Whai Wāhitanga

Youth Participation in Aotearoa: before 2020 and beyond

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Introduction

Young people are awesome! We are three people who believe this and are passionate about youth participation. At our heart we are youth workers. It is a privilege to walk alongside young people in their journey. Part of that journey is enabling them to navigate and participate in their world, whether that is their own whānau, community, town, city, country, or an organisation they are involved with. As young people discover, embrace and grow into their mana, our role as youth workers/supportive adults/holders-of-power, is to discover and embrace their mauri and identity in a way that fosters their positive development. This also presents an opportunity for society to learn and respect the inherent wisdom that young people offer about the reality of their own lives, and their aspirations for the world they want to live in. We have a huge responsibility at our feet to honour and champion a world in which young people are supported to step into their mana, including the value and richness that they add to our world.

Have you ever?

- Heard of Hart's Ladder?
- Witnessed tokenism?
- Seen young people manipulated or forced to participate?
- Shared power in a decision with young people?
- Worked for an organisation scared to take risks with young people?
- Listened to young people tell you about an awesome project idea?
- Had your mind changed by a young person?
- Met with a youth council?
- Seen young people make adults cry?
- Been concerned about a young person's capacity and commitments?
- Seen a young person's voice transform an organisational structure?
- Read the youth participation clauses in the Code of Ethics?
- Underestimated the power and creativity of young people?
- Been completely surprised by young people?

We've recently written and facilitated a workshop, and we've translated it into this article, with an emerging understanding of whai wāhitanga. Therefore, we've retained reflective questions, activities and scenarios to help balance the many theories we refer to with practical application. We don't claim to be 'experts' in youth participation, rather are enjoying swimming together in the relevant 'expertise' of indigenous wisdom, global academics and community-specific examples, mostly informed by lived experience with young people wrestling with these ideas.

A chronology and whakapapa of youth participation theory

Our understanding of what it means for young people to participate and find their place has changed and evolved over many years of youth work practice. Early models rationalised 'what is' youth participation, alongside what it is not, and described participation in linear levels or stages. We are now in an era of citizenship where we move beyond rating or describing youth participation and youth voice, and its value to society. Foremost in our consideration are the ethics and practice of participation that considers a multiplicity of methods, approaches, avenues and settings for youth participation; illuminating opportunities and meeting the diversity of young people finding their place. We need to consider that models of youth participation practice sit within socio-cultural, political, and economic environments and contexts that in turn have shaped the way we think and practice. Our youth participation practice has been shaped by the times we live in.

Many youth workers today know early models of youth participation such as Hart's Ladder (1992), Shier's Pathway (2001) and Westhorp's Continuum (1987). In recent years we have also been attempting to answer the questions and challenges to traditional western youth participation theory around culturally appropriate youth participation that addresses both young people's right to participate in decision-making within diverse worldviews and cultural values. Alternative words for youth participation are now being used in the wider sector such as active citizens, service design and co-design (Finlay-Robinson, 2018a). These words are being used to gain momentum, and often get a broader buy in from organisations, and other sectors of society.

Fresh approaches are being used to enable young people's participation and influence in decision-making. However, there is a danger that the multiplicity of approaches and language means that youth participation loses meaning and transparency. Worse still is that without clear ethics and standards for youth participation practice young people could be exposed to unethical and harmful practice.

We need a deeper consciousness of why we use the models of participation practice that we do, and what is shaping our thinking. We need to look beyond linear and reductive participation models and consider how we are enabling good youth participation; our accountability to young people; and, the ethics and processes of our practice. We are approaching an exciting era of whai wāhitanga that requires us to embrace new and different models and approaches from the long adhered to models that initially conceptualised youth participation for youth work.

Titiro whakamuri, kia anga whakamua.
Look to the past in order to move forward.

To move forward in our practice, we need to understand where we have come from. Let's take a look at the chronology/whakapapa of youth participation models and theories and consider how the social context has shaped our youth participation thinking and practice in Aotearoa.

Traditional indigenous approaches (pre-colonisation)

Long before Hart's Ladder described youth participation in the 1990's, according to the ethnographic accounts about and by Māori, the practice of Urungatanga actively included young people in decision-making and leadership (Hemara, 2000). Urunga is engaging in 'education through exposure' (Baxter, et. al., 2016; Caddie, 2011; Hemara, 2000). For example, imagine a group of manuhiri attending a pōwhiri. The kaikōrero matua, shuffling along during the karanga, might suddenly feel that a particular taiohi needs to deliver the whaikorero on their behalf. He whispers to the taiohi and tells them they must speak imminently. The taiohi has little time to prepare for this, is given responsibility, trusted to succeed, expected to make mistakes, and learns in the moment through the opportunity. In this act the elders are sending a message about the value of taiohi, especially to the mana whenua at this marae.

Colonisation and civil rights

We cannot ignore the impact colonisation has had on participation (Kerekere, 2017). We must recognise that there have been dark times in our history when taiohi have been stripped of their voice, and that we are still dealing with systemic racism today. From 1867 the Native Schools Act came into being, and in 1894 the schooling was compulsory for taiohi Māori (Calman, 2012; Higgins & Keane, 2013). The schools focused on teaching taiohi Māori the English language, and preparing students for the Pākehā world (Walker, 2016). Later students were forbidden to speak te reo Māori while at school (Calman, 2012). Colonial society systematically excluded the diversity of voices of Aotearoa's taiohi and attempted to strip them of their sense of empowerment, for the purpose of assimilation (Walker, 2016; Higgins and Keane, 2013).

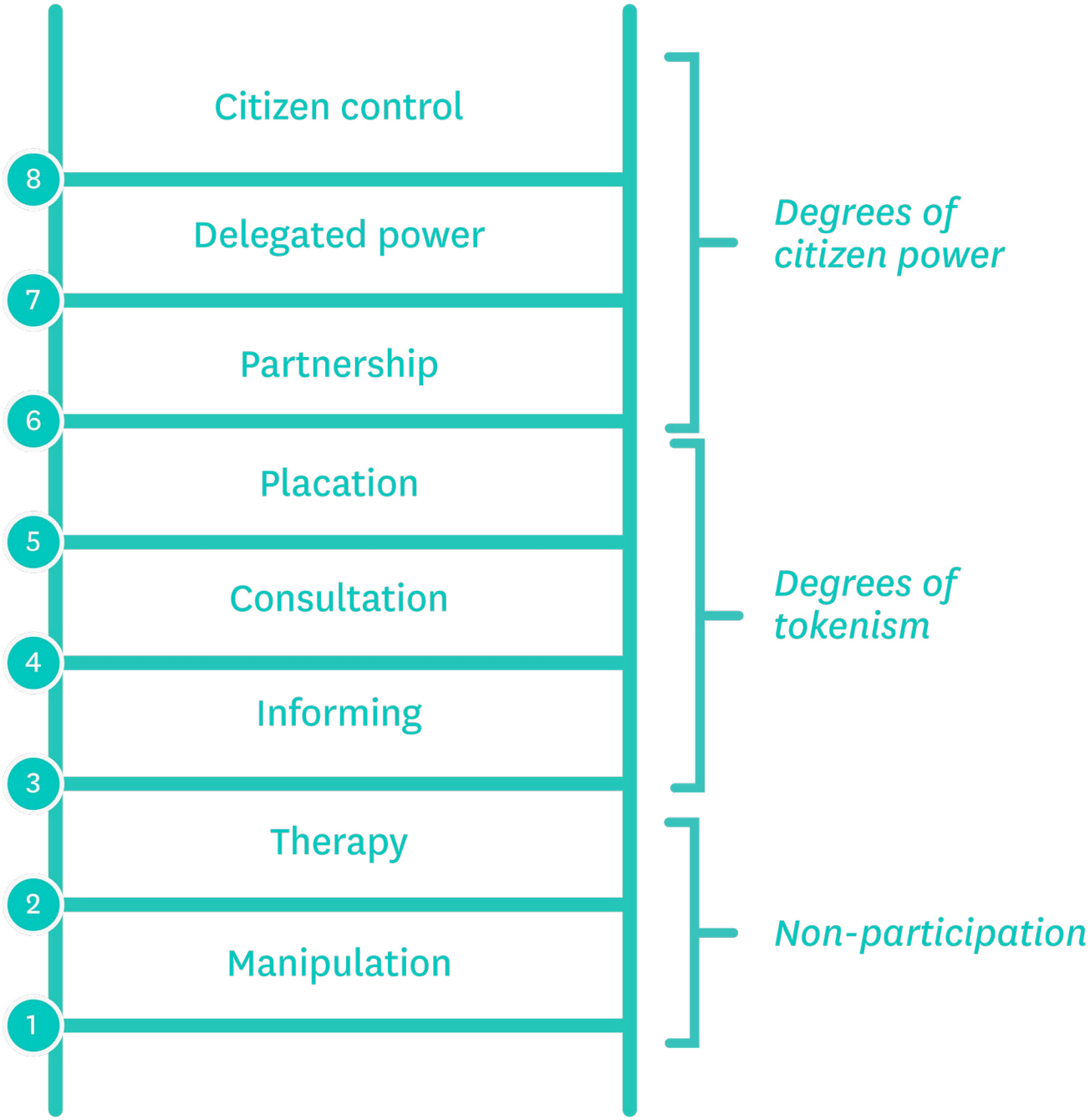
During the 1960s and 1970s Maori began to organise and protest in different ways. A group of young Māori leaders, Ngā Tamatoa, were influenced by Professor Ranginui Walker (Tūmanako Productions, 2012) and led protests about Māori land, te reo, and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We benefit today from their participation in the occupation of Bastion Point, in the Land March led by Dame Whina Cooper, in advocating for Kohanga Reo, and establishing te rā o te reo Māori (Tūmanako Productions, 2012; Keane, 2012; Finlay-Robinson, 2018b).

This period also saw community and social services worldwide grappling with increased civic activism. Women's liberation, the civil rights movement and numerous cultural revolutions all saw an increase in citizen activism with riots and protests becoming commonplace in civil society. Town planners and policy makers became concerned with inviting citizen participation in planning decisions. The focus became engaging the voices of an awakened public to shape a social and political context that was not meeting the needs of a diverse and multi-faceted post-modern society. Society began to recognize that there was not one absolute truth or way of doing things, but multiple perspectives, ideas, experiences and truths that shape and determine the fabric of society (Marshall, 1994).

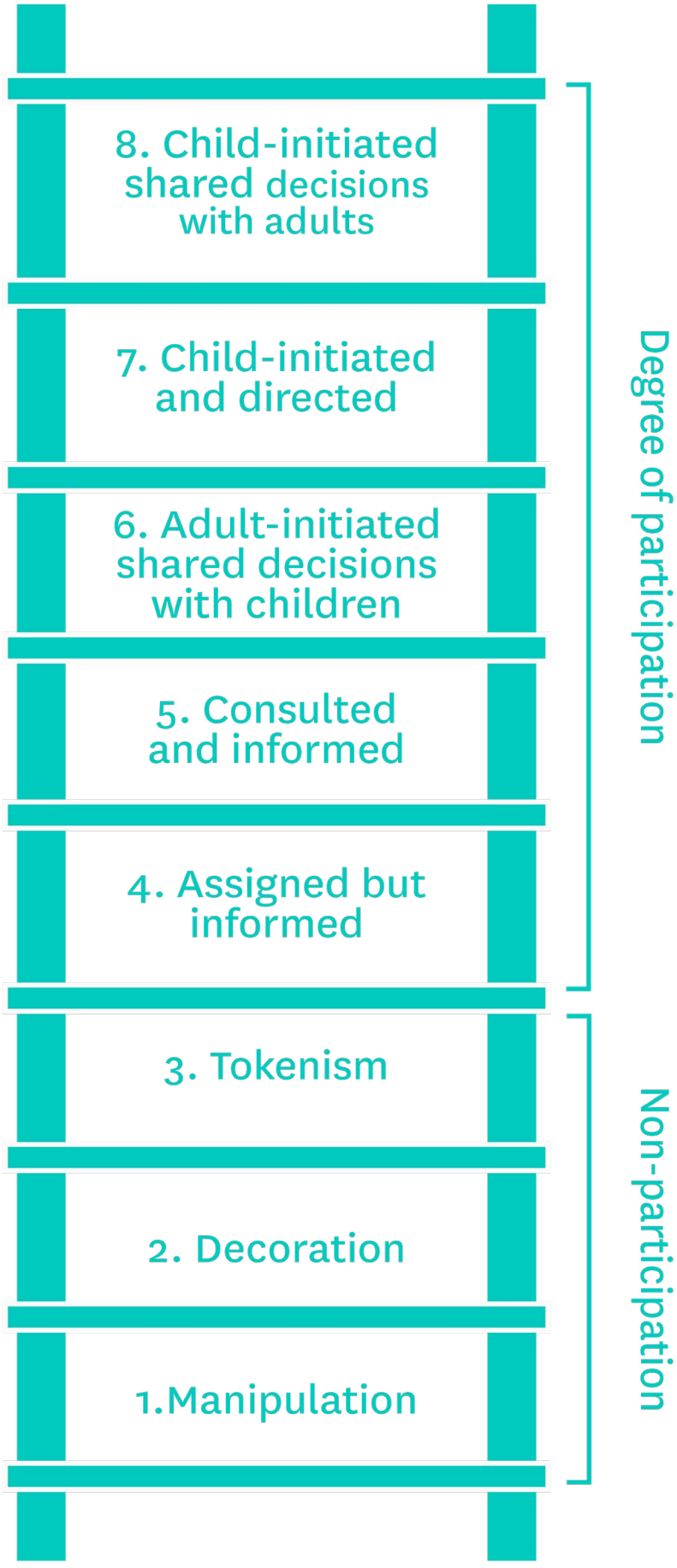
It was in this global context that Sherry Arnstein created the 'Ladder of Citizen Participation' in 1969. Arnstein's Ladder describes the ways in which all people might participate in decision making in civil society. The model was an attempt to offer a constructive description of the types of participation and what degree of power the public had in planning processes. Arnstein challenged planners and decision makers to drop exclusionary processes and create processes of equal opportunity so that those who had been marginalised by decision making processes are given power. Arnstein argued that this model described the means for how society could be transformed to benefit all.

Arnstein's (1969) eight rungs on the ladder were an attempt to simplify and define the debate around citizen participation. The bottom two rungs are clearly non-participation as manipulation and therapy describe situations in which others have power over the citizens. The next three rungs, informing, consultation and placation, are degrees of tokenism. While citizen voices might be heard by decision-makers, decision-makers hold all the power and this may result in no change to the situations or systems citizens are seeking to change. The top three rungs all recognise citizens possess power to bring change to the status quo through negotiation in partnership with decision makers, being given authority by those in

power to make decisions, or taking up decision making positions themselves. Arnstein's ladder shaped some of our later thinking around youth participation, most notably when Roger Hart adapted Arnstein's ladder for child participation in 1992.



1. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)



2. Hart's Ladder (1992)

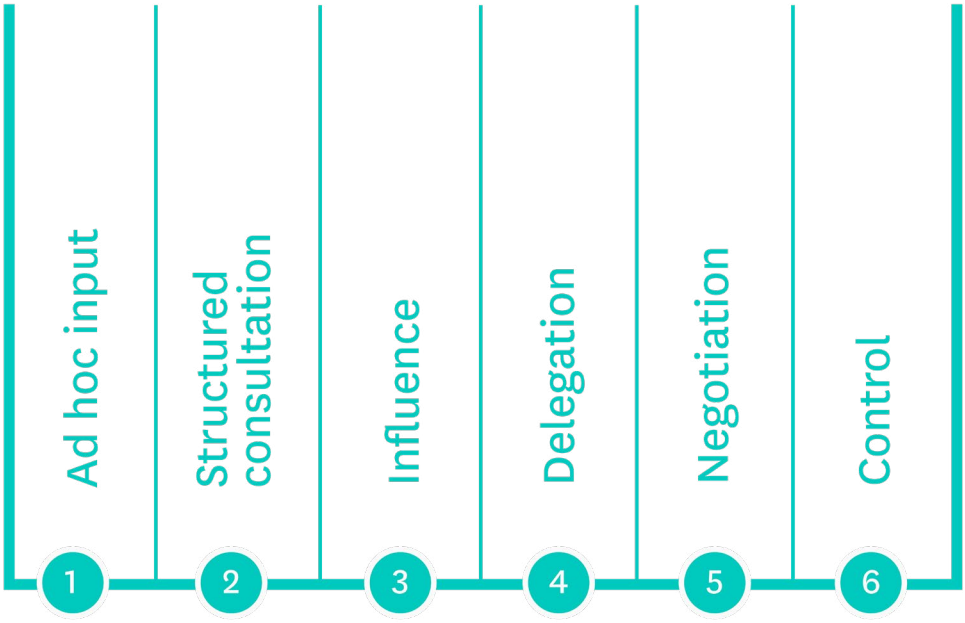
Increasing concern and moral panics

In the 1980s there was increasing concern about 'at risk' young people in New Zealand. While youth work had been active in the faith based sector, detached youth work became a strategy adopted by governments to work with unemployed young people and gangs. There was an increased focus on innovative youth work strategies to mitigate the issues young people were facing and the moral panic felt by society. The Children, Young Person and their Families Act passed into legislation in 1989 ensuring that children and young people receiving welfare and justice from the state were supported with whānau decision making, and community in a way that could be culturally flexible (Ministry of Justice, 2019). Youth work training schemes were implemented to train youth workers in engaging young people for their wellbeing and development.

Young people were at the forefront of change. They led and joined in protests. Young people marched and protested the Springbok tour in 1981, were central to the Nuclear Free Movement and led and participated in raising many other environmental and societal concerns. New Zealand society responded in moral panic.

With their increasingly amplified voice young people demanded spaces that were created for them, such as the forming of the Auckland City Youth Council in 1984 (Coom, 2010; Sleith, 2010). In this time early versions of youth representative bodies began to form enabling young people to speak within political systems.

It was within this context that Westhorp's Continuum (1987) was created in Australia for youth worker training. Westhorp's Continuum (1987) scales the stages of youth involvement or empowerment and indicates how adults can create partnerships with young people. It detailed a continuum of strategies for participation as options. Westhorp took the approach that no one strategy was better than another, but that different strategies suited different contexts. In the Australian Youth Foundation's 2002 reprint of Westhorp's Continuum, the paper asks a series of questions of the adult or youth worker to help overcome barriers to youth engagement and empowerment. In this presentation of Westhorp's Continuum we start to see the use of the term 'youth-adult partnership' (Australian Youth Foundation, 2002). Youth-adult partnership considers that the quality relationship that a youth worker has with a young person is fundamental for meaningful youth participation to occur (Australian Youth Foundation, 2002).



3. Westhorp's Continuum (1987)

UNCRC Article 12

1. States 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.

Approaching the end of the millenium

In the 1990s the faith-based youth ministries and detached youth work practices of the 1980s burgeoned. Along with it came the proliferation of school-based youth work practice, and statutory care services underwent an overhaul with the new Children, Young Person and their Families Act (1989). The Act sharpened the focus on the care and protection of children and young people, and the recognition and upholding of their rights as citizens in development. Within this movement to recognise the rights of children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was created advocating internationally for the rights of all young people across nations (Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with Article 49). New Zealand ratified the UNCRC in 1993.

The UNCRC asserts the right of the child to non-discrimination (article 2), decisions made in the best interests of the child (article 3), the right to life, survival and development (article 6), freedom of expression (article 13), and the right to express their views, have them heard and be taken seriously in matters that affect them Article 12). Article 12 is often quoted as the right of the child to participate in decision-making. Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 are general principles of the UNCRC and critical to ensuring that all the rights of the child are upheld as discussed in the 54 articles of the convention (UNICEF, n.d).

As part of the children's rights movement Roger Hart (1992) adapted Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) to describe the process of participation as a right of children. Hart describes participation as sharing in decision-making that affects one's life, and that it is a "fundamental right of citizenship." Hart is an environmental psychologist who researched the importance of children's play in the environment, on their development. He describes the psychological development of children and specifically the development of their ability to empathise at a young age that enables them to work with peers and adults for the purpose of democracy and community building. Hart is interested in the socio-economic environmental variables that impede young people's participation (Hart, 1992).

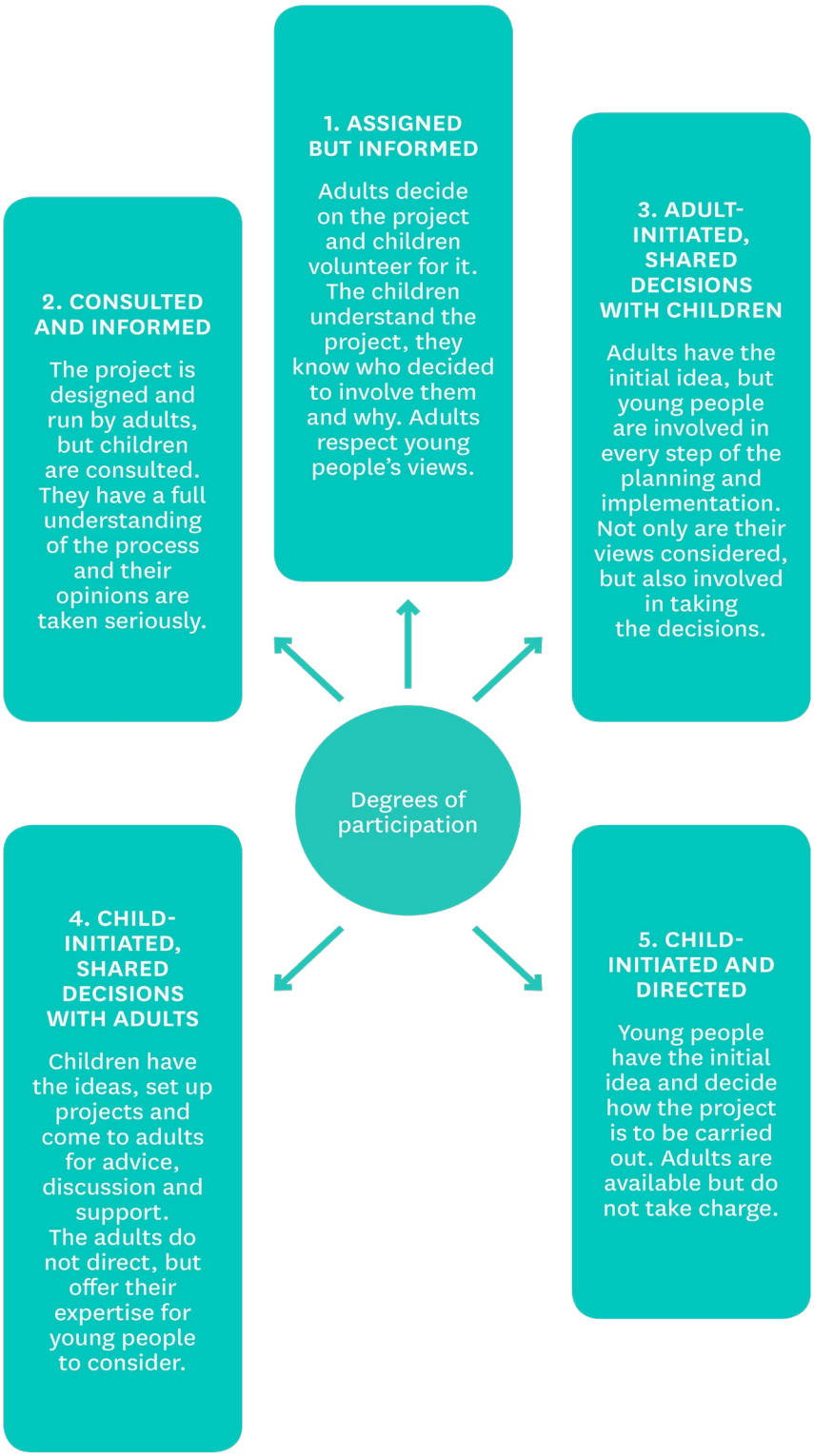
Hart (1992) argues that it is important that adolescents find positive ways to participate in community, or they will find irresponsible ways to participate. He argues that political self-determination is critical, in order for democracy to be flexible and responsive to a changing world. Participation is then a method that enables this positive political self-determination, as opposed to an indoctrination of political beliefs. In this context Hart's Ladder describes in the lower rungs of his ladder those aspects that are non-participation, and do not enable self-determination: manipulation, decoration and tokenism. Hart gives the example of manipulation being pre-school children carrying placards critiquing social policies that affect children. These pre-schoolers cannot cognitively fully comprehend the meaning of the placards they are carrying. In this time of galvanised action around critical issues in society, these lower rungs on Hart's Ladder are an important check for adults to ensure that in exposing children and young people to these events, that we are not manipulating their voice to amplify our own. Hart then describes the other rungs on the ladder as a continuum of participation, much like Westhorp. He makes the point that to reach the next rung, 'assigned but informed', young people need to have good information about the intentions of the opportunity, know who has decided their participation is important, and that their role is meaningful and voluntary.

Climbing higher, 'consulted and informed' refers to those instances where young people are fully informed and included in the decision-making process, being treated as consultants. This does not refer to consultation processes where young people have no idea of the outcome of the consultation. Hart describes 'adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people' as true participation in which adults work to engage young people in processes, and move outside those who are usually involved in such processes because of their access to power.

'Child-initiated and directed' is another example of true participation where children and young people determine for themselves the subject of their energy and participation in community. The top rung, 'child initiated, shared decisions with adults' is in Hart's Ladder the highest form of participation, where young people engage adults in supporting an initiative they have created. Hart argues that this is rare, due to the lack of listening and supportive adults.

Treseder's Wheel (1997) was one of the early models that began to delve deeper into discussing youth participation practice. Treseder moved away from linear typologies and continuums of participation, critical of Hart's Ladder and instead offered a wheel to describe the degrees of participation (using the upper five levels of Hart's Ladder). Integral to Treseder's Wheel are the steps to take before one can enable participation, which he adapted from David Hodgson's (1995) five conditions for youth participation (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2010; Karsten, 2012). These conditions help ensure that the participation opportunities are real, and are not tokenistic.

Too often in decision-making processes the importance of having a trusted independent person supporting young people is overlooked. Well-meaning planners, designers, and bureaucrats may not have the distance from the process to be able to see the ethical complexities for young people or may find their support or advice limited because of the nature of their role. Having a trusted, independent and skilled participation practitioner can ensure that young people can be self-determining, rather than having a particular outcome, decision or beliefs ascribed for them.



4. Treseder's Wheel (1997)

David Hodgson's *Participation of children and young people in social work* (1995):

1. Access to those in power
2. Access to relevant information
3. Real choices between different options
4. Support from a trusted, independent person
5. A means of appeal or complaint if anything goes wrong.

Beyond 2000

In the early 2000s there was a rapid development in the national understanding of youth development with the publication of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002) which named youth participation as one of the six principles and four goals of youth development practice (Beals, 2007; Deane, Dutton, & Kerekere, 2019). Influenced by the development of international youth participation practice, and accompanying participation audits in the US and the UK, numerous agencies, networks, systems and contexts discussed what makes good youth participation practice here in Aotearoa. Youth participation began to be researched with young people, often within participatory action research methodologies. Young people became involved in developing youth strategies, plans, policies and programmes. Youth-adult partnerships became normalised in youth work practice. The number of youth-led initiatives naturally began to rise.

Reflective of this nationwide interest, the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) employed Youth Participation Advisors and published a booklet on youth participation practice called Keepin' it Real featuring Hart's Ladder. This was accompanied with training workshops around the country, and a series of case studies (McGachie & Smith, 2003). This MYD-led training may be why Hart's Ladder remains so well known in Aotearoa.

In 2009 MYD released an updated version of Keepin' It Real including Shier's Pathway (2001), and a checklist for practitioners. The focus was on eliminating barriers to participation, creating a dynamic two-way conversation between young people and adults, and looking at effective youth-adult partnership. A critical discourse also began about who was included and who was excluded from youth participation opportunities (Nairn, Sligo and Freeman 2006; Finlay, 2010).

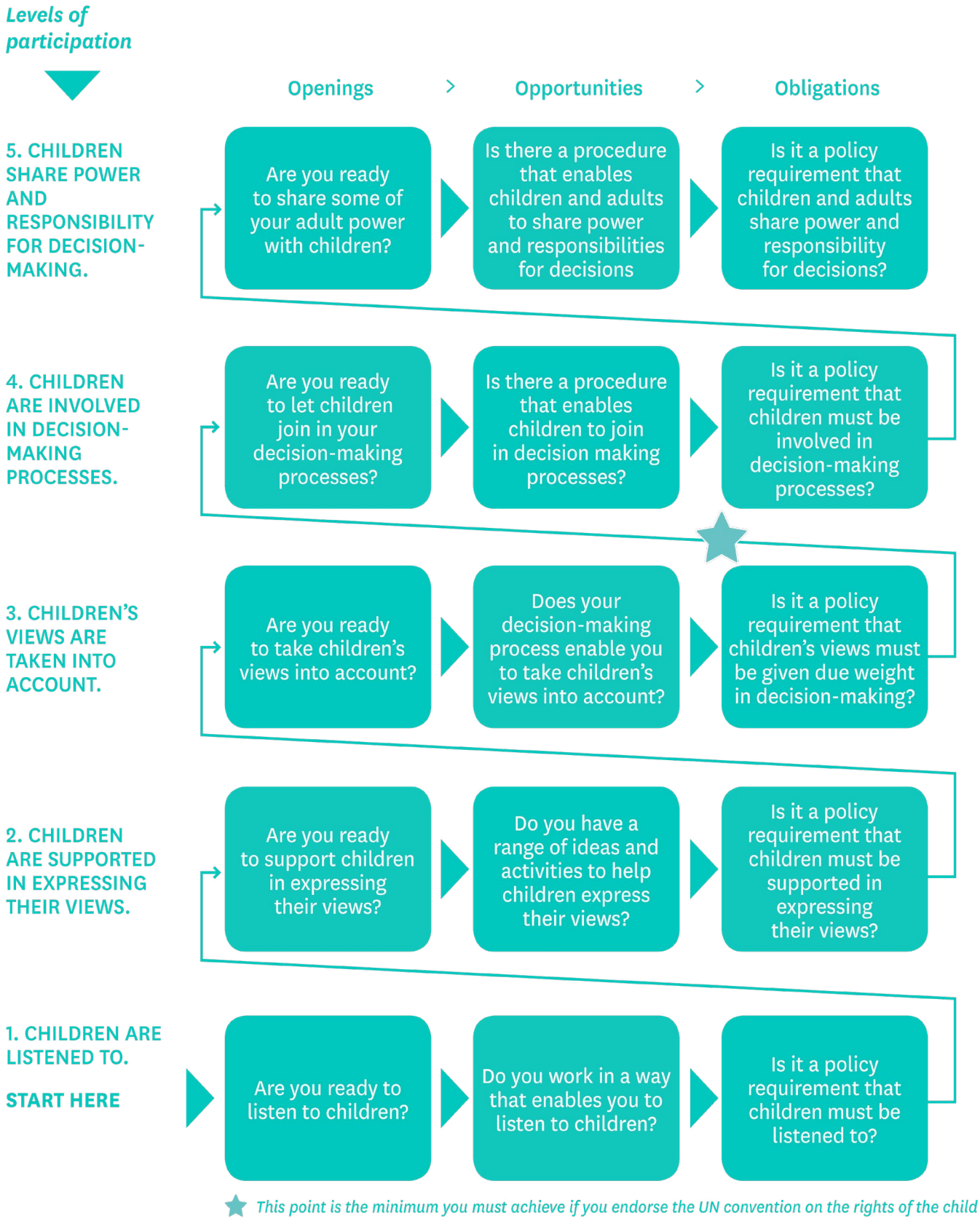
Harry Shier (2001) is a children's researcher and play specialist from Ireland, who created the pathway model to enable organisations to examine their level of commitment to enabling young people to have a voice, and in sharing decision making with them. Using the UNCRC as a guide, Shier examined the degrees of commitment by charting the levels of openings, opportunities and obligations organisations had in place to support young people's participation in decision making. Shier argued that unless organisations took young people's views into account, they did not meet the rights of the child as described in Article 12 of the UNCRC. This model is a helpful auditing tool for organisations and young people to assess the organisation's readiness to share decision making with young people. Young people typically want to share power in decision making with adults, and are still often facing criticism. Young people are seen as 'adults in the making' politically, rather than being competent social actors or experts in their own lives. This model clearly identifies that the onus is on organisations to create appropriate spaces for participation that are backed by policy processes, and supportive adults.

In 2003 Ani Wierenga engaged young people in a major piece of research for the Foundation of Young Australians, co-writing a model of youth participation and a toolkit for participatory practice. The model and toolkit arose from research undertaken to hear young people's voices about the experiences of being involved in decision making. Unsurprisingly this model places young people's interest in participation at the centre of the model's practice. However, it also offers a critique that many other models and approaches to youth participation are adult-centric.

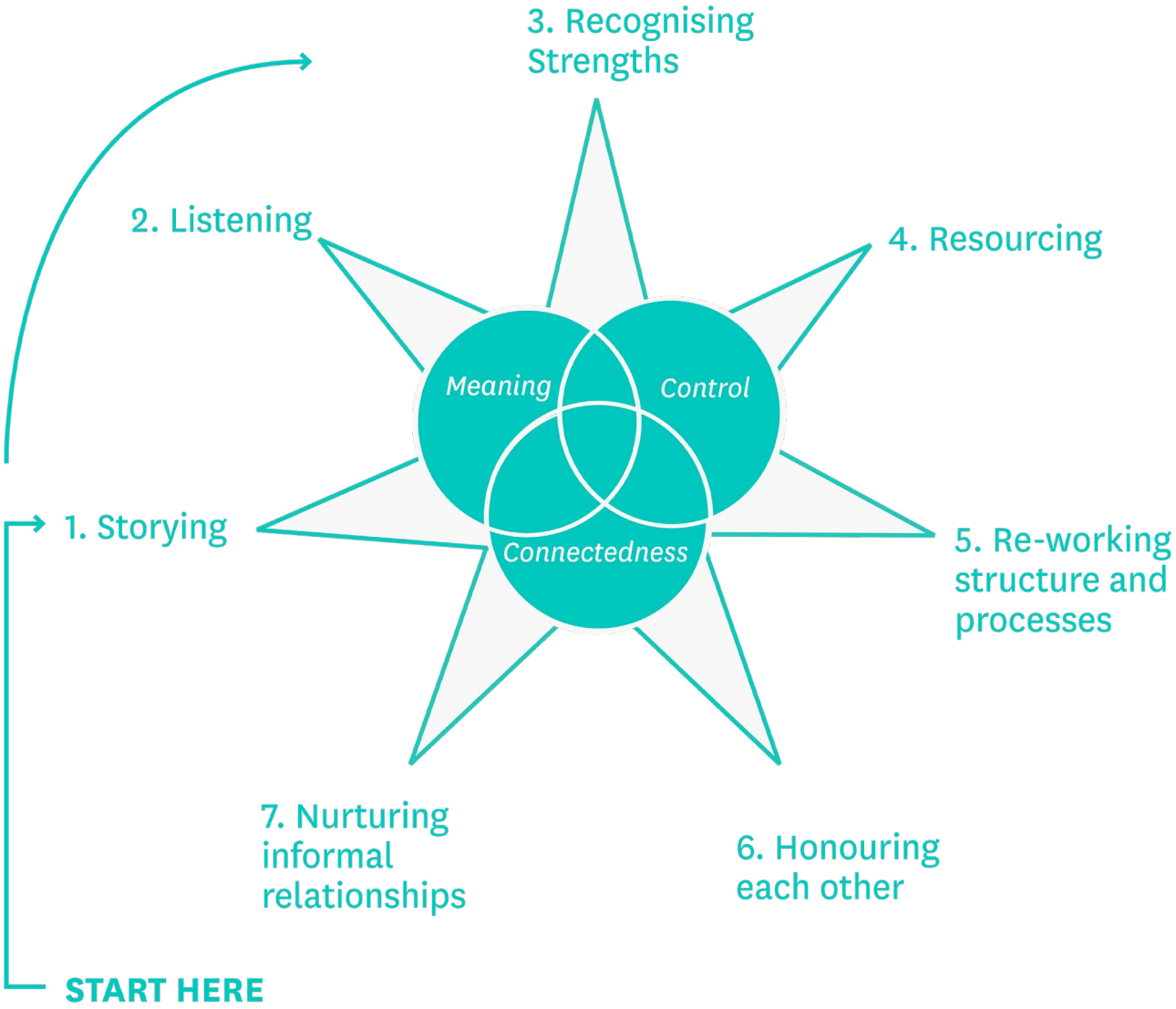
Wierenga's Star (2003) suggests that effective youth participation practice places meaning, control, and connectedness as central elements that youth participation opportunities must explore. Interestingly the model acknowledges the need for youth participation practice to transform the relationships of the young people involved to ensure the three central elements are met. This includes reworking adult structures and processes to more effectively work alongside young people. The toolkit goes on to provide practice examples, ideas and reflective tools for working through the model to help transform practice.

In the report, Wierenga and the youth researchers discuss the ideas of citizenship and youth development and debunk all of these as concepts that can limit young people's participation through adult perceptions of their capability. They prefer to focus on a capacity building approach, recognising that young people already have something to offer society, and already have a sense of agency. Capacity building recognises that education is useful to build skills further, but it does not need to be according to adult agendas nor fit within existing structures. A capacity building approach acknowledges that the process is collaborative and that there is mutual learning to be had (Wierenga, 2003).

Wierenga's Star acknowledges that young people want to have direct action and influence in the decisions that affect them. Too often policy change is slow, consultation does not enable meaningful involvement or co-design. It can be hard for young people to track their influence, and the story of their involvement in shaping decision making is too easily lost in restructures, policy development cycles and political agendas. Wierenga challenges us to address these issues in our practice, and keep young people at the centre of the process.



5. Shier's Pathway (2001)



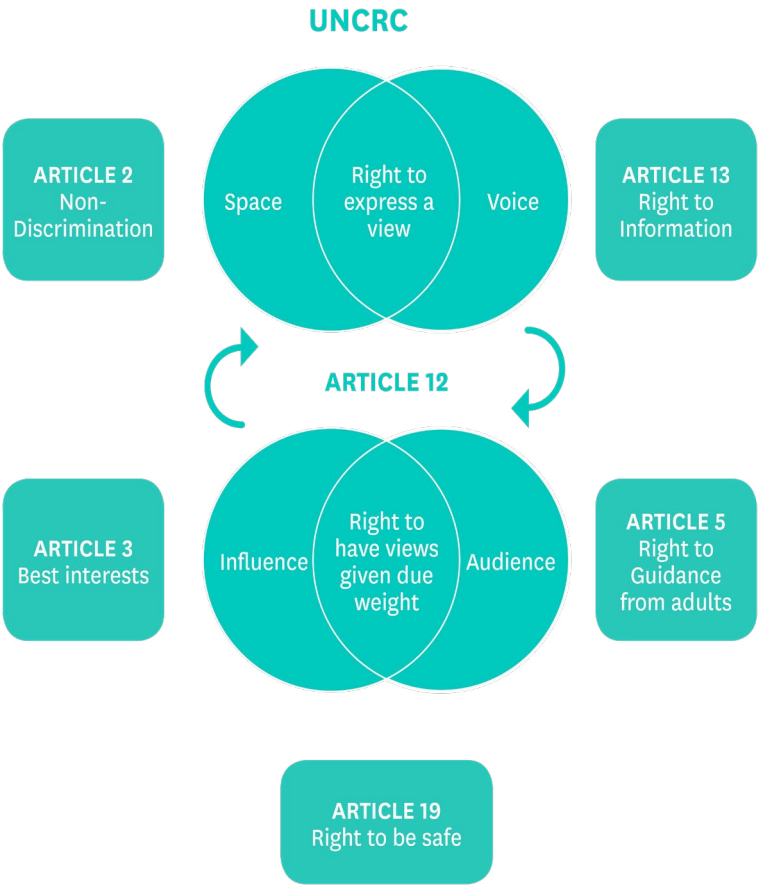
6. Wierenga's Star (2003)

Back in New Zealand in 2006, the collaborative and dynamic conversations with young people were starting to shape policies and legislation in new ways. With the support of Community Action on Youth, Alcohol and Drugs (CAYAD) and the Alcohol Advisory Council (ALAC) young people were taking their voices to initiate community debates, and to discuss the impact of New Zealand's alcohol supply on them and their wider communities. As a support to the proliferation of community debates happening at the time, ALAC commissioned a checklist for engaging young people (ALAC, 2006). The checklist became a tool that was easy to use for practitioners who were thinking about engaging young people in critical discussions around community access to alcohol. Young people's concerns ended up an integral part of shaping the Law Commission's 2010 review of the regulatory framework for the sale and supply of alcohol.

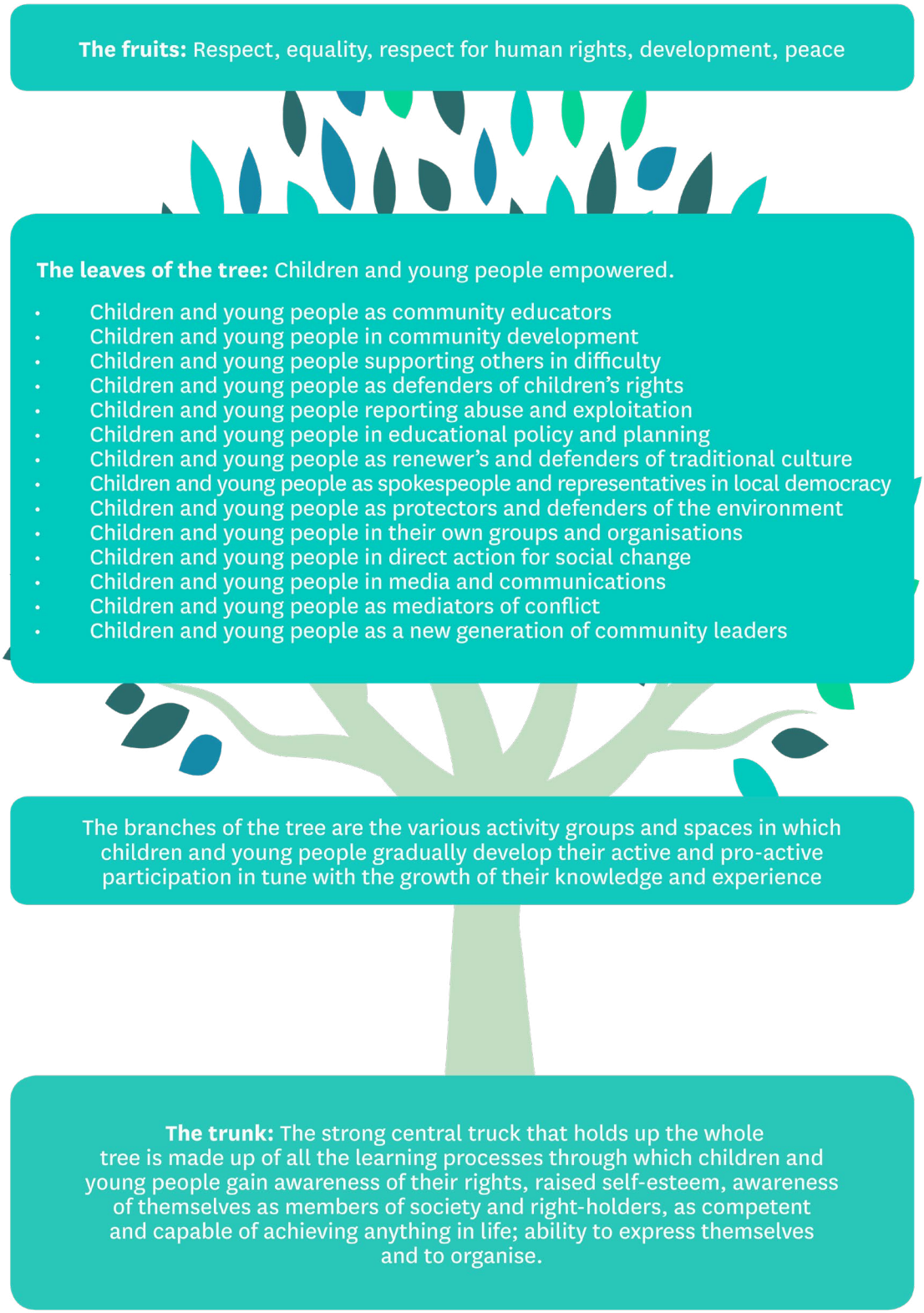
Internationally in 2007 Laura Lundy's 'Voice is not enough' model, conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC, gained wide recognition. Lundy is an international child rights expert and academic residing in Ireland. Her rights-based model of youth participation unpacks the wider intent of UNCRC and describes how rights relate to practice (Lundy, 2007). Her work is written primarily as a critique to participation terms that minimise the full intent of Article 12 (Lundy, 2007). The article draws on research for the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, that looks at barriers to Article 12 being applied. Lundy breaks down Article 12 into 4 overlapping and chronological parts: Space and Voice; Influence and Audience (Lundy, 2007).

Using the general principles of the UNCRC, Lundy describes how adults can create safe spaces that enable young people to express their voice, have it heard and influence decisions.

Lundy's model addresses complexities around who participates, through simply stating that all children have a right to non-discrimination. In placing Article 2 of the UNCRC firmly within her model, Lundy argues for participation to be a right for all young people, not just for a chosen few. Lundy uses the second part of Article 3 to argue that adults need to respect the 'ever evolving' capabilities of young people to participate in decision making. She goes on to argue that to limit decision making to tokenistic or decorative opportunities is damaging to young people's overall development. She argues for open and transparent policies and processes, and providing good information to young people that tell them how their voice will be used to influence decisions. Furthermore she argues that with young people's ever evolving capacity the support needed from adults will lessen. Lundy's model is a helpful conceptualisation of the UNCRC and can be used to develop strategies and programmes for organisations that ensure the UNCRC is being upheld.



7. Lundy's model (2007)



8. Shier's Participatory Tree (2009)

In 2009, Harry Shier further translated a model from his work supporting Children's rights in Nicaragua. Shier has spent substantial time in Nicaragua working with and researching alongside children on coffee plantations. The community context of Shier's work has transformed his way of looking at participation from his initial model. In Shier's Participatory Tree (2009) he takes a community ecosystem view of young people's participation and how they grow in their skills and their contribution to community. This is an organic look at participation inspired by a community concerned with nurturing and growing crops. What is unique about this model is that Shier orientates young people's participation starting not with organisational or community opportunities, but with the family of origin, and the opportunities to participate within the family and community that the family context affords (Shier, 2009). The seed then needs good soil that upholds young people's rights to be able to grow a seedling of participation that strengthens as young people participate in activities outside the home. As young people's participation experiences mature they are informed by both the range of opportunities to actively participate, and the learning that enhances their sense of awareness, agency and empowerment. In the leaves of the tree Shier presents one of the most interesting discussions on the variety of roles young people can take up as competent proactive participants in community. Shier's participatory roles challenge the view that participation is for the purpose of young people's development. In Shier's Participatory Tree, the purpose (the fruit) of participation is far more global: a respect for human rights, peace, development and equality for all.

USE THIS IN YOUR PRACTICE

UNCRC Committee General Comment No.12. 2009 – *The Right of the Child to be Heard.*

1. Transparent and informative
2. Voluntary
3. Respectful
4. Relevant
5. Child-friendly
6. Inclusive
7. Supported by training for adults
8. Safe and sensitive to risk
9. Accountable

In 2009 The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child wrote a General Comment on Article 12 out of concern for the degree to which the UNCRC was being implemented. They had specific concerns about the barriers to its practice and the diversity of young people who were still being marginalised or excluded from participation in decision making, and concerns around the quality of participation practice. This general commentary provides a legal analysis of Article 12, along with nine basic conditions for implementing the rights of the child to be heard. In 2015, Harry Shier visited Aotearoa and spoke at the Ara Taiohi wānanga 'Building Pathways' at Tapu te Ranga Marae, challenging the sector to consider how youth participation practice in Aotearoa met the nine standards of the UNCRC. Sadly, the nine standards are still not common knowledge in youth participation practice. If you take anything away from reading this article for your practice let it be these, the nine standards for implementing the rights of the child to be heard.

New decade, new diversity

Building upon the community engagement and capacity building of young people in the early 2000's, the second decade of this millennium saw a shift in Aotearoa: moving beyond youth councils and advisory groups to involve more young people in diverse participatory roles. Practice generally became more concerned about the diversity of young people involved in participation experiences (Finlay, 2010). Practitioners had experienced situations wherein a few young people had become 'super participators' and now actively ensured participation opportunities were open to all young people. Rebooted youth participation groups were as much young people from 'the street' as those with political and social capital that primed them to participate in traditional participation opportunities. We began to consider ethical issues around the amount of time and energy young people gave to participate in decision-making that benefited

organisations and ask, should young people be paid for their participation?

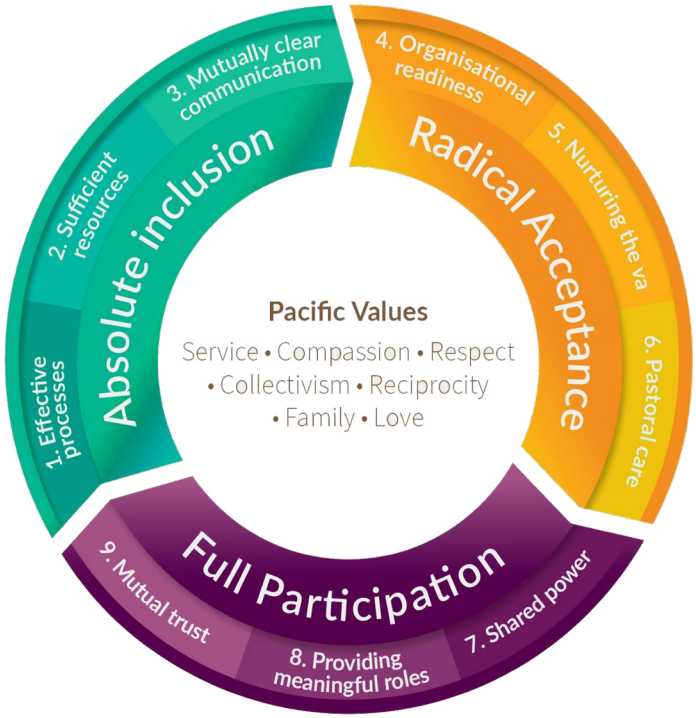
Up until the mid 2010's the Ministry of Youth Development and local government had been leaders in shaping youth participation in local and community democracy. Conferences like the Youth in Local Government conference had been a place for young people and council officers to discuss practice, celebrate advances and gain support for challenging processes to implement children's right to be heard. The critiques continued that traditional models of youth participation, such as youth councils, did not facilitate participation that is representative or engaging in an increasingly globalised and connected world.

Changes were made in 2012 and 2014 to the Local Government Act which has resulted in an explicit shift away from the 'four wellbeings' (social, environmental, economic and cultural) to focus on the 'core services' of territorial authorities as outlined in the Local Government Act 2001 Amendment 2014 (Kessaram, 2013; Salter, Laing and Hill. 2016).

This led to local government and statutory authorities examining methods for youth participation in decision making that are deemed effective and efficient within existing processes and structures, rather than looking to spark community democracy. Youth participation in local government has become more focused on policy than on youth-led responses to issues that actually matter to young people. It is important to acknowledge the tension between the child and youth participation agenda and the political forces that make meaningful participation difficult (Harris, 2006). These systemic changes have coincided with growing interest amongst young people in taking direct action on issues that feel real and relevant, rather than advocating for political and policy change alone.

More youth enterprise and social innovation incubators have invited young people to develop their own projects, ideas and responses to increasing global issues that young people are concerned with. In the gap that was left by the Ministry of Youth Development, and some local governments, other organisations and groups offered new perspectives on youth participation practice.

Le Va, a health promotion agency aimed at improving the wellbeing of Pasifika families and communities, worked with a group of young Pasifika leaders to develop a Pasifika Youth Participation Guide in 2016. This was a much needed resource that brought insight into how to conduct youth participation in a way that honors a Pasifika worldview. The Pasifika Youth Participation Guide places Pasifika values at the centre of practice of the Va (the relational space between) with three defining practice requirements: absolute inclusion; radical acceptance; and full participation (Le Va, 2016). Each of these feature a further three dimensions that describe the key attributes considered critical for organisations and practitioners to have in place to nurture Pasifika youth participation.



9. Pasifika Youth Participation Guide (2016)

10. Nga Uri Ō (2016)

LifeHack was one social innovation initiative that gained funding through the National government's Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project. It used co-design processes to address youth mental health through innovative ideas and pilot projects co-created with young people, organisations and community members. Emerging from one such collaboration between Lifehack, Sovereign, Youthline Manukau, and facilitated by Christina Leef, a model for collaboration and working together in co-design processes was formed (Lifehack, 2016). Nga Uri Ō... began as a way to set the culture of a group working together by exploring the diversity of cultural whakapapa of participants at the initial workshop, and acknowledge the place it happened. Nga Uri Ō... enables participants to explore their own whakapapa, and that of others through whānaungatanga, before forming a collective purpose and way of working together. This is a helpful model for addressing group formation in participatory experiences, emphasizing the importance of partnership and determining collaboratively with young people how might we work together, within a Te Ao Māori worldview. In an Aotearoa where young people are already taking action, taking time to develop good collaborative relationships and collective agreements for working together feels critical.

Why is this important right now?

Young people as activists? Not a new idea! If we look at many of the great historical social movements they have often been led by young people. Young people have a sustainable vision. Because of the nature of the challenges young people face they are able to look a long way into the future. Young people are also able to provide that fresh perspective because they come at things from a new and sometimes non-institutionalised angle; they can play the role of naive inquirer. Young people have everything to lose and nothing to lose. What do we mean by this? We've loosely brainstormed a handful of pressing social demands, and checked this with some young people Hannah works with:

Young people have everything to lose:

- They will wear the cost of today's decisions socially, economically, environmentally and culturally
- They are further burdened with the future costs of these current decisions, that they are not often engaged in or even in control of
- They are directly impacted by the uncertain future of work
- They might struggle to access equitable education
- They might lose access to nature
- They will experience the long-term impact of the determinants of health and wellbeing in society today
- They experience threats to personal security, including food, conflict, civic liberty and other fundamental rights.

Young people have nothing to lose:

- They don't have money or assets
- They have time and flexibility
- They don't have a brand/reputation to uphold
- They generally won't lose their livelihood.

The concept of intergenerational equity is based on the imperative that current generations need to ensure that the planet that future generations inherit is not worse off, and does not inhibit or infringe on the rights of future generations to meet their own needs. The whole principle of 'leave it better than you found it' is about leaving a positive legacy for those that come after us and is encapsulated in this whakataukī:

Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri, ā muri ake nei.

For us and our children after us.

Greta Thunberg (2019) is acutely aware of the inherent responsibility connected to decisions that leave a legacy. Her words have directly challenged adults in positions of power and resonated with millions of people across the globe. Arguably the most well known 16 year old in 2019, Greta also embodies whai wāhitanga in action through her leadership, decision-making, responsibility, commitment, inclusivity, determination, and her reclamation of Asperger's as a strength and superpower. Locating Greta in the context of Mana Taiohi also highlights the support from her whānau, who have co-authored two books (*Scenes from the Heart*, 2018, and *Our House is On Fire*, in-press 2020).

Greta is not alone and is not the only example of this, as young people are currently participating in, if not leading, various climate change movements across the world. In Wellington, Micah Geiringer featured on the front page of newspapers defiantly yet hopefully wielding a flare during recent protests (Hunt, 2019). Micah was refreshingly honest about his original intent to skip school in the March 2019 climate strike, and that through learning from older role models he met outside the Beehive, Micah realised the potential power in his participation. It was no longer about wagging, it was about making a difference. Micah's discovery of agency also involved negotiation (and subsequent conscious betrayal) of both parental requests and Wellington High School's regulations.

Hayward, Salili, Tupuana'i, and Tualamali'i (2019) press the need to hear young pacific leaders on climate change, as there is much that the collective values of

pacific communities can teach the world in responding to and being resilient in midst of climate change.

> *'There are also still too few opportunities to hear directly from Pacific communities, particularly young leaders. Yet with support, and respect for the nuances of local values, the efforts of Pacific communities can inform far-reaching transformative responses to climate change'* (Hayward, Salili, Tupuana'i, & Tualamali'i, 2019, p. 5).

Irrespective of your own personal and political perspectives on these issues, there is much to learn from this current wave of young leaders. Pania Newton, kaitiaki and land protector, has pioneered an indelible contribution to our nation's journey with Te Tiriti through her leadership and service at Ihumātao in recent years (Misa, 2019). The media discourse of 'rangatahi versus rangatira' (Johnsen, 2019) was unhelpful, inaccurate (Aoake, 2019; Cooper, 2019) and actually betrays the principles of Mana Taiohi as it undermines whai wāhitanga and ignores relationships.

It may seem like the contemporary expressions of youth participation are all grounded in protest. Youth activism certainly has been less apparent since perhaps the Occupy Movement or Youth Wage campaigns (Beals & Wood, 2012), and is undeniably more visible now. However we believe that this is one component of participation, wherein young people are claiming their rights and balancing their responsibilities. This balance is infinitely more powerful than the inherently limited, adult-dominated and typically manipulative 'co-design' that Mana Williams-Eade was incredibly cynical of in his keynote at Involve 2018 (you can watch it on Ara Taiohi's Facebook page).

Mana Williams-Eade was one of the care-experienced young people granted a voice in the creation of a new system and Ministry for Children. He said in his keynote, "I realised: this is quite serious" and described "all this weight" he felt with the responsibility bestowed upon him in this particular expression of participation. Mana criticized co-design as a "trend" and challenged the 1000 attendees at Involve to ask "why are you involving [young people] in these decisions? Because what you're doing is creating an expectation they have some kind of power but then you take it away". Mana cleverly paralleled the participatory design decisions with the "massive decisions at age 5, 12, 16... I shouldn't have had to make" about his siblings and new parents. The weight young people experience in participation must be considered, particularly in relation to their whakapapa and story, which is another reason why Wierenga's Star (2003) remains relevant.

The stories of these young people, alongside their peers, with their whānau and social contexts, during this time and here in this place, are rapidly redefining our new appreciation of youth participation known as whai wāhitanga.

Reframing youth participation for 2020 and beyond: whai wāhitanga

Many of the kupu presented in Mana Taiohi are familiar to most youth workers - we practice whanaungatanga daily! However, this term whai wāhitanga will most likely be new to most of us, and therefore need some careful understanding etymologically and in terms of the underlying kaupapa. At this point we three need to acknowledge we are tauiwi, and therefore our perception or understanding of this whakaaro comes from our identities as Ngāti Pākehā and Tangata Tiriti. Treaty-based practice means we are guided by, and held accountable to, our biological whānau who have iwi affiliations and whakapapa to the whenua, colleagues and friends who live in Te Ao Māori, and the many kaumātua and kuia who have all been patient as we have stumbled through the messy legacy and reality of colonisation in attempts to better appreciate matauranga through te reo Māori. We also love maoridictionary.com and have discovered:

Whai:

(noun) pursuit

(verb) to chase, follow, search for, woo, aim at

(verb) be equipped with, possessing, acquire

Wāhi:

(noun) place, opening, portion, share, allocation

(verb) to break through

Whai wāhi:

(verb) to participate, take part, have a part

These denotations are incredibly powerful, relevant to the historical expressions of youth participation and actually lay a roadmap for future exploration. Defining *whai* as a 'pursuit' or 'chase' suggests youth-led empowerment, and possibly a joint discovery with others. The connotations of 'search' and 'woo' imply an active and ongoing journey. Furthermore, the extended verbs of 'acquire', 'equip' and 'possess' certainly evoke adults are relinquishing power, resourcing young people and developing their skills. Conceptualising *wāhi* as 'break-through' indicates innovation, and 'allocation' or 'place' suggests delegation and responsibility. The themes threading through the chronology of youth participation frameworks back into whai wāhitanga are evident.

Whai wāhitanga: *to chase a place = youth participation.*

There's a beautiful symmetry here, as whai wāhitanga conceptually and practically existed before any of the international youth participation theories, and is (re) discovering new relevance in contemporary times. We come full circle and are reminded again of urunga (Baxter et. al., 2016; Caddie, 2011; Hemara, 2000), the aforementioned traditional indigenous approach that translated for some as 'education through exposure', as young people were gifted responsibility, leadership and decision-making power, for the wellbeing of the collective. We note that urunga features in our Code of Ethics, with the clauses clustered under youth participation, and it is helpful to remember the educative power of participation through leadership and responsibility. As our terminology evolves, and future editions of the Code of Ethics align with Mana Taiohi, we do hope this traditional wisdom continues to be embraced under the new framing of whai wāhitanga. We can be world leaders in this space.

The United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child Article 12 states the young people have a right to express their voice, to have it heard and for their voice to be given weight in decision making. Whai wāhitanga is undoubtedly about involving young people in decision-making in all aspects of their lives. As practitioners we pay attention to power dynamics between young people, their communities and decision-makers and seek to act as change agents enabling young people to participate and find their place.

Redefining empowerment

Power lies at the heart of the youth participation conversation. Especially when we are talking about young people's participation in decision-making. Baxter and Haxton's (2007) model of participatory power talks about how we have shared power with young people, the point where our authoritative power as youth workers, overlaps with young people's autonomous power (which we might also call mana). In our role as youth workers and practitioners we have authority to facilitate participation, but not to dictate young people's participation. We recognise young people's mana to shape their own decisions and choices. Empowerment is not an action of the youth worker to give young people power, but an outcome of actions and processes that enable young people to discover their own power.

> *'Empowerment is defined here as a process by which people are able to gain or seize power (control) over decisions and resources that influence their lives'* (Laverack, 2009).

Laverack is not a youth worker, but his discussion of empowerment within the context of community engagement and public health is useful to understandings of empowerment in the youth work context. Empowerment cannot be given to people, they must seek it. Empowerment is young people's realization of their own power and agency. It is critical for people working with young people to recognise young people's inherent mana and power, and to create a change in the environment to nurture and nourish young people, enabling them to find their place.

Whai wāhitanga utilises education, exposure and reflective processes that enable empowerment.

> *'Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects that must be saved from a burning building.'* (Paulo Friere, 2014)

In our varied experiences, we have often discovered that young people have an initial experience of participation, that illuminates for them the multiplicity of opportunities for their participation, and the power of their voice. Paulo Friere's dialogical model is an example of the kinds of processes that enable empowerment. Friere's concept of 'praxis' is taking and then reflecting on their perception of reality, with the purpose of understanding and changing future actions. Through safe and well facilitated dialogue, young people can question their understanding and knowledge, and create new knowledge and understanding together. Conscientisation then happens as young people test and act on their new knowledge, and see changes in their environment as a result of their actions. In the process of conscientisation young people gain a sense of their own agency.

Scenarios

The following scenarios are inspired by our experience and observations in youth participation initiatives. We brainstormed these during a series of video calls whilst planning our workshop for Involve 2018.

The original events (ostensibly changed for ethical reasons!) occurred in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch (where we live respectively), or in communities covered by national youth organisations. We note that diverse geographic contexts present unique challenges.

We encourage you to consider these scenarios as a reflective exercise, integrating the chronology of youth participation frameworks with the refreshed understanding of whai wāhitanga, paying particular attention to ethical issues and power dynamics.

Political, personal and practical ambitions

A group of young people are involved in a local youth council. All young people have been nominated or elected by local youth to sit on the youth council. A couple of young Pākehā males in the group are known members of political parties, and are studying political science and law. They have a declared ambition to become politicians, and use the forum for practicing their political skills. Other young people are leaders who have been involved in their local community or school. They are more interested in practically making a difference. Some young Pasifika women describe that they feel intimidated in meetings by others and they struggle to find their voice and be heard.

Opposing voices in public forums

An 18 year old young woman has been involved in a national youth advisory panel for a government department for two years, is passionate about young people having a voice and very recently joined a political party. She is interviewed by local media in a good news story about the importance of youth voting. She becomes the target of nasty personal comments made about her by a politician on Facebook on a public community page. The politician comes from an opposing political party, to the one the young woman is a part of.

Cynical decision-makers

You are working in an organisation whose core work is not focussed on young people, however you are in a role that advocates for youth voice, participation and wellbeing. Your role is to develop youth voice pathways and genuine youth participation however the overall attitudes and behaviours of those in management, governance or other power positions are negative, deficit focussed towards young people. Examples include circulating articles via email that mock the younger generation, sharing derogatory opinions openly, and have been dismissive when concerns have been raised. Despite providing professional development and support to those in management and governance you feel uneasy about engaging young people into this space.

For each scenario, ask yourself:

- What are the ethical issues here?
- Which participation models are relevant?
- What are the power dynamics potentially present?
- How might you respond?

When priorities conflict

A group within a youth participation project has the idea to run an event. Initially the wider group is very supportive but then it gets way bigger than anticipated and takes a lot of staff time and funding and isn't core business. There is tension within the wider group on what should be the priority. More staff time is being spent on this event and other young people (volunteers) in the group are having to pick up the slack and the core business of the group is being neglected. The staff member is seen to be moving away from the priorities set by young people for the sake of this one event. The staff member sees how big the event is getting and doesn't want to see the young people fail under the growing pressure of the project.

Processes and limits of representation

Your organisation does an excellent job of including young people in decision making. You've had a young person on the governance Board for 20 years. The current Board representative, Ivy, was elected when she was 12 years old and she's now in her second year at university, aged 19 years. Recently Ivy has started some university clubs that affiliate loosely to your organisation's kaupapa, hundreds of students are signing up and you're uncomfortable with some of their activities. You're not sure if this lines up to best practice and Ivy is actively excluding you from meetings so this can be "student-led". An invoice has been sent to you to approve for the $5000 hire of a bouncy castle for a student event that Ivy organised without anyone else knowing.

When the boss has a great idea

A significant event is happening in the region soon and there is a lot of hype, particularly expecting that tourists will arrive en masse. A group of young people have an idea to publish a zine for foreign young people travelling with their parents, of free and cheap stuff to do that only local young people know about. A youth worker supports the group to research, design the zine and access some small, relevant and appropriate advertising to pay for printing. When the printer's proof is being reviewed by the youth worker and some of the group, the youth worker's boss joins the conversation and insists on several other expensive businesses be included, even though it doesn't fit the kaupapa. The youth worker knows the businesses are owned by family and friends of the boss.

Do something!

Adolescence is a time when young people are framing their identity and giving things a go to figure out what their 'thing' is, their strengths, what they enjoy, and where they fit. It's important when working with young people in the context of youth participation that they are unique individuals and not just bums on seats. Our role is to nurture and uphold a young person's mauri - their inherent life spark that includes their values, beliefs, skills, strengths and talents.

In the context of whai wāhitanga, our role isn't to extract an outcome out of young people, rather to be part of their journey of empowerment. If that includes civic participation and alignment with your kaupapa, that is a win. If not, then that is also a win because you have been part of that young person's journey, forming their identity by providing a positive and mana-enhancing experience. An intrinsic part of a young person's identity is their whakapapa, they bring with them a cultural narrative that is tied to their identity and how they come to stand in the spaces in which we encounter them. In youth participation environments where young people are sharing their voice, this is often grounded in their whakapapa. We can't help but think of many of the young people we have worked with, when they stand in a room and share their voice, we can sense their ancestors in the room. For example when rangatahi Māori speak about their tūrangawaewae, the whenua and the awa, it is with strong conviction and a oneness with both land and people.

If a youth participation initiative isn't working (for example you put the call out for young people to join your organisation's governance and you get minimal uptake) nine times out of ten it is likely not the fault of young people. Organisations and groups must take time to examine the structural and cultural barriers to participation. Work with young people to identify the barriers and be transparent and collaborative about how these barriers can be removed.

Ask yourself:

- Have we got the right people?
- Are we investing in training for both young people and adults?
- Have we collaborated with people who work with young people to either partner or advise?
- Have we taken time to understand young people's context (e.g. looked through Mana Taiohi?!)
- Have we figured out what power we are going to / willing to / able to share with young people?
- Is our organisation ready?
- Do you have champions in leadership that 'get it'?

The Mana Taiohi principles alongside whai wāhitananga are helpful to include in your youth participation approach:

Manaakitanga:

- How welcome and safe do young people feel in the environment you create for youth participation?
- Is everyone clear how participation contributes to collective wellbeing?
- How can young people welcome and support other young people to participate?

Whanaungatanga:

- Have you created time and space for people to get to know one another, connect and build positive relationships?
- How do you build relationships with young people and the others in their world?
- How can you extend relationships during every encounter, even the most boring meetings?

Mātauranga:

- Are young people given the information and understanding that they need to participate fully?
- Are their forms of knowledge and expertise valued?
- How can you all reflect on the many youth participation theories to assess your work together?

At the dawn of a new decade: Where to next?

As 2020 approaches, we have a sense youth participation is returning, full circle, to traditional indigenous approaches, incorporating the best bits of well-established theories, within the kaupapa of whai wāhitanga. Power has changed, and young people are challenging systems, and asking adults to adapt their practice. We are beginning to see the flexible democracy Hart once imagined in which young people take hold of opportunities to have their voices heard and given weight in decision-making, and challenging the system when they are not.

Since 60 people joined our first workshop about this kaupapa at Involve 2018 in Wellington, and a further 20 at 2019's Festival of Youth Development in Christchurch, we're noticing momentum to reclaim the potential of participatory frameworks and chart new territory for the next season of this principle. This will require youth development practitioners to wrestle with a series of challenges.

We need to be clear about what we mean by youth participation and what it takes to do this well. *He Arotake Tuhinga* (Deane, Dutton & Kerekere, 2019) is a groundbreaking literature review that celebrated the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, integrated mātauranga and laid a future foundation. While whai wāhitanga wasn't a stand-alone concept in the review, much of what relates to this participatory principle was peppered throughout and mostly located under the section named "Mana". Deane et. al. (2019) offer

a range of recommendations, tensions and challenges when it comes to youth participation in practice. Based on the challenges laid out in the Arotake, and what we have covered in this article, here are some challenges for us all moving forward:

- Resources and training need to be made available to 'adults' when engaging in youth participation activities
- Adults need to relinquish power
- Cultural participation needs elevation
- "*Disseminate case exemplars of authentic and effective youth participation involving diverse groups of young people with clear best practice guidelines. Support organisations to make changes that will enable more frequent, widespread and genuine youth participation practices*" (Deane et. al., 2019, p6)
- The concept of civic participation in Aotearoa is reasonably narrow and often does not acknowledge that access to participation opportunities are often limited
- We need to acknowledge the wider ecosystems in which young people make their voices heard - acknowledging their whanau, their whakapapa, their lived experiences
- Consider the unique reality for rural youth and embedded community relationships
- UNCRC demands more from us all
- We need to redefine participation in Aotearoa as whai wāhitanga so that the diversity of young people are able to find their place, as we respect their mana.

Young people deserve our best and nothing less.

About the authors

Sarah Finlay-Robinson is Ilo's mum and lives in Auckland with her husband who is partially responsible for the hyphenated surname. An experienced youth participation advocate in local government, Sarah most recently taught on the Bachelor of Youth Development at WelTec.

Hannah Dunlop is also Hannah Williams since she married Steve. They live with their cat Blue near a beach in Ōtautahi. Hannah currently creates opportunities for young people to engage in decisions at Environment Canterbury regional council and supports a whole heap of youth work stuff that we can't even fit in here.

Rod Baxter lives in Wellington, isn't married and his partner wonders when this is going to happen. Rod started exploring youth participation as a rowdy teenager in the '90s when grunge was cool and everyone watched the X-Men cartoon. Somehow he became a youth worker through these experiences, and now works with the Prince's Trust New Zealand.

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Whai Wāhitanga Reflective Tool

Adapted by Rod Baxter from Ani Wierenga's (2003) *Sharing a New Story: Young People in Decision-Making*. web.education.unimelb.edu.au/yrc/linked_documents/WP23.pdf

	Meaning	Control	Connectedness
Storying	• What's your kaupapa? • What is your organisation's story? • Why is what you do so important?	• How are young people's voices heard in your place? • Who really knows what's going on? • Who gets to have a say?	• Where did your organisation come from? Where are you going? • Do you share stories and interests with anyone?
Listening	• How come you're involved in youth development? • What are your concerns? • What excites you most about the youth work you're doing?	• What do young people need to engage and participate in youth organisations effectively?	• What things would make you feel effective, useful and valued in the work that you do?
Affirming strengths	• What can young people learn from you?	• What things do you do well?	• How do you celebrate longstanding commitment and contribution?
Resourcing	• What do people need to do well in your organisation? • What do people need to feel useful, valuable and that they belong?	• What skills do people need in youth organisations? • What practical resources are needed?	• What needs to happen for people to be comfortable here? • What do we all have to offer each other? • What other sources could we tap into?
Creatively re-working structure and process	• How can people do things in ways that are meaningful for them in your organisation?	• Are young people allowed to find their own ways of doing things?	• Who are your advocates that can explain what is happening?
Honouring formal relationships	• What are the best ways adults and young people can work together? • What are the best ways young people can work together?	• How do you influence the way relationships are built? • How do you celebrate youth development?	• Who should be hearing about the great stuff you do? • Who do you refer to from the past? • How are you building people for the future?
Nurturing informal relationships, bonding and linking	• What do you love doing most? • What are the connections between our stories? • Who else shares our passions?	• What gives less dominant members of the community a chance to contribute? • Who else could you work with in the community?	• How can we get to know and trust each other? • What non-task activities might people be able to do together?