Matthews (2001), Hart (1997) and Wilks (2010).

5.7 Conclusion

The extent to which staff, policy and strategy dedicated to children and young people are useful in providing for their participation in council decision-making, is dependent on the awareness of council staff that can apply these resources in practice. Used

appropriately, these resources provide a basis for planners to design and implement methods targeting the participation of children and young people. Each case study council could use these resources more effectively. Monitoring is largely absent from council practice. Case study councils could benefit immensely from a greater emphasis on the monitoring of their attempts at participation, using information gained to modify procedure in the future.

Key informant perspectives of children and young people were generally positive, viewing their thoughts and opinions as both useful and relevant. However, the extent to which these positive perspectives influence how key informants approach their role in council appears limited. A small number of key informants expressed some reservation regarding the capacity of children and young people to provide valuable insight into issues of interest to local councils. These key informants preferred the concept of educating children and young people about council practice in an effort to build citizenship later in life.

There does not appear to be any consistent pattern in how key informants from each case study council perceive children and young people in relation to planning in general, their individual roles in council and their capacity to contribute to council decision-making. Instead the way in which key informants perceive children and young people seems to relate to their individual thoughts and opinions as opposed to council policy.

6

Results and Discussion: Methods of including children and young people in council decision-making and their associated problems

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine and discuss methods used to carry out participation with children and young people at each case study council. By analysing the perceived effectiveness of these methods this chapter will address Objective 5, highlighting ways of enhancing the inclusion of children and young people within council decision-making. In achieving this, data collected from key formant interviews will be discussed in regard to the theoretical framework, models and principles presented in Chapter Two. The following table presents methods of participation with children and young people referred to by key informants from each case study councils and from the Ministry of Youth Development.

Table 22: Methods of participation with children and young people mentioned by key informants

	Organisation			
Method	Hamilton City Council	Invercargill City Council	Waipa District Council	Ministry of Youth and development
Facebook	√	√	√	√
Twitter		√		
Youth council	√	√	√	√
Cool wall	√			
Participation advisors	√			
Drawing	√			
Local government conference		√		
Picture motivator		√		
Youth advisory group		√		
Lunch time school meetings		√		
Regional youth forum			√	
Public meetings		√		
Field trips		√		
Education – school projects	√	√	√	√
Work shops	√	√	√	√
Focus groups	√	√	√	√
Video				√
Online surveys				√
Surveys	√	√	√	√

6.2 Youth councils

It appears youth councils are the preferred method of providing children and young people an opportunity to influence the council decision-making process. Each youth council included in research differs in relation to various aspects of procedure, the following table summarises these.

Table 23: Youth council procedures at each case study council

	Waipa District Council	Hamilton City Council	Invercargill City Council
Appointment method	Head students from high schools in the district.	Application process advertised through schools and community boards	Nominations from schools, not necessarily head students.
Interaction with council	-Formal submissions -Workshops -Presentations from council -Youth events	-Formal Submissions -Focus group -Presentations, both to and from council -Youth events - involving council	-Formal submissions -Focus groups -Presentations, to and from council -Youth events - participatory in nature
Level of feedback	Low – however progress has been made recently	Medium	Medium

The Waipa District Council youth council is involved in predominantly token attempts at participation, although recent changes made to procedure are regarded as positive developments for participation. The Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council youth councils are given greater opportunity to influence the decision making process, however the extent to which their feedback is legitimately considered, is questioned by both youth councillors and key informants. The following table presents key informant perspectives regarding their associated youth councils.

Table 24: Key informant perspectives of effectiveness of their associated youth councils.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant number and role
Normally if we had a project and we want to engage we go through the youth council, I guess because it is easy, they are already established and they are familiar with how we work.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
They submit to council through the long-term plan and annual plan process, any strategies or things that mite be around, they don't necessarily have to be youth based.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth development worker
I think they are completely ineffective really…they are the kind of group that sits basically know where.	Waipa District Council	K10 – Policy Planner
It's a way of the council disseminating some information but I don't think its participation in terms of it being a two way street, it could work a lot better than it does.	Waipa District Council	K11 – Policy Planner
I think youth councils are a different set of people; they tend to be the higher achievers, not to say that other groups of youth are not higher achievers but they are different cultures.	Hamilton City Council	K4 – Youth Development worker

The majority of key informants were aware of their councils associated youth council, and many had presented to the group and in some cases received feedback. However, key informants expressed mixed opinions on how useful youth councils were as a method of participation. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, states "normally if we had a project and we want to engage we go through the youth council, I guess because it is easy, they are already established and they are familiar with how we work", identifying the ease at which the youth council can be reached as their reasoning for engaging with it. The majority of informants were unconvinced, and many expressed strong negative opinions on the effectiveness of youth councils as a method of participation. Key Informant 10, also a policy planner, states "I think they are completely ineffective really… they are the kind of group that sits basically know where", suggesting the youth council provides little or no benefits in aiding participation.

The way in which key informants described their associated youth councils supports claims made by Matthews and Limb (2003) and Wyness (2009), regarding their capacity to provide effective participation for the wider population of children and young people. Key Informant 11, a policy planner, states "it is a way of the council disseminating some information but I don't think its participation in terms of it being a two way street", supporting Matthews and Limb (2003) in their critique of the top-down approach to participation youth councils typically adopt. Wyness (2009) identifies a common lack of diversity in the background of youth councillors, similarly Key Informant 4, a youth development worker, states "I think youth councillors are a different set of people, they tend to be the higher achievers". The following table presents the views of youth councillors on the extent to which their youth council has the potential to influence council decision-making.

Table 25: Perspectives held by youth councillors on the operation of their youth council.

Supporting Quote	Council	Youth councilor number
We take decisions to the council but never hear back from them.	Invercargill City Council	1
It depends on how our opinions are expressed outside of youth council meetings.	Invercargill City Council	2
A small of amount ideas are heard but rarely acted on.	Invercargill City Council	3
I do not think that the council has really listened to the things/issues we have talked about	Hamilton City Council	4
The council doesn't ask our opinions very much	Hamilton City Council	5
They take into account our future as potential Waipa citizens and so are trying to accommodate for our future needs.	Waipa District Council	6
We have a limited say on what happens but we do get the chance to voice opinions on behalf of the youth in the area and give a different perspective.	Waipa District Council	7

Youth councillors generally took a negative outlook on the potential of their own youth council to influence council decision-making. Similarly, Stafford et al., (2003) found that despite their growth in popularity in local councils, there is little demand for youth

councils by children and young people. Youth Councillors 1 and 4 state respectively, "we take decisions to the council but never hear back form them" (YC1), and "I do not think that the council has really listened to the things/issues we have talked about " (YC4), suggesting a lack of feedback from the council is issue for their youth councils. The views of youth councillors are closely aligned with those of key informants, supporting Matthews and Limb (2003), Wyness (2009) and Stafford et al.,(2003), who maintain that youth councils are commonly used as an inappropriate method of participation.

Although the majority of key informants and youth councillors expressed dissatisfaction with the operation of their associated youth council, the outlook was not entirely negative. Each case study youth council has modified key elements of procedure and made progress in terms of participation. Key Informant 15, a regional participation advisor, states, "I think youth councils can be a very effective way of engaging with young people on the council, but also the young people who are network and engaged with it". The potential for youth councils to be an effective method of participation for children and young people also draws support from a number of authors. Keeley (2002) asserts that providing youth councils undergo continued review and evaluation of performance and the necessary changes to procedure are made, youth councils can be an effective method of participation. Although Matthews (2001) outlines youth councils as typically problematic, he acknowledges their potential if established with a number of key principles in mind.

Discussed above is the importance of diversity between youth councillors and their ability to draw on a wider population of children and young people for their ideas and opinions. This diversity could include age, ethnic background, education, gender and many other characteristics. The inclusion of a diverse range of people can increase the potential of youth councils to incorporate the views of different groups of children and young people. Key Informant 14, a national participation advisor, states "as long as they go to the youth council and the youth council consults with other youth, that is what makes a youth council effective". Youth Councillor 2 outlined the importance of incorporating the views of children and young people outside of the youth council

stating, "it depends on how our opinions are expressed outside of youth council meetings". Matthews (2001) and Keeley (2002) have acknowledged the potential for youth councils to modify their operation and become a valuable participation tool for children and young people. Stafford et al., (2003) describes youth councils as early in their development making it difficult to predict their future impact on participation. It should be noted that each youth council has made considerable progress since being initially made operational, modifying procedures to select youth councillors and encouraging council feedback.

6.3 Other Methods of council participation with children and young people

6.3.1 Local and regional gatherings of children and young people

Each council is involved in the organisation of gatherings for children and young people. The Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council hold events annually for children called 'Children's Day and 'Kidszone'. These events have little emphasis on increasing the participation of children in council decision-making, instead providing a day of fun activities. Case study councils have however, held successful events through which the views of young people have been successfully gathered. The Invercargill City Council recently held a regional youth forum titled 'Our Way Southland'. Young people from the region traveled to Invercargill at the expense of the council to partake in leadership training and discuss community outcomes in the Invercargill City Council's LTCCP. Key Informant 7, a community development worker, states "in the afternoon we went into council business and focused on our LTCCP and what the kids thought about the various well-beings". With over 100 young people in attendance the forum was considered a success.

Stafford et al., (2003) found that children and young people generally perceived these types of one-off events as of little value to participation. Although they allow for the involvement of a large number of participants, this makes it difficult for children and

young people to have their opinion heard. Driskell (2002) took a more positive perspective of these gatherings, identifying their potential to gather information from a cross section of the children and young people. The scale of these events also forces community wide recognition of participation involving children and young people (Driskell, 2002).

6.3.2 Social media and the Internet

The majority of key informants commented on the potential for the Internet, and more specifically the social media phenomenon associated with 'facebook' and 'twitter', to influence participation with children and young people. Although the potential of 'facebook' and 'twitter' as a method to target children and young people was acknowledged, key informants expressed uncertainty as to how information gathered in this forum would be presented to council. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, states "it works well at the informal stage of participation, when we get to that formal stage it is a lot more structured making it difficult to include information gathered through facebook".

There is evidence to suggest the perspective that children and young people want to be engaged through the use of the Internet is inconsistent with what they really desire in regard to participation. Key Informant 11, a policy planner, states "I was quite flummoxed when talking with the youth council, that they said they were not interested in computers…so you have to use a range of forums". Stafford et al., (2003) supports this finding that children and young people quite commonly have a negative perspective of online methods of participation.

Key Informant 15, a regional participation advisor, discusses the use of online platforms to distribute surveys and questionnaires, but asserts that these must be accompanied by hard copies that are also made available to the community. Online methods of participation are relatively new and "there are very few examples of good online engagement of young people by local government or central government" (K15

– National participation advisor). Commonly attempts at participation through the use of online methods encounter problems associated with limited to access computers and variable abilities in negotiating the Internet (Stafford et al., 2003).

6.3.3 Field Trips

Field trips as a method of participation were used in relation to the proposed development of a skate park in Invercargill. A group of children and young people from the skating community in Invercargill were taken to skate parks in Wanaka, Queenstown and Arrowtown to discuss elements of design. A second field trip was made to potential sites in Invercargill, to discuss their appropriateness in regard to issues of surveillance, access and existing facilities participants had noted during their previous excursion (K7 – Community development officer). The amount of resources invested into field trips can be significantly higher than other methods, however, the example above regarding the Invercargill skate park proves this investment can be worthwhile. Driskell (2002: 127) describes guided tours as "consistently one of the most valuable methods for understanding their perspectives on and use of the local environment".

6.3.4 Focus groups and workshops

Key informants outlined focus groups and workshops as effective methods of participation with children and young people. The following table includes key informant perspectives regarding focus groups and workshops involving children and young people at their respective councils.

Table 26: Key informant perspectives regarding focus groups and workshops as a participation method for children and young people

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
We had vision workshops with mainly high school aged children, in which we captured what people liked and did not like about their district and what they wanted to see change.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
As part of that process we did vision workshops, and we decided early on that we needed to capture what children like and did not like about their communities.	Waipa District Council	K11 – Policy planner
We had this cartoon of what the CBD could look like as a motivator to get participants to put down things that they would like to see in the CBD.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker

Each case study council has approached the administration of these participation exercises in a similar way, using schools to assemble participants. Key Informant 7, a community development worker and Key Informant 11, a policy planner, both refer to workshops in relation establishing a vision of what children and young people like and do not like about their city or district. The way in which this vision is established in focus groups and workshops can differ. Commonly some form of presentation by a member of staff is used to educate participants and encourage their feedback, however, key informants provided examples of more creative methods. A focus group held in relation to the redevelopment of the Invercargill Central Business District (CBD) used a "cartoon of what the CBD could look like as a motivator to get participants to put down things that they would like to see in the CBD" (K7 – Community development worker).

Key informants perceived the use of focus groups and workshops in a similar way to Driskell (2002), promoting their use early in the decision making process to identify key issues and recognising their potential to introduce different methods to stimulate discussion. Focus groups are not without their associated weaknesses and risks. Certain individuals in focus groups may dominate discussion or participants may avoid conflict in favor of group harmony, resulting in bias results (Driskell, 2002). Morgan et al., (2002) recognises the importance of a facilitator of discussion to ensure the group remains on topic and individuals are given equal opportunity to express their ideas.

Without this guidance, group dynamics can effect the quality and usefulness of information gathered.

6.3.5 Traditional

Traditional methods of participation such as public meetings, mail drops and the formal submission process are commonly used in council to allow the public to participate in the decision-making process. In the absence of more targeted methods, the council relies on these to encapsulate the views of children and young people as well. Generally this dependence results in the exclusion of children and young people. However, when traditional methods are adapted for the use of children and young people, they can produce valuable results. The following table presents key informant perspectives regarding the modification of traditional methods of participation to include children and young people.

Table 27: Key informant perspectives regarding the adaption of traditional methods of participation to provide for children and young people.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
We have had enormous public meetings, with youth and minimal adults…we had over 80 young people turn up to the first meetings.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
I have supported some youth who dramatised their whole submission, which was refreshing it, made people stand up and take a look.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker

Key informants provided a number of examples in which traditional methods of participation had been modified to cater for the needs of children and young people. In relation to participation regarding a new skate park in Invercargill, Key Informant 7, a community development worker, states “we have had enormous public meetings, with youth and minimal adults…we had over 80 young people”, demonstrating the potential of public meetings to attract children and young people. In relation to the submission process, Key Informant 3, also a community development worker, states “youth

dramatised their whole submission, which was refreshing, it made people stand up and take a look", presenting the flexibility involved in making a submission to council.

The success of these traditional methods adapted for the use of children and young people is characterised by the formation of an environment in which children and young people feel comfortable expressing their ideas. Stafford et al., (2003) found that children were hesitant in expressing their views in a situation requiring direct contact with politicians. Driskell (2002) supports the use of role-play and drama in the formal arena of decision-making, to allow children and young people to communicate their thoughts and opinions in a manner less intimidating than speaking directly to a group of adults.

6.3.6 More abstract methods of participation

There appears to be a growing desire for more creative and targeted methods of participation for children and young people. Key informants alluded to a number of examples in which participation with children and young people differed from more traditional methods. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, discussed the use of a 'cool wall', which involves children and young people posting pictures on a scale of 'coolness'. Similarly Key Informant 14, a national participation advisor, described a recent participation project in which children and young people used photos to showcase and talk about issues of concern in their life or their surrounding environment. Driskell (2002) describes the value of photos in providing a basis for discussion and a form of visual data. It was the general consensus of key informants that these attempts at participation were more effective than methods used in the past, and should be utilised more often and in relation to broader issues.

6.4 Models of Participation

Hart (1997), Shire (2001) and Francis and Lorenzo (2002) have all constructed models in an attempt to demonstrate the various levels at which children and young people can be considered involved in participation. The variable and complex nature of council decision-making however, means it is inherently difficult to define each case study council's position in any of the models constructed by the above authors.

6.4.1 Hart's Ladder of Participation

The diversity in attempts at participation with children and young people means each council's position on the ladder encompasses a range of different levels of participation, or 'rungs of the ladder'. Often participation is marked by tokenism, however key informants provided numerous examples of more effective participation with children and young people. The following figure presents Hart's (1969) 'Ladder of Participation', with an indication of the levels of involvement at which each case study council has carried out participation.

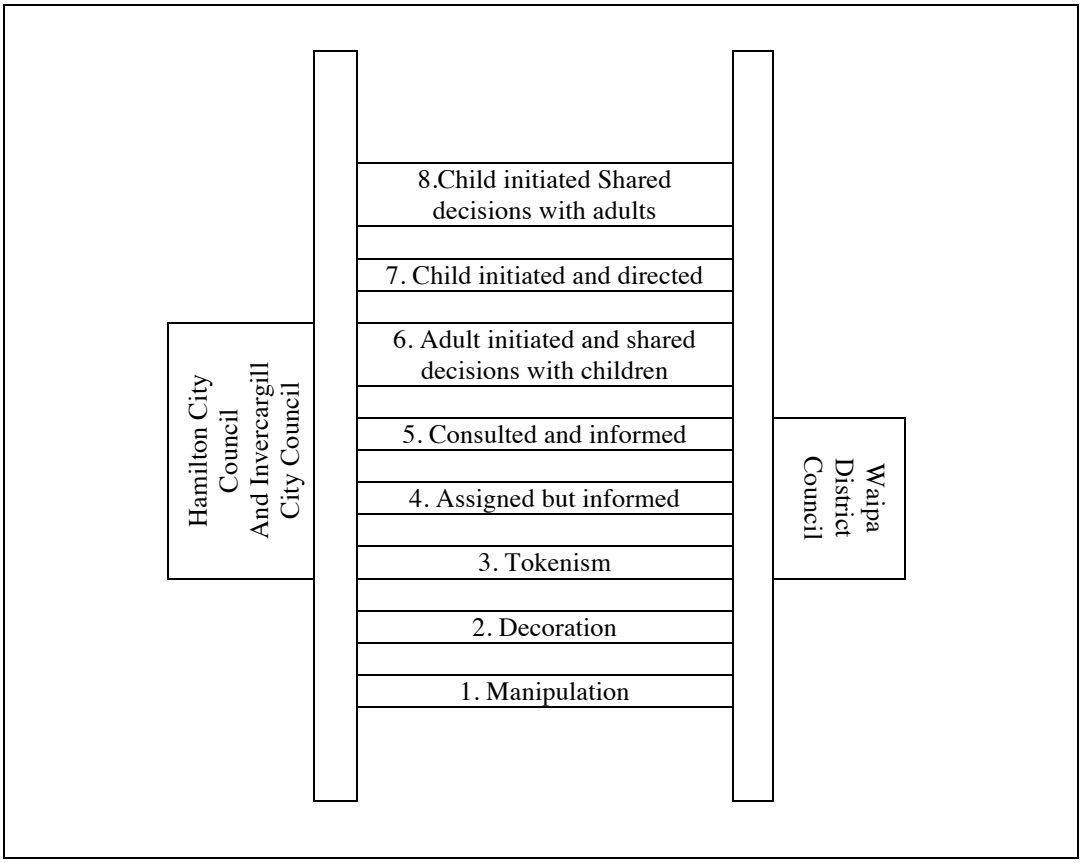

Figure 12: Harts Ladder of Children's Participation: An analysis tool (Source: Adapted from Hart, 1997)

Key informants from each case study council gave examples of participation with children and young people that involved some degree of tokenism. The Hamilton City Council and Invercargill City Council provided examples of participation with children and young people at level six, 'adult initiated and shared decisions'. The most inclusive examples of participation with children and young people given by key informants from the Waipa District Council were limited to level five, 'consulted and informed'. At no point was manipulation or decoration evident in council practice, but participation does not appear to have reached a level of inclusiveness where decisions were child initiated or directed. Figure 12 provides a useful depiction of the variable nature of participation with children and young people at each case study council, however, it provides little explanation regarding the complexity involved with this participation. The following table expands on Figure 12, providing examples of

participation carried out at each case study council that correspond to the different levels of Hart's (1969) Ladder of Participation'.

Table 28: Examples of participation at each case study council that correspond to levels of participation as defined by 'Hart's Ladder of Participation'

	Methods of participation		
Level of Participation	Hamilton City Council	Invercargill City Council	Waipa District Council
6. Adult initiated and shared decisions with children	• Participation advisors	• Field trips/ guided tours • Advisory committee	
5. Consulted and informed	• Drawing • Focus groups • Work shops	• Focus groups • Work shops	• Focus groups • Work Shops • Surveys
4. Assigned but informed	• Public meetings • Youth council • School projects	• Public meetings • Youth council • School projects	• Youth councils • School projects
3. Tokenism	• Youth council	• Youth council	• Youth council

6.4.2 Pathways to Participation

Shire (2001) constructed a model titled 'Pathways to Participation' in an effort to provide councils, what is essentially a step-by-step guide to evaluating their responsibility to involve children and young people in participation. Figure 13 below presents Shire's (2001) 'Pathways to Participation'. It is intended that users will start at the bottom row and move right, progressing to the above row only if they answer yes to each question.

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
5. Children share power and responsibility for making decision-making	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
4.Children are involved in decision-making processes.	Are you ready to let children join your decision making process?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decisions making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decisions making processes?
3. Children's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Does your decision making process enable you to taken children's views in to account?	Is it a policy requirement that's children's views must be given due weight in decisions making?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
1. Children are listened to.	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

Figure 13: Pathways to participation (adapted from Shier 2001)

Outlining a position on the model at which each case study council can no longer progress is difficult. In regard to openings, each council appears to be meeting the requirements at level three as willing recipients of children's views. Whether each council has an enabling decision-making process for children and young people is questionable. Methods in which children and young people express their ideas often produce information in a form that is difficult to balance in weighting with formal submissions. At times children and young people have negotiated the decision-making process through appropriate methods of participation administered by council staff and have been relatively successful. To achieve this however, it requires a significant

investment of resources and a high level of commitment on behalf of those facilitating participation.

Assuming each council meets the requirements to progress to level three, they would be required, under council policy, to give due weight to children's views in making decisions. Under each council's relevant LTCCP the importance of communities is emphasised, however, the Invercargill City Council is the only council that has an operational youth policy that provides for the participation of children and young people. If a dedicated policy is required to progress to level four, where children are considered to be involved in decision-making, only the Invercargill City Council would progress. Shier (2001) defines this progression as the minimum level at which councils can claim to be endorsing UNCROC, meaning the Waipa District Council and the Hamilton City Council would fail to meet their obligations to provide for children and young peoples rights.

6.4.3 Seven Realms of Children's Participation

Participation with children and young people in each case study council draws on elements from multiple realms of participation as defined by Francis and Lorenzo (2002). Case study councils draw on elements from the realms of 'Learning', 'Rights' and 'Institutional'. Below an explanation of these three realms can be seen in Table 29.

Table 29: Realms of learning, rights and institution from the Seven Realms of Children's Participation (adapted from Francis and Lorenzo, 2001).

Realm of participation	Description of realm
Learning	Where participation occurs through education. Must occur alongside other realms of participation to be effective.
Rights	Where children are considered participants as part of their rights as citizens. Can result in the environmental needs of children being overlook and attempts at participation are often token.
Institutional	Where children and young people play an integrated role in the decision making process, but in a environment that is controlled by adults

A number of key informants described education as both a method of participation and a platform from which participation can be developed. Key Informant 12, a strategy planner, states when referring to educating children and young people on council procedure and challenges, "I think it is important if not more important than the feedback side of things". Similarly Key Informant 13, a consents planner, describes the use of a mock hearing in relation to the development of an amusement park, requiring children and young people to explore the costs and benefits of this scenario to better understand planning processes. This education element appears to be a strong component of council relations with children and young people, supporting the existence and influence of the 'Learning' realm on council participation with children and young people.

Francis and Lorenzo (2001) describe the participation realm of 'Rights' as resulting in token attempts at participation with children and young people who are perceived as equal citizens. Results appear to support the existence of this realm, as children and young people are commonly excluded through the use of inappropriate methods of participation. Although the notion of children and young people as equal citizens could be viewed as a positive development for their participation, it seems it has resulted in the perspective that children and young people have the same needs as their fellow citizens. It is possible this perspective of equality has promoted the use of token inappropriate methods of participation to engage with children and young people.

Within the 'Institutional' realm children and young people are involved in decision-making through participation, but operate under the control of adults. Key informants provided examples of effective participation with children and young people, however, at no point were they in a position to make decisions on behalf of council. Instead relying on councillors to make informed decisions on their behalf. Council practice has not yet established what Hart (1997) describes as 'child-initiated shared decisions with adults', Shier (2001) states as requiring shared power and responsibility for decision-making and what Francis and Lorenzo (2002) classify as the 'Proactive' realm.

6.5 Conclusion

Each council has displayed the ability to provide effective methods of participation for children and young people. Of concern is the lack of frequency in which these methods are put to use. Models provide a visual representation of the level of inclusiveness of participation at each council, although they fail to denote the complexity in which this participation is carried out. Reliance on youth councils and the failure to adapt traditional methods of participation, most notably the formal submission process, means participation with children and young people is often characterised by tokenism. The use of more effective methods of participation for children and young people, whilst it may be limited, suggests positive developments continue to be made in regard to their inclusion in council decision-making.

7

Results and Discussion: Moving past the challenges to effective participation with children and young people

7.1 Introduction

There are a number of challenges associated with the successful inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. This chapter will address Objective 6, 'to determine the challenges planners encounter when engaging with children and young people and highlight ways of overcoming these challenges to better provide for their participation in council decision-making'. In achieving this, the chapter will analyse data collected from key formant interviews and discuss relevant information in regard to the theoretical framework, models and principles presented in Chapter Two.

7.2 Challenges associated with participation involving children and young people

7.2.1 Time frames

Time frames were identified as a major hindrance to implementing effective participation for children and young people. A number of key informants highlighted the difficulty in working within allocated time frames whilst, providing for the needs of children and young people. Below, Table 30 presents key informant perspectives

regarding time frames and the way they impact upon participation with children and young people.

Table 30: Key informant perspectives regarding the time frames they must work within.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
We often have hideous time frames that we are trying to meet, we are trying to talk to all sorts of different people and trying to balance quite different views.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
Time frames are not friendly and they are hard to work with.	Hamilton City Council	K1 – Consents planner
You have to balance how much time you invest into getting those views.	Waipa District Council	K12 - Strategy Planner
You are very much driven by time frames now that the discount policy has been put in place.	Waipa District Council	K13 – Consents planner

The majority of key informants identified time frames as an issue in providing effective participation for children and young people. In addition, the discount policy associated with resource consents was acknowledged as element of added pressure for consent planners. Key Informant 13, a consents planner, states in relation to the discount policy, "you are very much driven by time frames now that the discount policy has been put in place". Key informants highlighted the challenge of balancing different perspectives in the time frames allocated for processing consents and drafting policy. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, states "we often have hideous time frames that we are trying to meet, engaging with all sorts of different people and trying to balance quite different views". Clearly time frames play an integral role in determining the extent to which council planners can commit to involving children and young people in council decision-making.

Although key informants perceived time frames as a limiting factor in participation with children and young people, they were also largely accepted as a reality planners must work within. Central government clearly perceives time frames as a necessary element of council planning. Recently legislation was modified to ensure development could proceed with minimal hindrance through the consent process. The Resource

Management Amendment Bill (2009) introduced major reform to the resource management process, amongst other significant changes, the Bill limited who could potentially submit on an application and enforced a discount for applicants if time frames were not met (K13 – Consents planner).

Freeman and Nairn (2003) describe time frames as promoting token attempts at participation with children and young people in an effort to merely fulfill a requirement to consult. Planners are essentially forced to sacrifice the legitimate inclusion of children and young people to meet time frames by implementing methods that produce the most immediate results or alternatively to forego their inclusion all together.

7.2.2 Legislation

Key informants identified the RMA as the most influential piece of legislation they work with. Varying opinions were expressed as to the extent to which planners are restricted or guided in their role by the RMA. What was particularly evident was the variation in perspective, between consent planners and policy planners. The following table presents key informant perspectives on the potential for planners to work within the RMA and initiate effective participation for children and young people.

Table 31: Key informant perspectives on how their role relates to the RMA

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
In the initial stages not a lot, but once you actually start the formal process it is quite restrictive…what you can accept in terms of submissions is quite restrictive.	Invercargill City Council	K5 – Policy planner
I know I said the RMA doesn't stop us engaging with these people, but when you get to the formal end of the process maybe it restricts how you can do that.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
I think it is quite restrictive really…the RMA says the property owners and occupiers so that is whom we consult with.	Invercargill City Council	K6 – Consents planner
Legislation says you must get written approval from an affected person, so you are assuming the effected person is a landowner and or occupier.	Hamilton City Council	K13 – Policy planner

Policy planners identified a high degree of freedom for participation in the early stages of drafting policy, but acknowledged an increased level of restriction in what they described as the 'formal processes' in the later stages of drafting and implementation. Key Informant 5, a policy planner, states "I know I said the RMA doesn't stop us engaging with young people, but when you get to the formal end of the process maybe it restricts how you can do that". Consent planners identified their role as following a very legalistic process, where participation was focused on obtaining written approval from landowners or occupiers. Key Informant 13, a consents planner, states "legislation says you must get written approval from an affected person, so you are assuming the effected person is a landowner and or occupier". Obviously there are challenges associated with meeting expectations under the RMA in relation to participation. Achieving inclusive participation for children and young people, while meeting the demands of the RMA would appear to be a difficult task, and one that is rarely accomplished.

Discussed in Section 5.2 was the impact the RMA has on notions of sustainable management and how this concept affects the way in which key informants perceive children and young people. The RMA may promote the consideration of children and young people in council decision-making, however, it does not necessarily ensure their

participation. Fookes (1996) outlines numerous barriers associated with participation under the RMA, including the formality of procedures, technical complexity, financial considerations and equity considerations. Although key informants made little mention of financial constraints on children and young people, they highlighted similar challenges to those stated by Fookes (1996).

7.2.3 Language

A number of key informants indentified the language used by planners in communicating their ideas in written documents, as inappropriate for the use of children and young people. The inability for children and young people to understand information being presented to the public presents a significant barrier to their participation in council decision-making. The following table presents key informant perspectives regarding the language used by council staff to communicate with the public.

Table 32: Key informant perspectives regarding the use of inappropriate language when engaging with children and young people.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
Not everybody is a scholar, sometimes the language…puts people off because people don't think they can write to that level.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker
Planners use a lot of jargon, they struggle to come down to the level of kids.	Waipa District Council	K12 - Strategy Planner
Ideas are not clearly and concisely communicated a lot of the time, instead bureaucratic and legal language is used.	Waipa District Council	K10 – Policy planner

Key informant perspectives regarding council use of language, relate to both the level to which a submission must be written and the way in which ideas are communicated. Key Informant 3, a community development worker, states "not everybody is a scholar, sometimes the language…puts people off because people don't think they can write to that level". This quote suggests children and young people believe they cannot write to

the required standard to have their thoughts and opinions legitimately considered by decision makers.

Key informants also highlighted the use of jargon in council documents as inappropriate for children and young people. Key Informant 10, a policy planner, states "ideas are not clearly and concisely communicated, instead bureaucratic and legal language is commonly used". To provide valuable feedback children and young people must first understand the issue they are commenting on. It appears councils are failing to provide the appropriate level of explanation to children and young people, limiting the extent to which their participation is useful. It should be noted that other groups experience the same challenges associated with language that children and young people struggle with, when attempting to voice their concerns in council.

Freeman et al., (2004), Hart (1997) and Hinton (2008) have identified the use of inappropriate language, both in communication with children and young people and requiring them to communicate their thoughts in an inappropriate manner. Hinton (2008) asserts that the language ability of children and young people should not be used as an indication of their capacity to participate. Despite an individual's inability to write what would be described as a formal submission, their opinion can still be considered valuable. Freeman et al., (2004) include a comprehensive list of ways of communicating with children and young people that must be avoided, included in this list is the use of long words and jargon.

7.2.4 Transforming ideas into something useful

Key informants have established the potential for children and young people to make valuable contributions to council decision-making through more targeted and captivating methods of participation. However, the task in which raw data from children and young people is transformed into a functional form of information for decision makers, was identified as inherently difficult to achieve. The table below

presents the perspectives of key informants on the transformation of information gathered through participation with children and young people.

Table 33: Key informant perspectives regarding the problematic nature of gathering information from children and young people and presenting it to council.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
I think the difficultly is providing that transition for information presented in that way to a more formal arena.	Hamilton City Council	K2 – Policy planner
It is hard to transform those ideas into something useful and meaningful for council.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker
You cannot say I have got 23 submissions and I've got five tweets and one twitter….it is a weighting thing, if someone writes you a two-page submission how do you balance that with a one-sentence tweet.	Invercargill City Council	K8 - Environmental planner

Council procedure is not equipped to provide for information presented in what could be described as abstract forms. Without an effective method of presenting the views of children and young people to decision makers, it is difficult to have them legitimately considered. Key Informant 2, a policy planner, states "I think the difficultly is providing that transition for information presented in that way to a more formal arena". An increased level of formality in the later stages of council decision-making has created a forum in which information can only be presented under certain guidelines and procedures. Key Informant 8, an environmental planner, gives the example of, "you cannot say I have got 23 submissions, five tweets and one twitter" and states, "it is a weighting thing, if someone writes you a two-page submission how do you balance that with a one-sentence tweet". Clearly there are underlying issues associated with council decision-making that obstruct children and young people from fully participating and influencing the process.

Results present similar findings to ideas expressed by Freeman and Nairn (2003) that depict institutional systems as limiting the extent to which council staff can commit to participation with children and young people. The traditional and ingrained nature of

council procedure has resulted in what could be described as a lag between council practice and best practice. The Ministry of Youth and Development, ARACY and various other organisations have released best practice guidelines in regard to council procedure, promoting the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. It appears the extent to which these are useful however, is dependent on a commitment on behalf of local councils to modify procedure for their adoption.

7.2.5 Politics

Associated with council decision-making is the risk that decisions will be made out of political intent or commitment, rather than what is best for communities. A number of key informants recognised the underlying political structure of local councils as a potential challenge for the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. Key Informant 8, a environmental planner, states "it is all about the motivation for the decision maker to be in that role", suggesting their reasoning in making decisions is derived from the values they brought to that position.

Each council has their own challenges that they must find ways to manage and overcome. The Waipa District Council has an aging population and suffers from the loss of young people to territory institutions, such as universities and other education facilities outside of the district. This could be perceived as a loss of influence as young people are increasingly perceived as a minority in their communities. This also has consequences for the political motivation behind decisions made in council. There is potential for greater weight to be given to the consideration of the needs of elderly at the expense of children and young people. Key Informant 11, a policy planner, states "there is a risk, because we are a district with a significant aging population, that the youth lose their voice in council".

7.2.6 Children and young people

In terms of participation it is possible that the general character of children and young people is a significant barrier to their own inclusion. The following table presents perspectives of key informants regarding their struggles in working with children and young people.

Table 34: Key informant perspectives regarding political influences on council decision-making.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
Maybe a lack of knowledge or a lack of understanding, a feeling that, what is the point because it will not make a difference anyway.	Hamilton City Council	K3 – Community development worker
Kids today are really and truly only thinking about what is happening today, tomorrow and maybe about the assignment due next week	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
We find that it is very difficult to attract young people along to our forums, young people do not really see that it is interesting.	Waipa District Council	K11 – Policy planner

Key informants noted the difficulty in motivating and captivating children and young people to take notice of issues in their environment and voice their concerns regarding them. Key Informant 3, a community development worker, states "we find it very difficult to attract young people along to our forums, young people do not really see that it is interesting". Children and young people typically lack motivation to become involved in issues of interest to council. Key Informant 7, also a community development worker, states "kids today are really and truly only thinking about what is happening today, tomorrow and maybe about the assignment due next week". It is possible these characteristics of children and young people provide one of the most significant challenges council staff must overcome to effectively engage with them. If children and young people cannot recognise the value of their own inclusion in council decision-making, it makes it difficult to secure their attendance and input.

7.2.7 Lack of child friendly environments

The majority of youth councillors reported a lack of locations in which children and young people can meet and feel welcomed. The construction and existence of environments like these relate closely to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making (Woolcock, et al., 2010). Authors such as Wilks (2010) and Nordstrom (2010) describe these spaces as child friendly environments, and like Woolcock (2010), believe in their potential to link aspects of decision-making and planning to children and young people.

Key informants generally made little mention of environments that would be considered child friendly, only those in community development roles stated their importance for children and young people. Key Informant 4, a youth development worker, suggests the development of "a really big shared spaced", promoting the mixing of children and young people with other age groups. This mixing can encourage aspects of security, safety, visibility and helps build citizenship. Key informant 7, a community development worker, describes the use of a youth advisory group in the redevelopment of the Invercargill CBD, encouraging the inclusion of child friendly elements into its design.

A lack of appreciation for the potential of child friendly environments to build power and agency, both through their existence and development, could limit the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2009) promotes child friendly environments as a space for enjoyment and access to community services, facilitating children and young people to engage with their local community.

7.3 Where we stand now and looking to the future for participation

Sandercock (2000), Amado et al., (2010) and Hart (1997) describe communication and collaboration as increasingly dominant in the planning profession, promoting consensus

building between stakeholders. Planning practice generally reflects those developments stated in theory by the above authors. However, the extent to which these notions of communication and collaboration relate to the inclusion of children and young people appears limited. While there is no doubt participation has become more inclusive, the challenges associated with engaging with children and young people, still promote a relationship marked be elements of advocacy planning as opposed to collaboration.

Current trends imply the continued progression of participation to higher levels of inclusiveness. Slowly council procedure should adapt to provide for the needs of children and young people. These developments however, cannot occur under the current framework local councils operate within. Change must be promoted from both internal and external sources, encouraging councils to address those challenges discussed above in Section 7.2.

7.4 Ways to move forward

Although the challenges outlined by key informants make participation with children and young people difficult, they are manageable and can be overcome to increase their inclusion in council decision-making. The following figure presents a SWOT analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks associated with children and young peoples participation in council decision-making.

In Figure 14, strengths and weaknesses relate to the current situation regarding children and young peoples participation in council decision-making, opportunities are those methods of developing practice and threats are those risks associated with implementing the opportunities. While it is useful to view the situation regarding the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making holistically, of particular interest are the opportunities or avenues for progress and the risks associated with these.

Figure 14: SWOT analysis of children's involvement in council decision-making.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Council staff dedicated to advocating for children and young people in council. • Council staff with established links to groups of children and young people. • Strategies detailing children and young people's needs, and the council's commitment to their participation. • Use of targeted methods of participation for children and young people. • Freedom in early stages of decision-making to consult. • Acceptance by council staff that children and young people can play a meaningful role in council decision-making.	• Lack of awareness and commitment to participation with children and young people. • Use of inappropriate methods of participation to engage with children and young people. • High cost of implementing targeted participation methods for children and young people. • Limited time frames to carry out participation. • Lack of communication between departments in council. • Restricted in how participation can be carried out in the later stages of decision-making. • Difficulty in transforming information presented by children and young people into something useful for decision makers. • Difficulty in securing children and young people as participants.
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Develop linkages with outside groups of children and young people, for example, university student associations and schools. • Improve communication with council staff that work directly with children and young people. • Promote the importance of participation with children and young people for community well being. • Increase media attention regarding the benefits of participation involving children and young people. • Renew strategy dedicated to children and young people and educate staff as to the needs of children and young people. • Instill a commitment to meaningful participation with children and young people in council staff.	• Increased cost to ratepayers to allow for extended use of resources. • Delays in development due to extended time frames. • High work loads for council staff. • Perception of inequality in council if other groups perceive children and young people as receiving unwarranted attention.

Key informants highlighted various avenues in which participation involving children and young people could be promoted and increased. In the above SWOT table these have been presented as opportunities. Opportunities relate to both internal and external changes that could promote the increased inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. The following table presents key informant perspectives regarding opportunities for the development of participation with children and young people.

Table 35: Key informant perspectives regarding the development of participation with children and young people to levels of higher inclusiveness.

Supporting Quote	Council	Key informant
I think the success of communities taking on board the principles of youth participation results in a flow on effect to councillors having a real passion for engaging with young people.	Ministry of Youth and Development	K14 – National participation advisor
The media in all its forms…impacts on others professionally, then they talk about it in the community and then the push comes through to council.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker
I don't even know if its being more effective but providing for their participation in it, I guess a commitment has to be made to involving them in your process.	Waipa District Council	K13 – Consents planner
That people can actually open their minds sufficiently to think who is absolutely everybody that should know about this or we should talk to about this.	Invercargill City Council	K7 – Community development worker

Key informants acknowledged the media and community as crucial external influences in advancing the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. Key Informant 14, a national participation advisor, states "I think the success of communities taking on board the principles of youth participation results in a flow on effect to councillors having a real passion for engaging with young people". Councillors hold significant weight in the council decision making process. They are elected by their communities on a basis of their own beliefs and values that are ultimately applied in reasoning when making decisions.

The importance of communities in forcing change to otherwise embedded procedures in local councils was explored by Reisch (2005) in his discussion of radical community organising as a method to achieve social justice. The potential for council procedure to adapt to the changing needs of the communities they govern is limited by the nature of legislation and a lack of knowledge (Lyon, 2007). Although trends suggest that the inclusiveness of participation for children and young people will improve, the period of time in which this occurs could be lengthy. The notion of radical community organising could force local councils to react faster, initiating change and ensuring councils continually reassess their procedure.

Communities have the potential to play a pivotal role in influencing how children and young people are valued in council. Individuals base the election of councillors on their ability to represent their community in council, applying the values for which they were elected for when making decisions. If communities come to value the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making, it is likely this same perspective will be established in council through the election process. Key informants noted the importance of the media in building this understanding. Key Informant 7 states, "the media in all its forms…impacts on others professionally, then they talk about it in the community and then the push comes through to council". The media is a powerful tool in exchanging information and influencing peoples perspectives. By educating communities as to the benefits associated with participation involving children and young people, this knowledge ultimately infiltrates council through the election of community representatives.

Key informants noted the potential for numerous internal changes to be made in the case study councils to better provide for children and young peoples participation. These changes included; better communication with council staff directly associated with children and young people, earlier engagement, the use of targeted methods of participation and modifications to council procedure to allow for the presentation of information in different forms in the later stages of decision-making.

Despite a lengthy list of changes, key informants portrayed the most significant change, as an increase in awareness of children and young people and a commitment to their participation. Key Informant 7, a community development worker, states "I want people to actually open their minds sufficiently to think, who is absolutely everybody that should know about this and have a role to play in its development". A key finding from Chapter Five suggests key informants generally perceive the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making, as useful and in some cases necessary. However, it would appear that this perspective is not sufficiently influencing the way in which council staff approach participation with children and young people.

7.4 Conclusion

The inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making through participation could be carried out more effectively. Although councils face a number of challenges in providing methods that consistently promote inclusive participation, there are a number of avenues that can be explored to initiate change. These avenues could be viewed as impractical or unrealistic, however, whether it is through radical community organising or gradual change these changes must be made.

8

Recommendations and Conclusion

8.1 Conclusion

This research has explored processes associated with participation undertaken by local councils, accessing the extent to which children and young people are included in the decision-making process. This exploration has been based around six objectives, collectively aimed at establishing a theoretical framework for the research, determining the state of participation involving children and young people in local councils and identifying opportunities for improvement. This thesis draws heavily from the planning profession, investigating the extent to which planners in local councils have adopted principles and models of participation stated in planning theory.

Earlier chapters provided the basis from which primary research developed. Chapter Two explored the various theoretical perspectives regarding the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making. Chapter Three details the methodology and methods used to collect and analyse data. Chapter Four placed the theoretical perspectives within the New Zealand context and introduced the case study councils on which primary research was based. Chapters Five, Six and Seven include the results of research and their discussion. Chapter Five focuses on the way in which children and young people are perceived in relation to their inclusion in council decision-making. Chapter Six highlights the variation in methods used to engage with children and young people and their relative success at each case study council. Chapter Seven explores

different avenues for the advancement of participation involving children and young people, increasing the inclusiveness of council decision-making. This Chapter will outline key findings and state recommendations in an effort to conclude the research.

8.2 Key findings

8.2.1 Children and young people are necessary and able

Research is centered on the belief that the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making is both necessary and valuable. Authors like Driskell (2002) Hart (1997) and Freeman (2005) have all stressed the importance of considering the perspective of children and young people when making decisions in council. The same authors maintain that children and young people hold the necessary capacity to provide valuable insight into issues that extend more broadly than youth centers and playgrounds.

Participation involving children and young people benefits planners and policy makers, other community members and children and young people themselves (Driskell, 2002). By engaging with children and young people effectively it helps promote their healthy development, decisions made in council are better informed and the needs of children and young people are better understood. Importantly conclusions drawn from primary data collection are inline with those concepts established in secondary data, validating the importance of engaging with children and young people and their ability to provide valuable feedback.

8.2.2 The inclusion of children and young people remains inadequate

Despite the benefits of children and young people's participation being well established through key informant interviews and in planning theory, their participation in council decision-making is still inadequately provided for. This apparent inability of local

councils to provide for the needs of children and young people in participation, relates to both council procedure and the choice of methods used to engage with them.

Council procedure

The formality and bureaucracy associated with the presentation of information in council, means procedure lacks the necessary flexibility to adapt to the way in which children and young people communicate their ideas. Methods of participation such as photographs, social media and drawings allow for children and young people to effectively express their ideas in a manner that they find stimulating and enjoyable. Council procedure restricts the way in which information gathered using non-traditional methods of participation could be presented in council. Inevitably, the optimal environment for the exchange of information is not created, decision makers go uninformed and children and young people remain excluded.

Methods of Participation

Discussed above were some of the difficulties associated with council procedure and how these promote exclusion, however, often the choice of method to engage with children and young people is the first point of failure. Principles of participation with children and young people have been documented by authors like Hart (1997), Steinitz (2009) and Head (2006) as fundamental to their successful inclusion in council decision-making. Research suggests that too often these principles are overlooked in designing and implementing methods of participation for children and young people. Children and young people have a unique perspective of their environment and therefore require targeted methods through which they can express this perspective. Methods that provide for the participation of adults, likely fail to engage effectively with children and young people. Instead methods of participation with children and young people must be diverse, flexible and target their specific needs. Traditional methods of participation like leaflet drops, news paper notifications and even youth

councils lack the necessary elements to effectively engage with children and young people.

8.2.3 Planners endorse an indirect relationship with children and young people in their roles

The continued exclusion of children and young people in council decision-making does not appear to result from the perspective that children and young people are not legitimate participants. Research suggests that planners generally have a positive outlook on the value of participation with children and young people, as well as their capacity to provide practical and informed feedback. The continued exclusion of children and young people is instead derived from the belief that the role of planners involves an indirect relationship with children and young people. Planners fail to see children and young people as a priority audience that they must engage with and report back to, instead the voice of larger more vocal groups is given greater weight when making decisions.

This perspective of an indirect relationship places pressure on advocates for children and young people in council to provide them with the opportunity to voice their concerns in the decision-making process. Key informant perspectives indicate that these advocates are a valuable resource for local councils, but are increasingly losing their jobs or being moved into community development roles where their expertise is lost. Policy and strategy provides an opportunity for councils to change this perspective, outlining the responsibilities of planners to engage with children and young people. However, these documents must continually be promoted within council or they are inevitably forgotten and go unused.

8.2.4 The gap between theory and practice

Key findings indicate that a gap exists between what academics are promoting in regard to participation involving children and young people and what planners in local councils are practicing. Although New Zealand ratified UNCROC in 1993 and the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making is supported by central government, local councils still lack the necessary commitment to their participation.

Two of the three case study councils fail to reach what Shire (2001) defines as meeting their obligations under UNCROC, and only a limited number of their attempts at participation could be described as in the upper levels of Hart's (1997) 'Ladder of Children's Participation'. This lack of commitment to meaningful participation involving children and young people is the result of a number of limiting factors. Time frames, legislation, language, the transformation of information, politics, children and young people themselves and the lack of child friendly environments were all identified in Chapter Seven as challenges that must be overcome to effectively engage with children and young people.

Despite these challenges, participation involving children and young people has evolved to increasingly more inclusive levels. Research provided a number of examples in which these challenges had been overcome to successfully engage with children and young people. Despite ongoing struggles to consistently involve children and young people in council decision-making, positive examples of their participation continue to shift their involvement in planning away from advocacy and towards collaboration and communication.

8.3 Recommendations

Four recommendations have been formulated on a basis of key findings drawn from research carried out at each case study council and at the Ministry of Youth

Development. Each recommendation aims to increase the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making by addressing issues associated with participation practice. Collectively recommendations have the potential to ensure that the right of children and young people to be heard and voice their concerns in council is upheld, irrelevant of any restrictions associated with allocating resources.

Recommendation One: Promote or implement dedicated youth strategies and staff dedicated to addressing the needs of children and young people in council.

Strategies and staff dedicated to participation involving children and young people have the potential to significantly improve their inclusion in council decision-making. Providing staff are aware and actively referring to strategies and policy, these documents provide both guidance and support when engaging with children and young people. Staff dedicated to children and young people have been identified as a resource planners rely on, or alternatively would like to see introduced to their council. Engaging with children and young people requires a comprehensive understanding of principles fundamental to their successful participation. It may be unrealistic to expect every planner working in local council to hold an in-depth understanding of these principles. Providing an individual that planners can consult with when carrying out participation, ensures that these principles are upheld throughout the decision-making process.

Recommendation Two: Modify council procedure to allow for information to be presented in ways children and young people are more comfortable with.

Too often participation is carried out with children and young people that effectively provides an opportunity for them to express their ideas and opinions, only for their perspective to be lost in the formality and bureaucracy associated with council procedure. The formal submission process is just one element of council procedure that that promotes the exclusion of children and young people in the later stages of the decision-making process. Commonly councils rely on traditional methods of collating information after participation. These methods fail to provide for information presented

in more abstract forms by children and young people. Modification of council procedure to provide for the presentation of information in a manner suited to children and young people, will better provide for their inclusion in council decision-making.

Recommendation Three: Increase community and media awareness regarding the benefits of participation involving children and young people for the wider community.

For any significant improvement to be made to the current situation regarding the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making, change must be motivated by factors outside of local councils as well as inside. Communities and media have been identified as having the potential to influence the participation of children and young people in local council decision-making. The media provides a means to influence the way in which people perceive certain issues. If communities can be educated as to the benefits of participation involving children and young people, this perspective can be established in local councils, through the election of councillors that reflect their community's values. Once in council, councillors are expected to endorse the values on which they were elected. If councillors believe in the value of engaging with children and young people, this will be reflected in their approach to making decisions.

Recommendation Four: When engaging with children and young people methods of participation must be diverse, flexible and targeted.

Commonly methods of participation lack the necessary diversity, flexibility and targeted effort to provide children and young people the opportunity to influence council decision-making. Children and young people are diverse, it is not surprising then that they respond best to a diverse range of methods that reflect their individual preferences. Methods must be flexible, accommodating for the entry and exit of children and young people when they feel their thoughts and opinions are of most value. Finally, methods aimed at engaging with children and young people must be targeted. Those implementing participation with children and young people must

actively seek out their input. Commonly planners publicise a project or issue and invite participation regarding it. This is insufficient, instead planners must actively approach children and young people and target their input.

8.4 Significance of research and future scope

Planning as a profession has evolved significantly from notions of master planning on which it was originally based. Participation is now considered an essential component of the planning process, removing the concept of planners as advocates and replacing it with planners as facilitators of collaboration and communication. What this research questioned, was the extent to which children and young people are involved in collaboration and communication or whether planners remain their advocates in the decision-making process. Although there are a number of existing critiques regarding children and young people's participation in local councils, this research provides an indication of any progress that has been made since levels of inclusion were last documented.

It is evident a number of areas should be investigated further to ensure the continued development of participation involving children and young people. Each recommendation essentially provides an opportunity for future research. The implementation of strategies, advocacy officers and appropriate methods of participation for children and young people require a detailed understanding of their operation in council. This understanding must be established before their implementation can be successfully endorsed and consequently adopted by local councils.

Community action has been identified as a necessary element in progressing participation involving children and young people to higher levels of inclusiveness. The necessary community action draws similarities with the notion of radical community organising outlined in Section 2.3.2, however, little is understood as to how these similarities would translate into a functional model to promote the required change.

Similarly, little is understood as to what practical modifications should be made to council procedure and how these should be implemented. Council procedure has become embedded in practice, making implementing any sort of change inherently difficult. Research must target, not only the necessary changes, but also how these changes can be promoted and effectively implemented in council.

8.5 Concluding remarks

Children and young people have a unique perspective on their surrounding environment, viewing issues and interactions in their communities in a way that cannot be replicated by adults. Their participation in council decision-making is then necessary if local councils seek to provide for the whole spectrum of the communities they govern. Research has shown that whilst participation involving children and young people has developed significantly since collaboration and communication became increasingly dominant in the planning process, their inclusion remains inadequate and is characterised by advocacy. Developments regarding the inclusion of children and young people in council decision-making, hinge on the ability for local councils to address the traditional nature of council procedure, implementing change to better provide for their unique needs in the participation process.

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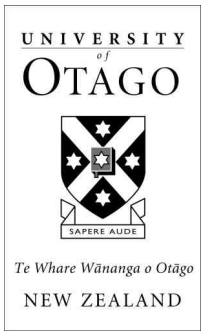
Appendix

Appendix 1: Information sheet for participants

Reference: 11/118



Effective participation for Children and Young People in Council Decision Making

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

The inclusion of children and young people provides an insight into the built environment that cannot be expressed by adults. From a planning perspective this study aims to evaluate the extent to which the inclusion of children and young people occurs within local council decision-making in New Zealand.

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Master of Planning degree at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

Participants from private and public sectors, as well as community representatives who are directly or indirectly involved with the participation of children and young people in council decision making are invited to take part in this project.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. This interview will involve an open ended questioning

technique where the nature of the questioning will be dependent on responses by the informant. The interview is not expected to take longer than one hour and will take place in a location convenient for both parties involved. Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?
In the interview you will be asked about your knowledge and opinions on issues relating to the participation of children and young people in council decision-making. Each interview will be audio recorded as a method of gathering data unless stipulated otherwise by the informant, in which case written notes will be taken. In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
The data collected will be securely stored and only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for **at least 5 years** in secure storage. Any personal information held on the participants may be destroyed at the completion of the research even though the data derived from the research will, in most cases, be kept for much longer or possibly indefinitely.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?
If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

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This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 2: Consent form for participants

Reference: 11/118

Effective participation for Children and Young People in Council Decision Making

CONSENT FORM FOR ***PARTICIPANTS***

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary.
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage.
3. Personal identifying information including audiotapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years.
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning relates to the inclusion of children and young people within the public participation process carried out by local councils in New Zealand. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity should I choose to remain anonymous.
6. There are no known or anticipated risks to participating in this study.
7. There is no remuneration for participating in this study.
8. I grant/ do not grant * permission to allow the research audio record my interview.
9. I grant/ do not grant * permission to allow the research to use my identity.

*Please indicate by circling

I agree to take part in this project

…… ……

(Signature of participant) date

…….. ……

(Signature of researcher, acknowledging receipt)

date

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 3: Youth Council Questionnaire

Questions for youth council representatives

Background

- What council are you involved with?

Council Involvement

- What does your youth council do? What is your purpose?

- Are children and young people consulted/ involved in issues relevant to them?

- How has this consultation been carried out?

- What additional services would be helpful to improving participation?

- Does this youth council have access to a youth advocacy officer in council?

- To what extent is this access helpful?

- What child friendly services and activities are available within the community?

Initiatives

- Do you know of any particular initiatives aimed at including children and young people?

- How successful were these initiatives?

- What kinds of experiences within the community provide children and young people with the opportunity for fun etc?

Planning

- How relevant are children and young people to decisions made by council representatives on issues of significance to your city?

- In what context are they relevant?

- To what extent does this youth council influence planning decisions?

- What things do you think children and young people consider to be important in the built environment? Why?

- What would you like to see developed?