

JENNY PARKER
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SHEFFIELD UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH TITLE

**AN EXPLORATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING
AND OF THE SKILLS LINKED TO HIGH-LEVEL PARTICIPATION**

**CO-RESEARCHING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
FROM PARTICIPATION GROUPS IN ONE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the nature of participation and involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes, both within participation groups and also as co-researchers. The research explored whether children and young people's decision-making in participation groups was 'tokenistic' or 'active,' through examining the nature and level of decision-making. Skills linked to co-research and decision-making in participation groups were identified by participants.

The research was located in a Social Constructionist Framework. A case study methodology was used with an 'embedded single case' design. Interviews were the key methods used and the phased data collection involved four participation groups. The Participatory Research Approach involved co-researchers in the design, interviews and analysis.

The method of analysis involved combining Boyatzis's (1998) Thematic Analysis approach with Attride-Stirling's (2001) Thematic Networks. A number of themes were identified which are further discussed in terms of the literature reviewed. Global themes were 'Decision-Making and Power', 'Inclusion and Equity' and 'Skill Development'.

The research identified features for high-level of involvement in decision-making, as reported by the children and young people in participation groups and in the research. Transfer of decision-making to other children and young people was a development area and supportive of inclusion. Key skills linked to research involvement were similar to skills related to high-level participation. Practice suggestions include embedding high-level youth decision-making within Education and Educational Psychology practice.

Definition of Key Terms

- *Active Participation* refers to a process in Hart's (1992) model, which involves a high-level of decision-making from Children and Young People.
- *Buddying* refers to processes involving peer support. This takes place with older or more experienced Children and Young People training or encouraging their younger peers.
- *Children and Young People (CYP)* as a descriptive term, rather than children or teenagers was used to identify participants (aged 11-19).
- *Co-researcher* was a term used to refer to CYP who were involved with the design and analysis of this research.
- *Data Corpus* was a term used by Boyatzis (1998) and is used to refer to data across all interviews and all materials analysed.
- *Emancipatory Participation* is a term used to represent a particular form of participation linked to concepts of increased power and social justice.
- *Global or Super-Ordinate Themes* refers to important overarching themes.
- *Inclusive Participation* is a term to define a process, which is open to as wide a number of CYP as possible, including potentially disadvantaged or marginalized groups, within decision-making processes.

- *Participation* has a range of terms of reference but specifically refers here to involvement of CYP within L.A. participation groups and, through being part of the research process itself, as co-researchers or as participants.
- 'Participation' is used to refer to CYP's involvement in decision-making.
- Participant is a term used to refer to involvement in the research, by: 1) participating in the interviews; 2) being observed; 3) as co-researchers. The term 'participant' also referred to CYP's involvement in the process of decision-making within participation groups.
- *Participation-Unit* refers to the "Connexions" and "Youth Service" led 'hub' of activities and groups involving CYP and adults, within the local authority (L.A). These groups were involved in co-ordinating and running participation events within the L.A. and developing participation. The CYP involved within this research came from this unit.
- *Student-voice* is a term used to refer to representations of CYP's views.
- *Tokenism* is a term used which relates to Hart's (1992) model and a process whereby adults lead decision-making which marginally and superficially includes CYP's views.

1.0 INTRODUCTION (CHAPTER 1)

Participation and involvement of children and young people (CYP) in decision-making, relating to decisions that affect their lives, is a key element within guidance and legislation, pertaining to CYP's education and human rights. This would include the *United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) and *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004), which have participation and involvement as central principles. Recent educational practices, involving 'student-voice,' that is to say eliciting CYP's views about issues that affect their lives, have been influenced by such principles.

In this research, I have related the term *eliciting views* of CYP to wider educational concepts of *Student-voice and Participation* and consider these terms as being interchangeable, involving the same underlying principles of CYP's involvement in decision-making. The relating of these two terms *eliciting views* and *student-voice* was worked towards through the design of the research questions, which explored CYP's participation alongside their involvement as co-researchers.

The 'Hear by Rights' Standards, outlined in publications produced by Participation Works (2007), provide guidance to CYP and organisations relating to the more practical elements of participation. The 'Hear by Rights' standards also include reference to the McKinsey model developed in Peters et al (1980). Following on from this legislation and guidance, practices in schools and L.A.s related to gaining CYP's views have started to expand, including school councils, forums and participation groups.

The notion of involvement in decision-making was explored with explicit reference to Hart's (1992) model of participation, which is outlined in the literature section and *Figure 4* (p.29). Hart's 'Ladder of Participation' distinguished between levels of participation. These levels vary from adult dominated, including '*Manipulation*' and *Tokenism* at the bottom of the model, to

shared and empowering stages of decision-making at the higher levels such as *CYP and adults sharing decision-making*.

1.1 Background to the Case Study (Setting the Context)

The CYP involved within the research were all members of participation groups, from a 'Participation Unit' either in the L.A. or in a local school.

'Participation Unit' refers to a L.A. organised structure which supported the involvement of CYP and which was based within the Integrated Youth Service, in the L.A. where the research took place. This 'Participation Unit' included youth workers and CYP aged 14 to 19. The participation groups referred to below were from the 'Participation Unit' and formed the 'embedded cases,' (Yin, 1994) in this case study.

One member of the participation unit who was a key co-researcher wished to extend the focus of analysis to his school, where there was an emerging school council. This was in order to develop his school council and the skills of the councillors. The school was a co-educational comprehensive school, situated in an urban context in North West England. The research explored the experiences of participation and involvement in decision-making of children, on the school council in that comprehensive school. The researcher (JP) also explored experiences of co-researchers and their associated skills.

The participation groups (A-D) were identified and involved within the research after taking account of the level of the CYP's existing involvement, within participatory processes in the school or L.A. Access to groups was established through a process of negotiation with the CYP themselves, youth leaders and participation representatives in the authority. The participation representatives were L.A. employees and CYP who had influence on policies, relating to participation, in L.A. policy making.

1.2 (i) Participation Groups

The participation groups involved within the research were as follows.

Group A: This group was the L.A. 'Children in Care Council.' This group was involved in the pilot and preliminary data collection phase (phases 1 and 2). This participation group consisted of eight male and female CYP (six in this research) aged between 14-19 and two youth leaders who facilitated group processes and activities. One co-researcher involved was also chair of the Youth Opportunities Panel (B) and had the opportunity to be involved in the later stages of the research and to introduce co-researching to peers.

Group B: The second participation group involved was the Youth Opportunities Panel. This group of 17 male and female CYP were involved in interviewing CYP for grants (Youth Opportunities Fund) relating to initiatives which they wished to pursue. This group used inclusive and positive discrimination criteria for selection and included CYP from different backgrounds, groups and some CYP with additional needs.

Group C: The third participatory group selected was the 'Scrutiny Panel' from the L.A. This group of 9 male and female CYP was responsible for scrutinising L.A. 'lead' people (senior managers) on their progress in terms of the objectives in the Local Authority, 'CYP's Plans' (2009 and 2009-2012). Co-researchers conducted interviews in the participation groups and school council, in the case study school. The school council group became the fourth participation group.

Group D: This was the school council group including two representatives from each of the year groups within their local comprehensive school. This group was just emerging at the time of the research and identified for inclusion in the study by a co-researcher from the 'Participation Unit.' This school council was involved in making decisions relating to their classmates as a whole. This included influencing anti-bullying policies.

Interview questions (*appendix A*) explored CYP's experiences of decision-making within groups (A-D) and provided an opportunity for the co-researchers, who were in the groups, to refine their research skills, through their own design and conducting of interviews with peers. This was a cyclical process involving (JP and co-researchers) modelling interview skills and the phased involvement of subsequent co-researchers. This process follows in *Figures 1-2* (p.13-15).

Research Process Details

Figure 1a

Participation Group and Co-Researcher Cohort Details

CYP involved in the research as co-researchers were aged 15 to 19. Five co-researchers were involved (three male and 2 female). Co-researchers within phases 3-5 were also participants in the earlier interviews, as part of the process of skill development. Participants were aged 11 to 19. Participant groups involved in the research had an 'inclusive entry criteria'. Groups A-C consisted of CYP from different socio-economic backgrounds, CYP with learning, emotional and behavioural needs and both male and female CYP.

Pilot Stage

- Introductions of JP to the Participation Unit (youth leaders & Group A);
- Initial visit to the CYP from the 'Children in Care Council' (Group A) and attendance at two meetings;
- Workshop part 1 – This involved the following activities:
 - ❖ Pilot Q sort with CYP from the 'Children in Care Council' (Group A - 6 CYP 3 female and 3 male) relating to experiences of research;
 - ❖ Additional discussion of other ways of collecting data with group A;
 - ❖ Discussion with Group A to find out the CYP's preferred methods;
 - ❖ Identification of statements (created by the CYP) about participation and related skills (*appendix A*) which were subsequently used within the main research phases.

Preliminary Stages (Phase 1 and 2)

Figure 1b

Workshop part 2 – Questionnaire completion (group A).

- Interim data collection (co-researchers 1 (CR1) and 2 (CR2) involved);
- Introductions, observations and meetings with youth leaders and CYP from: 'The Youth Opportunities Panel' and 'The Scrutiny Panel' (Participation Groups B and C). 17 and 9 members in each group.

Main Study (Phase 3)

- Researcher (JP) carried out initial interview to model conducting research interviews, in order to refine interview questions and explore the nature of participation (2 co-researchers involved: CR3 male 19 and CR4 female 18). Participants involved were from the Youth Opportunities Panel (B).
- One participant co-researcher (CR4 – female aged 18 selected from the Youth Opportunities Panel, Group B) interviewed a participant co-researcher (male aged 16, CR5) from The Scrutiny Panel (Group C) JP observed this process.
- Brief reflective discussion and refining of questions;
- Observations of group activities within the Scrutiny Panel;
- One participant co-researcher (CR5, male aged 16) interviewed a participant (female aged 16) from group C (Scrutiny Panel). Brief reflective discussion and plan followed with co-researcher 5 including next steps for the research.

(Phase 4)

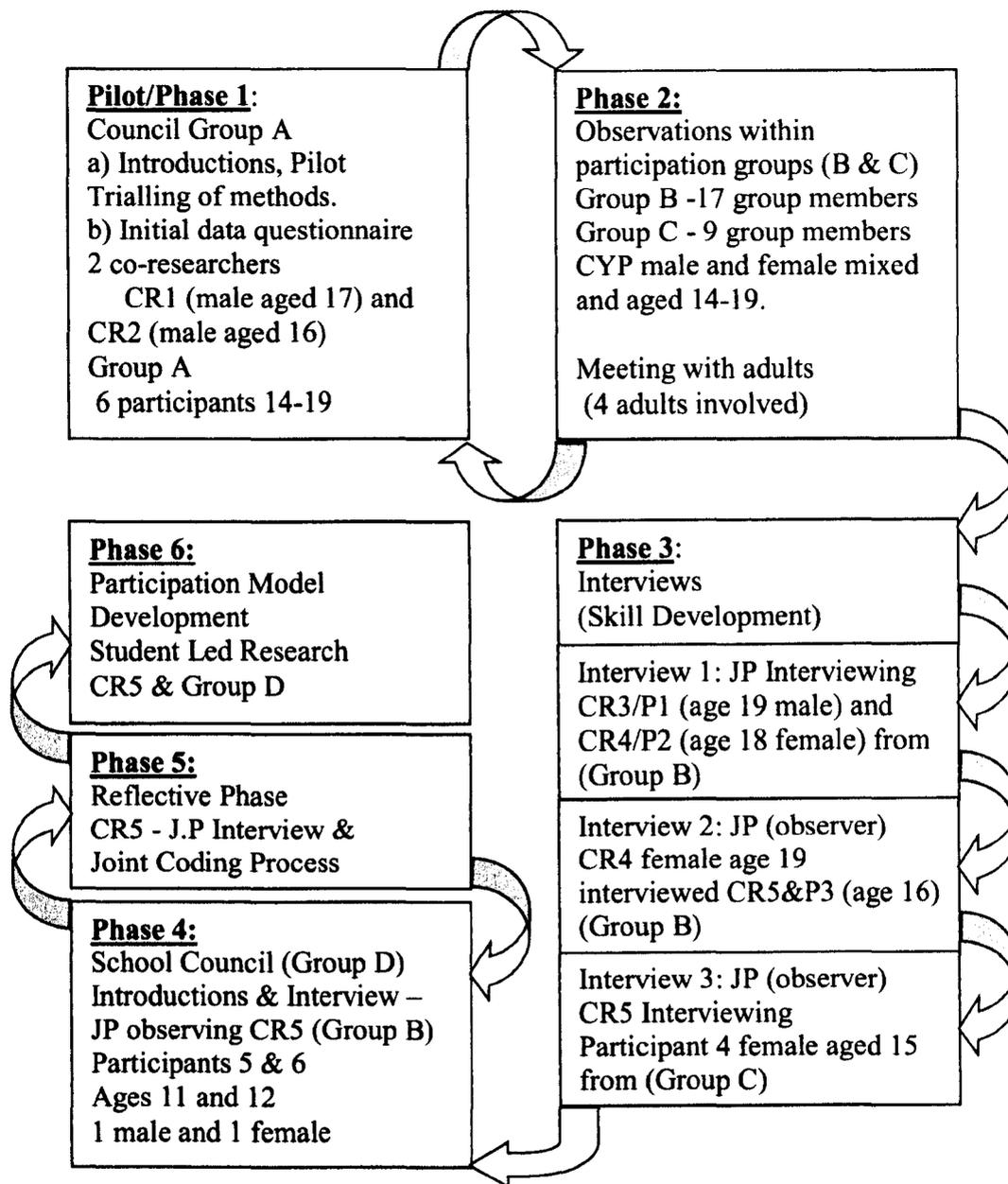
- Group D (School Council group) Ages 11-16 (12 group members). Introductions and meeting attendance.
- (CR5) interviewed P3 & P4 - 1 male/1 female ages 11 and 12 (JP observing).

(Phase 5)

- JP conducted reflective interview with CR5 (male aged 16);
- Transcriptions of interview data from all the phases;
- Researcher and CR5 engaged in joint coding and discussion of all data (Thematic Framework, appendix K. p.162).

Research Model (Phased Approach)

Figure 2



Key: Arrows relate to the reflective cycles within the research.
 CR – Co-researchers in sequence order.
 Participant Groups: (A) Children In Care Council, (B) Youth Opportunities Panel,
 (C) Scrutiny Panel, (D) School Council.
 P – Participant; J.P – Jenny Parker (researcher).

The selection of the CYP chosen to be co-researchers was determined through researcher discussion with CYP, the youth leaders and through self-selection. The criteria for selection were that the CYP had existing experience in participation groups. The co-researchers reflected on their skill development during reflective interviews. Methodological decisions were shared with the co-researchers, when possible, relating to the research questions and methods. Further details are in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.2 Relevance of this Research to EP Practice

Within Educational Psychology (EP) practice, there has been a focus on '*eliciting the views*' of CYP and involving them in decision-making, as outlined in Harding and Atkinson (2009) and Pomerantz et al (2007b).

In my personal experience, there has been less focus given to the specific level of participation taking place, with reference to the nature of power relations involved within decision-making and *eliciting* CYP's views. My EP practice-based experience had indicated a variable level of involvement of CYP in decision-making related to their education. Consistent with Hart's (1992) model, CYP were informed, consulted or involved in a more *tokenistic* way.

The key target areas I identified for increasing the level of CYP's participation by EPs included involvement in meetings, assessments and educational decisions. A higher level of CYP's involvement has been evident when EPs used therapeutic techniques, such as Solution Focused Practice (De Shazer, 1985) and approaches deriving from Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). These approaches have a client-centred focus, which is theoretically consistent with involvement at the highest levels of participation models.

An important reason for carrying out this research is that education systems often contain systems of embedded power relations. Important decisions are made about EP and Educational practice that do not always include CYP as

'active participants.' These processes are discussed in Chapters 2 and 6. For these reasons it was considered important to increase CYP's participation as a means to address the balance of power in decision-making relating to important issues affecting the CYP's lives.

Educational systems, settings, and L.A. organisations can often involve a complex array of power relations. From a Social Constructionist viewpoint, as outlined in Gergen (1985) discourse should be viewed as an 'artefact of social exchange', rather than reflecting a 'clear map to reality'. From this point of view, there are many 'voices' or narratives in the education system and CYP's views should be included. Hearing CYP's narratives, rather than adult accounts, is a challenge addressed in this research.

1.3 Importance of the Research in the Local Context

Within the L.A, where this research took place, there was an existing strong focus on participation. This involved a variety of participation groups run with a high-level of involvement from the CYP and these groups were involved in this research.

The structures of participation, as related to Hart's (1992) model of participation, appeared to operate relatively successfully and were student-focused. The evidence for this was that awards were given to local participation projects, linked to *Hear by Rights Standards* (Participation Works, 2007) and the National Participation Merit awards. There were also a range of existing youth forums and groups, within the authority, which appeared to be operating at a high-level of consultation with the CYP.

During the start of this research, the L.A. was conducting a wide ranging inclusive series of events aimed at gaining views relating to the CYP's Plan (L.A. 2009-2012), involving groups of CYP of different ages, from different types of educational provision, youth groups and with a range of S.E.N.

Once the CYP's Plan (2009-2012) was in place, the L.A. prioritised participation. Participation was stated as being a 'golden thread' and underpinning each of the priorities. This was also identified as number eight of the nine key targets in the previous 'Children and CYP's Plan' (Local Authority 2006-9) relating to participation, which was 'To ensure that CYP engage in and have the opportunity to influence decision-making.' For reasons of confidentiality it has not been possible to include a copy of the L.A. plan. Targets are reproduced in *Appendix S*, p.208.

After discussion with representatives from the L.A., it was agreed to explore, participation in practice within the Children in Care Council (A), the Youth Opportunities Panel (B) and Scrutiny Panel (C). CYP from these groups were also co-researchers. This was to facilitate participation of CYP in the research, as well as to examine levels of participation in existing groups. The groups (A-C) selected for this study had engaged in research, linked to their perceptions of education. These groups had pivotal roles in participation initiatives in the L.A, which is why these CYP were involved.

This authority employed participation leads. These were L.A. employees who were charged with leading on aspects of participation. They reported that there was already evidence of participation and some CYP's influence on decision-making, but that for group (A) there were mechanisms which were preventing their full participation. For instance, child protection concerns and the bureaucracy designed to protect children often unintentionally limited the opportunities of some groups of CYP to be fully involved within decision-making processes. This included issues relating to consent.

Participation was not fully inclusive or fully developed, in this L.A, in some schools where participation groups were newly formed and for younger groups of CYP such as *children looked after*. A specific participation group for *children*

looked after and recent care leavers had been set up, which was run in partnership with Integrated Youth, Connexions (support and advice service for CYP) and the Children's Authority. Initiatives included a 'virtual school' for *children looked after*, were set up. This was a multi-agency system for supporting *children looked after* in the authority deriving from the Care Matters (DfES, 2007) agenda.

For the 'Children in Care Council' Group (Group A), the children expressed some ambivalence at being identified as being part of the 'Children in Care' group, but the CYP agreed that they had specific needs and views to express. This did not preclude them from being representatives on other groups or forums. The purpose of having specific groups of children in order to express the voices of CYP, in particular circumstances and with particular needs, is an important element of this research.

I believed that the existence of groups where CYP were highly active in decision-making processes was an important area for exploration. The opportunity to explore several groups where decision-making was at a reported high level, in terms of Hart's (1992) model, was important, as it provided an opportunity for identifying the potential effects of group membership on skill development in the CYP, and their role as co-researchers. This is reflected upon within Chapter 8.

1.4 Researcher Values

This research was underpinned by the key pivotal issues of social justice and empowerment of CYP, through 'active participation'. This was based on a Humanistic (Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1968) viewpoint where individuals are viewed as having a high-level of agency. I aimed to ensure that these principles were central to this research through the inclusion of CYP as co-researchers and the focus on a high-level of student-centred participation. The process of accurately representing the insider accounts of participants and groups was

aimed for through gaining CYP's direct views. The co-researcher involvement influenced methodological considerations, including ensuring co-researchers were part of the research design, process and methods used.

1.5 Value of the Research

Prilleltensky et al (2001) identified a gap within the literature relating to the 'dire effects of powerlessness on children's lives' and to 'issues relating to lack of control' (p.144). The goal of 'reducing the sense of individual disempowerment' discussed by Prilleltensky et al, was my goal also, reflected in the values of this research, so I hoped to focus on how 'opportunities to experience power and control in one's life contribute to health and well-being' (ibid, p.144). This focus on empowerment was explored through links between 'active participation,' increased control, power, and skill development. In addition, CYP's participation was identified as a method for addressing the sense of powerlessness through listening to CYP's views and centralising their involvement as co-researchers.

Within this Participatory Research Approach, I hoped that by focusing on CYP, through their role as co-researchers exploring decision-making, it would be possible for further insight to be made into this key area. These insights could be obtained through identifying routes into an increased sense of 'power', 'self-efficacy' and 'resilience' for CYP, through their effective involvement in decision-making processes. The CYP's perceptions of skills linked to participation were obtained through reflective interviews, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In this thesis, chapters are organised in the following structure:

In Chapter 2, which follows, I will examine the relevant background literature. This will include literature relating to changing constructions of childhood, the legislative context of decision-making and the need to elicit CYP's views. It will also include a discussion of participation models and to the potential effects of participation.

In Chapter 3, I will set out the methodology employed. This will include the philosophical underpinnings, researcher values and details of the rationale for the case study approach, interviews and thematic analysis employed.

In Chapter 4, the procedures employed will be outlined in detail. This will include the methods of data collection, analysis employed and details of the ethical considerations. This will also include a detailed description of the coding and thematic analysis stages.

In Chapter 5, the results of the research will be outlined related to the research questions and research phases. This will also include the proposed model for participatory practice emerging from this research.

In Chapter 6, the research findings will be discussed with reference to the background literature. This section will be organised in terms of the research questions.

In Chapter 7, recommendations will be outlined for EP and participatory practice emerging from this research.

In Chapter 8, the limitations of the research will be outlined and the research critiqued. This will include reference to CYP's involvement in research, participation skills and additional methodological critique.

In Chapter 9, the research is concluded with reference to the research questions.

1.6 Conclusion

The standpoint of this researcher was that CYP's views are often obtained in 'tokenistic manner' (Hart, 1992) in educational practice. I have argued that the nature of involvement of CYP in decision-making processes is an area for further exploration, particularly with the increased emphasis on student councils within schools and youth participation groups. I aimed to explore participation in terms of what it means to CYP and their involvement in decisions.

It was a key goal of this research to obtain student views and to *centralise* CYP's involvement within the study. The goal of *centralisation* of involvement was through participants' role as co-researchers as a key focus within the research. The methods and procedures were questionnaires (Group A), co-researchers' interviews with participants from groups (B-D) and a more detailed reflective interview. (See Chapters 3 and 4)

My experiences as a practitioner led me to postulate that CYP's routine participation in assessments and meetings, without sufficient planning or consideration of their needs and views, can create ethical issues related to power. However, if participation is not carried out sensitively, it could potentially increase the sense of powerlessness for CYP, for instance inclusion in review meetings where involvement is *tokenistic*.

Active attempts through participation, to acknowledge and respond to the views of potentially marginalized groups and incorporate their 'narratives', was a significant aspect within this research. This should be an important consideration, I believe, in EP practice as stated earlier. It has been a key interest and goal of mine to *centralise* the narratives and views of CYP, by encouraging them to have an active participatory role within decision-making processes.

An additional element of the research was, therefore, working with CYP as co-researchers as a method. I explored this, working with students from participation groups (A-C) and a school council (D). This process involved negotiating with the CYP throughout the research as well as the co-researchers actually conducting some of the interviews. It was intended that this would be through a process whereby data obtained within interviews would be reflected upon in a collaborative and active process, whereby participant views and voice would be illuminated.

This research, therefore, has significance I believe on a number of different levels. This is in terms of involvement of CYP within research, also in decision-making within participatory groups and in terms of skill development related to participation and decision-making. The research questions in *Figure 3*, p.23, relate to these areas.

Research Questions

Figure 3

- To what extent can CYP be involved within the research process as co-researchers?
- What is the level and nature of CYP involvement in participatory and decision-making processes? (within the case study)
- What are the skills relevant to CYP's involvement in decision-making?

2.0 CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Structure of the Literature Review

Within this literature review, CYP's participation is considered with reference to changes in constructions of childhood, followed by an overview of the current nature of participation linked to the *Rights of the Child* and then by examination of key models and features of participation pertinent to this research. Literature linked to the potential effects of participation includes its effect on empowerment and agency, education, skill development and resiliency. Lastly, the processes of CYP co-researching and power relations in the research are considered.

2.2 Changing Constructions of Childhood and the Legislative Context of Children's Rights and Participation

The changing nature of societal conceptions of childhood throughout history is outlined by Hobbs et al (2000), who argue that there have been different historical constructions of childhood, namely: children as *possessions*, then as *subjects*, then as *participants* and finally as *citizens*. According to this viewpoint, societal perceptions of children and their abilities underlie the possibility for active engagement of children in processes, which affect them. 'Active participation' practices are allied to the more recent societal conceptions of children as participants and citizens and are linked to the more historically recent educational focus on the relevance of childhood participation and 'student-voice,' including the setting up of school councils and forums as recommended in the Crick Report (QCA, 1998) as part of the Citizenship curriculum.

Veitch (2009) and Tomas (2008) have also linked the recent changes in educational practice to changes in children's rights and constructions of childhood. Tomas (2008) referred to child labour legislation and primary universal education during the 19th century as the start of the process. Mayall (2004) and James and Prout (1997) also highlighted the current conception of children as competent social actors emerging from a historical context. These

historical changes were drivers to the later emergence of children's rights during the 1980's and 1990's through the *Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989) which implied changes to 'children's participation recognising for children similar rights to those of adults' (Tomas, 2008, p.3).

The expansion of children's rights to participation and the expression of their views relating to matters affecting them are enshrined in *Article 12, United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNICEF, 1989). This Article says that: '*States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming (their) own views that right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child*' (UNICEF, 1989, p.4). This act drove the changing role for children as it stated the child's views 'must be considered in all matters'.

This legislation later paved the way for changes, within education, such as the focus on *Student-Voice and Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004). The rights of children and guidance in terms of their education and social care were enshrined in the Children Act (HMSO, 1989) and this included the rights of children with special educational needs within the *SEN Code of Practice* (DfEE, 2001). This also included the Children Act (HMSO, 2004) which provided for the establishment of a Children's Commissioner in England and the duty for local authorities to prepare and publish a CYP's Plan. These documents included reference to children's views being obtained within educational practice. The concepts of *Participation* and the '*Student-voice*' were subsequently highlighted within *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2004) and *Care Matters* (DfES, 2007) as central and important elements of practice. Social justice and empowerment of CYP, through active participation should, therefore be key principles for EP practice.

I argue that it is important to consider, as outlined above, the changing constructions of childhood, in order to understand and contextualise the recent focus in educational practice and society on obtaining CYP's views. I also argue

that the process of CYP's involvement in decision-making is socially constructed as participation mechanisms are already changing within the current political climate and there is variability in terms of the levels of participation.

The Fraser Guidelines enshrining the 'Gillick Principle' discussed in the British Medical Association Guidance (2001) are relevant to consider as a representation of the changing view of children's capacity. These guidelines emerged from a legal ruling concerning the age at which an individual would be able to make a decision about contraception. The Fraser Guidelines establish the age or level of understanding when children are capable of having a legal say on matters which affect them, including medical treatments and for their views to be considered independently of their parents.

Veitch (1999) linked children's rights and charted recent legislation to the emergence of participatory frameworks within education and setting up of school councils. Veitch was critical of the level of participation and agency within many school councils and identified a tension between the participatory framework evident and educational ethos in schools. Morrow (2000) suggested that active participation and involvement of children in all levels of decision-making is non-existent within school councils.

The importance of CYP's participation was discussed in Ruddock et al (1996), Barton (1998) and Clough (1998), who highlighted the importance of obtaining pupil perspectives about important decisions including education and of the importance of 'student-voice' as a mechanism for increasing power through participation which would have a real impact upon lives. Prilleltensky et al (2001) described student participation as a means for addressing the balance of power. This is discussed in Chapter 6.

2.3 Models of Participation

2.3 (i) Hart's Background and Model of Participation

Roger Hart is a recognised academic and specialist in the area of participatory research and CYP's involvement in decision-making. He is a professor in Psychology in the Environmental Psychology PhD programme of the graduate centre of the City University of New York. He is also the co-director of the Children's Environmental Research group. His background involved exploring participation in a range of contexts including developing a model of participation while working for UNICEF in 1992. He has also written widely on a range of participation topics and areas. Later research by Hart (2001) extended the participatory model further to include reference to an overall Participatory Framework, linked to CYP involvement within research.

Hart (1992) outlined a model of levels of participation, which appears to be particularly relevant as a starting point for a consideration of the nature and potential outcome of participation. The Hart model was selected for this study as it was a model that appeared relevant in terms of exploring the levels of participatory structures. It was also viewed as being a simple visual and general representation of the layers of participation. It is a recognised model within educational and participatory practice.

Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation distinguished between types of participation ordered from adult-led types, including *manipulation* and *tokenism* at the bottom to *child-centred*, *empowering*, *child-initiated* and *shared* at the top. The bottom three levels of this model were considered to be non-participation. This model suggested that the goal of participation would be to move towards a shared level of decision-making. The ladder metaphor derived from Arnstein's (1969) earlier conception of participation as a series of levels (see appendix R). Hart's model is outlined in *Figure 4*, (p.29).

Hart suggested that CYP were often involved in decision-making to influence a cause, for example, political rallies, but that CYP's involvement was not always with awareness of the social implications. Hart argued that this process relates to the lower three stages of this model. The lowest level of participation was viewed as being manipulation, which could involve adults encouraging CYP to be involved with political situations they do not fully understand, or similarly, when CYP are consulted but feedback is not given. *Decoration* refers to CYP participating in an indirect way, where they are a visible presence but not really with a specific role. *Tokenism* refers to how CYP are apparently 'given a voice' but not fully given choice about the 'style or method' of communicating (Hart, 1992, p.9).

Hart next moved on to explain the higher levels, which he regarded as participatory. In order for CYP involvement to be participatory, he outlined the criteria for children being '*consulted and informed*' and their ideas being considered with integrity:

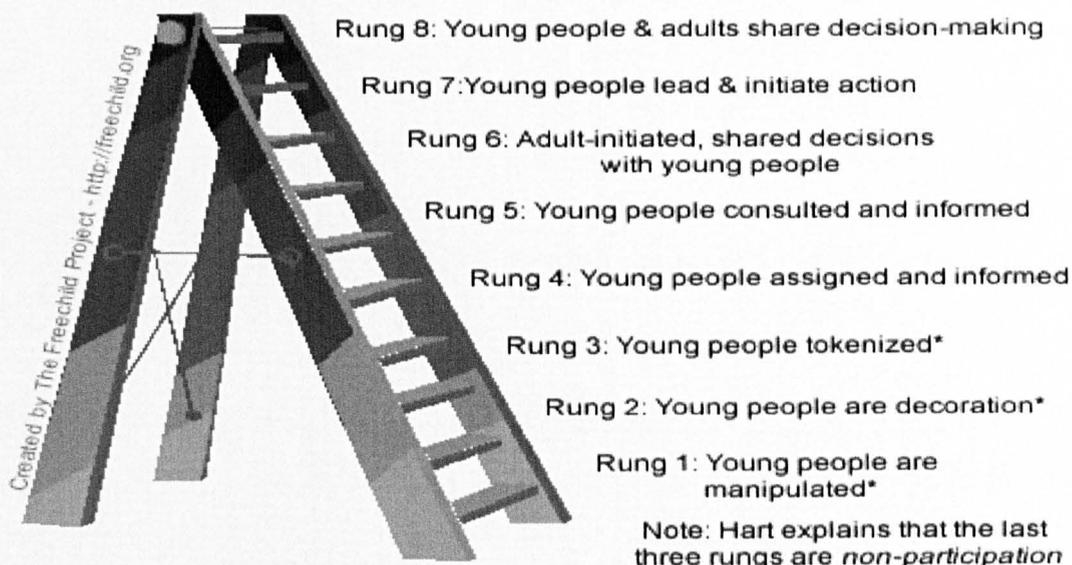
1. The children understand the intentions of the project;
2. They know who made the decisions concerning their involvement and why;
3. They have a meaningful (rather than 'decorative') role;
4. They volunteer for the project after the project was made clear to them.

(Hart, 1992, p.11)

Hart suggested that 'true' participation operates at levels 6 and above. This included the following types: '*adult initiated*' approaches, where CYP '*share decision-making*,' then '*child initiated and directed*' and the highest level as '*child initiated and shared with adults*.' Illustrations are given by Hart from global contexts and various educational programmes by Hart to demarcate the different participation levels in practice.

Roger Hart's Ladder of CYP's Participation Figure 4

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Hart (2001) argued that participation relates to the following areas: 'seeking information', forming views; expressing ideas; 'taking part in activities and processes'; 'playing different roles including listening, reflecting', 'researching; being informed and consulted in decision-making'; 'initiating ideas; processes, proposals, projects'; 'analysing situations and making choices'; 'respecting others and being treated with dignity' (UN Children's Fund, 2001, p.11).

Hart's model could be critiqued by adopting a multi-layered social constructionist approach by suggesting that there may be different meanings of participation operating at any one time. There may well be some potential difficulties with achieving child-centred participation at the higher ends of Hart's (1992) Ladder of participation. This is because 'high-level' student participation could challenge and contradict internal power relations and structures implicit within the organisation, by facilitating CYP challenging systems and affecting policies. This is further referred to in Chapter 6.

Hart's (1992) model is relatively simplistic in terms of levels of participation and suggests that groups could be analysed in terms of a specific level of decision-making, when in reality multiple levels could be operational depending on the person's role within the group and the particular decision discussed. Hart does acknowledge that his model should be viewed as a starting point for exploring the nature of participation. The model was used within this research, as a tool for discussion about decision-making. The notion of active participation referred to stages from 6-8 within this model as this was taken to indicate the move from *tokenism* towards a CYP centred approach.

I would acknowledge that this initial model (*Figure 4, p.29*) does not fully consider the contextual and political factors linked to the practical application of consultative models of child involvement, although the focus on CYP involvement in Participatory Research aimed to extend this approach further, as Hart had advocated in his later approaches (Hart, 2001). In this research, the aim was to explore the level and nature of participation taking place.

Hart extended his initial model to a general Participatory Approach within research. This means that decision-making and involvement of CYP in participation was linked by Hart (2001) to the establishment of 'Participatory Research' involving CYP.

This Participatory Research approach advocated a rejection of the "social division of mental and manual labour" (Hart, 1992, p.16), suggesting that research and action should "go together and be carried out by the same people." (Ibid, p.16) This meant that research participants were involved in the research process, through a series of research cycles, as active not passive participants. Co-researching and involving CYP similarly aimed to extend participation to this research process, as outlined in Chapter 4.

2.3 (ii) Alternative Models of Participation

There are other models of participation which can be compared with Hart's (1992) model. Some are directly comparable laddered models and some use alternative structures to explain participation. Shier's (2001) model is a more recent adaptation of a laddered approach to participatory practice, which includes five stages. The highest level (level 1) is where children and adults share decision-making; (level 2) children are involved in decision-making; (level 3) CYP's views are taken into account; (level 4) children are supported to express their views and (level 5) children are listened to. The lower levels of Shier's (2001) model still suggest a level of participatory intent, whereas Hart (2001) has more specific criteria for 'true participation.' A comparative table of the laddered models is within appendix R, p.207.

Kirby et al (2003) have developed an alternative to the ladder-based models of participation, where different levels are outlined in parallel, which include the following types of participation: 1) CYP's views are taken into account by adults 2) CYP share decision-making; 3) CYP making autonomous decision and 4) CYP are involved in decision-making jointly with adults. This is outlined below.

Kirby et al's (2003) model of participation

Figure 5

	CYP's views are taken into account by adults	
CYP make autonomous decisions		CYP are involved in decision-making together with adults
	CYP share power and responsibility for decision making with adults.	

Another model of participation relevant to this study and the participation context is McKinsey's seven-stage model of organisational change, (Peters et al, 1980). Peters et al claimed that this was an attempt to reconcile some of the factors within an organisation, in order to promote an environment conducive to

participation. This model forms the basis of the *Hear by Rights Model* (Participation Works, 2007), which the research authority and several other L.A.s are working towards in terms of key principles and systemic approaches to incorporating child decision-making into L.A. organisations, as required by the Children Act (HMSO, 2004). The seven stages of the 'McKinsey' model in Peters et al (1980) are strategies, structures, systems, staff, skills and knowledge, styles of leadership and shared values. This model follows below

The McKinsey 7S Model

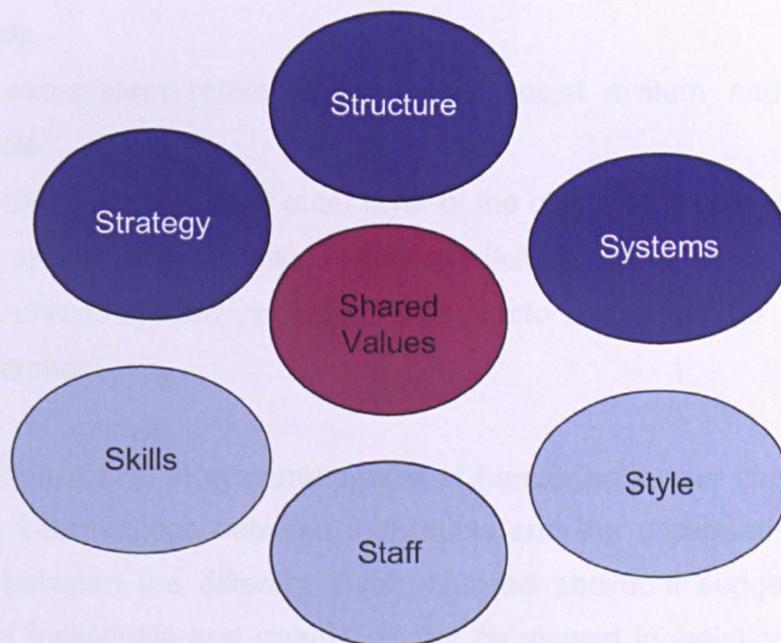


Figure 6

In terms of the factors for organisation structures, the strategies, structure and systems were identified as being priority or 'hard' factors, which could be altered by management and staff. Style and skills were identified as 'soft' factors and more variable or susceptible to change. Shared values were considered as central to any organisational system and are relevant to the analysis of participation systems or groups.

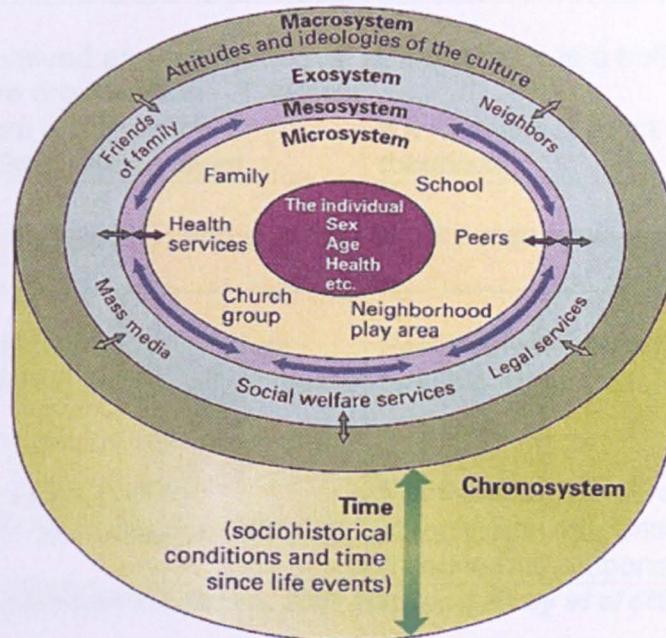
The approach outlined in Peters et al, (1980) is similar to Bronfrenbrenner's (1979) system-based model as it suggests that focusing on a range of different elements in the environment, can be a basis for ensuring and facilitating participation. Bronfrenbrenner (1979) suggested there are systems in the environment to consider as outlined below:

- The *micro-system* is the layer closest to the CYP, with which the child has direct contact (relationships and immediate interactions).
- The *meso-system* provides connections between structures of the child's micro-system and can include connections between a child and their parents.
- The *exo-system* refers to the wider social system and associated impacts.
- The *macro-system* is the outer layer of the child's environment. (This system includes laws, values and beliefs).
- The *chrono-system* includes time factors relating to the child's environment.

Bronfrenbrenner's (1979) systemic model of human behaviour can be used to analyse the interrelations between individuals and the organisation operating within and between the different levels outlined above. It suggests that the behaviour of individuals and groups cannot be viewed in isolation, but needs consideration of the wider social settings and structure. This model implies that adults' roles and the environmental factors could also affect participation, which was a relevant feature impacting on the participation groups in this research.

Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Model

Figure 7



2.4 Conditions for Effective and Meaningful Participation

In terms of the process of establishing a culture of participation, there are a number of key factors to consider, outlined in *Figure 8*, below. These factors link to high-level participative practice within groups and organisations and are relevant to this research. Some of the key positive factors identified in the publication by Children's Alliance (2007) included the role of managers and adults, the impact of high-level participative practice on decision-making and recognising and valuing the views of CYP.

Creating a Culture of Participation

Figure 8

What works?	What does not work?
Participation is valued and embedded in all aspects of the organisation – There is a culture where children are respected and their views valued.	Participation is a bolt-on extra. If it happens, it is an after-thought and <i>tokenistic</i> .
Senior managers champion and commit to participation.	Senior managers do not value participation.
Participation is focused on what has changed for children as a result of their engagement.	Participation focuses on process with no tangible impact on decisions made.
Everybody plays their part to ensure that CYP can influence decision-making.	Participation is not reflected in individual responsibilities (no-one has responsibility).

Adapted from: (Children's Alliance, 2007 P36) and Kirby et al (2003)

The key considerations relating to ensuring meaningful participation identified in *Listen and Change* are outlined in the following questions: 'What will change as a result of the child's views?' 'Will their voice be heard?' 'Will their voice be acted upon?' (Children's Alliance, 2007, p.87) These questions underpinned the research and relate to RQ2, which focused on the level and nature of CYP involvement in participatory and decision-making processes.

Thomas (2006) suggested that there is little sign of CYP participating in processes that produce important political decisions or of children as a social group expressing their common interests. Thomas (2006) advocates opening up existing institutions to the voices of children and later extends this process to discussion of involving children in the political process of decision-making.

Ackerman et al (2003) further suggest that projects and research should address issues of genuine interest and relevance to the children themselves. Facilitation of skills was important in terms of ensuring child-led participation.

Ackerman et al suggest that evaluation of the impact of participation is an important factor to consider. They suggest that four levels of impact are relevant to participatory processes. These are individual, familial, communal and institutional. Within this research, this was relevant in terms of consideration of the impact of CYP's decision-making.

The notion of developing 'non-tokenistic' participation should therefore be of central consideration and the researcher should consider their role when gathering views. The challenge, therefore, within this study was how to carry out 'participatory research' truly representative of the views of the CYP and to provide some insights, which might result in positive change to the situations of those involved.

2.5 Potential Effects of Participation

2.5 (i) Impact of Participation on Empowerment and Agency of CYP

Student participation is widely regarded as a means to empower CYP and to gain their views in relation to important decisions within their life, as outlined in Prilleltensky et al (2001) and Hart (2002). Veitch (1999) and Morrow (2000) note that participation is only meaningful if the practical application of participation is empowering.

Meaningful or *higher level* participation processes have been regarded as means for addressing the balance of power in relation to CYP, which is a particularly pertinent approach to adopt when working with groups, who are considered by Chilokoa and McKie (2007) and Pomerantz (2007b) to be marginalised in decision-making. Empowering CYP and aiming to create environments of active student participation has been linked to inclusion of '*children at the margins*' by Billington and Pomerantz (2004b), who discussed how participation has been viewed as central to the concepts of social justice. From this viewpoint, I would argue, that empowerment and active participation of CYP could be a mechanism for challenging power within institutions.

Billington (2006) argued that the *voice of the child* can be regarded as having 'emancipatory intent' (p.5). He also suggested that such terms could: 'become opaque to the analysis of complex discourses of meaning and power circulating within them and the manner in which the voice of the child is heard' (p.5). This view would relate to situations where the stated aims and principles, within L.A. and education systems, of child-centred participation, do not necessarily relate to practice.

I argue that the participation of CYP is a pivotal method for seeking out and exploring new narratives. Billington (2000) referred to how different accounts relating to a child's experience can frame their current and future experiences. He also explores how alternative narratives can challenge and contradict the dominant discourses. These new narratives derived from active student-centred participation could also be viewed as threatening to the *status quo* as they may actively challenge the dominant discourse. This research aimed to *centralise* marginalised and less dominant narratives.

Educational systems and settings and L.A. organisations can often involve a complex array of power relations, so from a social constructionist viewpoint (Gergen, 1985), there could be many voices and narratives. Hearing alternative and critical narratives from the CYP, rather than the dominant and more sanitized accounts is a challenge. For this reason, particular marginalized groups could be less likely to be incorporated within the participatory structure. I argue, that active attempts to acknowledge and respond to marginalised student narratives through active participation, should be a consideration in EP practice.

It is also important to consider CYP's agentic influence and involvement within decision-making. This would be with reference to O'Kane's (2000) assertion that power imbalances between children and adults could be addressed through giving child-centred and child-produced information within educational practice. Empowering CYP and aiming to create environments where active student

participation is evident has become a part of the practice of some EPs, in accordance with legislation previously described and the SEN Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001). Examples include the gaining of pupil views within reports and involvement of pupils in meetings.

2.5 (ii) Impact of Participation on Supporting Inclusive Practice

The process of CYP's participation was linked to concepts of inclusion by Billington and Pomerantz (2004) & Billington (2006). Participation was also viewed as an important mechanism for addressing balances of power within institutions and situations. Billington (2006) indicated that 'meaning and power' involved in these institutional discourses were important to consider. Seeking active participation for CYP classed as 'hard to reach' as outlined in '*Listen and Change*' (Participation Works, 2007) can be a challenge because of anti-inclusive discourses. For example, groups of CYP are often not included in school councils (Fielding, 2001), as discussed in Chapter 6.

If EPs are to focus on advocating for CYP, challenging aspects of labelling and dominant narratives, then it is important to work with educational organisations, such as schools and L.A. groups, in order to ensure participation is as inclusive as possible. Particular groups classed as '*on the margins*,' which are outlined in various chapters in Billington and Pomerantz, 2004 are also likely to be children who should be given priority inclusion within participatory processes and organisations such as school councils and forums, as well as within general practice.

Billington and Pomerantz (2004) suggested that marginalized groups could include children with a range of special educational needs (SEN); children not in formal education, *children looked after*, with educational and behavioural needs and with social and communication difficulties. Ideally, a democratic system of participation would result in inclusion and the views of a range of CYP being sought. However, more reactive and supportive structures may be needed for

individuals who may feel disenfranchised from meaningful or high-level participation. This is relevant to this research as some CYP involved in the design stage were from a 'Children in Care Council' (Group A).

There is, however, a danger that by having separate participatory groups or councils, for example relating to children who are 'looked after' or with S.E.N., the process of labelling could become more entrenched. By the process of labelling, CYP involved could be viewed as somehow separate and distinct from the general participation processes.

As Katherine Marshall, former Children's Commissioner, suggested, 'particular attention should be given to CYP who have limited opportunities to have their voices heard' (Marshall, 2007, p.5). This again highlights the need for working with CYP and organisations to elicit narratives. Fielding (2001) discusses the types of CYP and views represented within student councils, with a reported over-representation of middle class female pupils and an under-representation of pupils with educational and behavioural needs. This suggests that there is a need for inclusive and wider participation.

2.5 (iii) Impact of Participation on Self Actualisation

Ensuring active and meaningful participation of CYP in matters concerning them could be viewed as contributing to the fulfilment of their needs. and enabling self-actualisation. It is an important mechanism for identifying an individual's particular needs. Participation, according to Ackerman et al (2003) is also linked to increased confidence and self-efficacy. They argued that, with increased self-efficacy 'children may be better equipped to highlight abuses or neglect of rights, challenge the relevant authorities, take action where necessary and act more effectively to protect themselves' (p.19). This process of highlighting abuses of rights could occur if participation were at a meaningful level to ensure the representation of CYP's views and to enable their self-actualisation.

The idea of a structure of needs is relevant to the idea of participation. Maslow's (1968) model of the Hierarchy of Needs is outlined in *Figure 9*, below. This model suggested that self-actualisation could only be achieved when other more basic needs are met, including physical, safety, social and esteem needs. The notion of being able to influence one's environment, through active and meaningful participation, could therefore be viewed as a key element of a CYP's involvement in participation groups and the development of self-actualisation through engagement in participation.

Maslow's Model of the Hierarchy of Needs

Figure 9



I would argue that Maslow's (1968) model, although relevant in some respects might not necessarily be as linear a process as he suggests. I also argue that resiliency elements can be developed and built within some areas of a person's life, even when some needs are not met within the lower levels of his model, as outlined in section 2.5 (v).

The idea of self-actualising and forming and achieving educational aspirations could potentially be affected, according to this model, by social and emotional needs not being met on some occasions. It is for this reason that access to decision-making was explored in terms of associated skills emerging from active participation (RQ3).

2.5 (iv) Impact of Participation on Education

The other main effect of participation is on education. Ackerman et al (2003) suggested that knowledge from children could lead to improvements in the curriculum, in school management and in school attendance. Research by Hannam (2001) showed that in 12 schools in the UK, identified as having higher level participatory practice, the rate of permanent exclusions was lower than less participatory schools.

Hannam (2001) also suggested that participation may increase motivation and lead to improved educational success. It was not possible to explore this aspect fully within this research. The importance of eliciting the views of CYP has some key implications. This is evident in research by Turner and Patrick (2004), who found that pupils are able to perceptively identify areas for future development relating to the school learning environment.

Having a higher level role within decision-making in education may also be important for CYP who feel disenfranchised from the current participatory processes, described in the *Listen and Change* (Children's Alliance, 2007) document as being 'hard to reach'. This highlighted the importance within participatory processes of representing the views of marginalised groups of children, such as those excluded from schooling or 'children in care'. It is important therefore that school-based professionals and EP's work towards ensuring that the views of these CYP are heard and acted upon.

The literature suggests therefore, that a potential effect of enabling more inclusive and wide-ranging participation would be to facilitate effective communication between adults and CYP in terms of identification of needs. for marginalised groups within schools. This would be so that effective systems-based strategies could be put into place to facilitate inclusion and result in a reduction in behaviour linked to a sense of frustration and isolation. Another effect could be to identify what schools and EPs need to do.

2.5 (v) Impact of Participation on Resiliency and Skill Development

Henderson and Milstein (2003) identify meaningful participation as one of six key factors for building resiliency within schools. They additionally suggest that this could result in high levels of self-efficacy and the skills needed to support other CYP. Brown et al (2001) extend this argument further, suggesting that participation is the specific aspect of the learning process that allows resilience to be facilitated. They state that 'participation is indeed the key context of resilience education' (2001, p.51). Daniel and Wassall (2002) outlined a useful description of key resiliency factors, such as social competencies, having a secure base, friendships, access to education and educational achievement, talents, and positive values.

The focus on skills gained through decision-making, within this research, also aimed to identify resiliency factors linked to involvement in participation. This was particularly relevant for 'children on the margins' and CYP not fully included in traditional participation routes, such as participation groups. Early and Glen Maye (2000) argue that participation offers the potential for real personal growth and the skills of adapting to different environments. Newman et al (2003) take this argument further, noting that 'recent trends in health and social care have tended to emphasise risks for children, rather than opportunities for growth and adaptation' (Early and Glen Maye, 2000, p.118). This is particularly applicable to EP practice linked to social care and working with 'children looked after,' in terms of supporting resiliency skills.

Dent and Cameron (2003) take a positive view in terms of building 'protective or resiliency factors'. They describe resiliency as follows: 'Resilience is the concept that is used to describe the flexibility that allows certain CYP who appear to be at risk to bounce back from adversity' (Dent and Cameron, 2003 p.5). The purpose of developing resiliency factors, from this point of view, is to support the CYP's development and to mediate for other factors in their life.

Guldberg (1997), who outlines the importance of participation to children and child welfare, further highlights the importance of building resilience skills. He outlines the paradox in terms of wanting children to participate in matters relating to their life and the societal need and desire to protect them from making decisions that could put them at risk. This could affect the ability of groups of CYP such as *children looked after* to participate freely.

The guidelines for Chartered Psychologists on *Safeguarding CYP from Abuse, Harm and Neglect*, outlined in Professional Practice Board (2007), discussed the role of EP's in 'contributing whatever actions to safeguard the child' (p.13). This safeguarding mechanism was also of paramount importance and consideration within the research.

At the same time the focus on 'facilitating children's expression of their needs. and wishes' (Professional Practice Board, 2007, p.3) was a goal of the research. This was in order to identify resiliency factors within groups of CYP. The literature outlined above has shown that ensuring participation at a high level is an important way of ensuring that the needs. and wishes of CYP are understood.

Prilleltensky et al's (2001) model of control and power outlined potential skills related to participation. This model incorporated three key elements, which were participation; access to resources; and skills of competency and self-efficacy. Prilleltensky et al (2001) also argued that 'participation and self-determination

refer to the opportunity to experience meaningful decision-making power in matters affecting well-being' (p.146). It could be argued that Prilleltensky's (2001) model, which places the family at the heart of each of the elements of control and resiliency, could suggest or imply a rather deterministic view of the effect on children from particular familial backgrounds.

Rutter's (1987) suggestion was that talents and skills in one area could overcome barriers in another, and result in chain reactions of skills. From this model, therefore, the potentially negative effects of reduced access to material resources are not deterministic of a reduced impact on emotional health and well-being. This could also be viewed as a critique of Maslow's (1968) model, which views the process as more linear. This optimistic focus, I feel, is particularly important when working with CYP, in terms of the development of skills, such as 'participation and self- efficacy', and as a potential route to increasing a sense of control.

Kirby et al (2003) suggested that the benefits or skills emerging from 'genuine pupil participation' were ability to access better services, prompting individual citizenship, being able to be included and personal and social skills development. An ethos of participation was linked to a greater level of motivation and sense of emotional well-being and self-esteem, although there is less evidence to date to support the impact on skill development.

2.6 Co-Research and Participation

Inch and Chick (2007) carried out a study in '*Involving CYP in Research*'. They used a variety of methods including getting to know the staff and CYP, asking them if they wanted to take part, involving them in the research including devising questions and other activities and in the sharing of the information. Some of these methods I pursued within this research. After discussions with the CYP, they then identified tips for staff and CYP relating to learning how to co-research and to 'participate'. Suggestions from the CYP outlined in Inch and

Chick (2007) included adopting the following practices; listening, giving additional time, getting to know each other, having opportunities to express oneself, having a quiet space and accepting what people say. These were also considerations in this research. Co-researching with CYP and eliciting their views aimed to involve a reflexive approach to analysis and to centre the accounts with the CYP, through jointly devising interview schedules and discussing themes that emerged.

As Billington (2006) suggests we should think about how we, 'speak of children, speak with children, write of children, listen to children, listen to ourselves when working with children' (p.8). The last of these points, I argue, is particularly important in a research context and when seeking participation on a more equal level.

Nespor (2008) suggested that involving children as 'research participants' can be a way of 'opening up new questions and new understanding of participants' worlds' (p.369). It was the intention within this research to 'centralise' the 'voice' of the CYP and reduce the power differentials within research, through the CYP's role as co-researchers, through participation within the interviews and through involvement within the groups expressing their views. This could also relate to Nespor's (2008) view of the importance of CYP to 'participate in research not as objects of study but as inquirers' (p.370).

This study involved carrying out participation-based research with CYP and explored how to work with CYP as co-researchers. The idea of research as 'co-owned' by individuals in this context was explored. A democratic process was aimed for through methods including conducting a pilot, interviews, co-researching and reflective discussions with the CYP.

The next chapter will outline the methodology involving CYP as co-researchers, which aimed to address the power balance with the CYP involved in the design,

interviews and some of the analysis. An important consideration was to focus on the type and nature of participation that would enable and facilitate involvement of the CYP.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following section provides a detailed account of the methodological considerations and the methods selected for data collection and analysis. This is followed by a description of ethical considerations and in the next chapter by the procedures.

3.2 Researcher Values and Ontology

The researcher values which underpin this research include a focus on social justice and empowerment of CYP, through 'active participation'. These researcher values impacted on research decisions and methodological approaches adopted.

There was also a focus on 'emancipatory' intent, which Clough and Nutbrown (2002) identified as important as part of a Critical Research approach. The aim towards emancipation and Humanistic agency (Maslow, 1968) was through involving CYP as a way of acknowledging and minimising potential power and ideological factors, implicit within research. The factors outlined above were pivotal in the decisions relating to method choice.

The research ontology (interpretation of the nature of reality) was of a broadly relativist and critical nature. The relative nature of social constructions was therefore acknowledged, in terms of the production of meanings. This stance impacted on the qualitative research approach adopted and the primacy given to the process of searching for meaning of the research topic (RQ2 and 3) as viewed by the CYP.

As a result of the ontological stance an interpretative and qualitative approach was therefore adopted. This is where the 'context and integrity' (Banister et al, 1994, p.1) is viewed as central to the research process. Additionally, the role of the researcher as a neutral observer was not viewed by me, or from this point of

view, as possible or desirable. I therefore acknowledged the role of myself as a researcher, within a context, through reflection and the central involvement of the CYP.

The presence of multiple narratives (Billington, 2000; Gergen, 1985) and accounts is recognised, within this research, as impacting on the potential for action in some situations and that this operates largely in relation to dominant societal constructions. I agree with Harre's (1990) assumption, that there is a world beyond text but that this world is also socially constructed. For this reason, a critical research approach was adopted as outlined shortly.

The research was also based on an adaptation of the Humanistic (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968) viewpoint where CYP as individuals are viewed as having agentic potential and intent. I aimed to ensure that these principles were central to the research through the inclusion of CYP as co-researchers and the focus on a high level of student-centred participation. The ontological approach and researcher values outlined above resulted in this study focusing on co-research, decision-making and power.

3.3 Research Questions

Two of the research questions were devised in collaboration with the co-researchers. This was through a process of discussions relating to the wording of RQ2 and RQ3. The questions aimed to relate to the research principles focusing on pupil involvement in the study, decision-making and skills related to participation, as outlined below:

Research Questions

- To what extent can CYP be involved within the research process as Co-researchers?
- What is the level and nature of CYP's involvement in participatory and decision-making processes? (within the case study)
- What are the skills relevant to CYP's involvement in decision-making?

3.3 Methodological Framework and Philosophical Underpinnings

3.3 (i) Social Constructionist Approach

A broadly Social Constructionist (Gergen, 1985; Harre, 1990) approach was adopted in this research including the key principles of Social Constructionist thinking, as outlined by Cromby and Nightingale (1999). These principles included, belief in the 'primacy of social processes,' 'historical and cultural specificity' and that 'knowledge and activity are intertwined,' (Ibid. pp.4-5). These are discussed below.

In terms of social processes and how they operate, I would largely agree with the underlying assumption that social processes are 'linked to discourse' and that the 'world involves the social reproduction...of structures of meaning.' (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999, p.4) This is a process where the language used can influence social situations and everyday practices.

I would also acknowledge that particular structures of meaning and social constructions are more dominant and influential at particular historical times and within particular groups in an existing society, but that there are also variations within each of these.

I was also aware of research itself as a positioned process in terms of the Social Constructionist view that knowledge and action are intertwined. This is outlined in Burr's (1995) statement that: 'knowledge and social action go together...questions we pose are linked to the activities we carry out,' (Burr, 1995, p.5). This is a reflective point, in terms of my own positionality as a researcher and the choice of methods selected. I aimed to address this to some extent by involving CYP acting as co-researchers within the process of design and method selection.

I recognise the assertion that 'without some grounding in the real, discourse itself is a social construction' (Willig, 1999, p.49) and responded to this assertion by adopting a Critical Research Approach. This related to the viewpoint outlined by Parker (1999) that 'social constructions are relative but emerge through social processes that are already shaped by influences such as power and material resources,' (Parker, 1999, p.6).

3.3 (ii) Critical Approach to the Research

The key elements of a Critical Research Approach outlined in Clough and Nutbrown (2002) include a focus on political and ideological factors, a critique of ideology, notions of 'collectivity' and 'participant research' (p.16). This influenced the choice of participation and co-research in this study and meant that examination of power and contextual factors were important. The Participatory Research Approach used, which is discussed shortly was also influenced by this Critical Approach.

The critical approach to the research adopted was outlined in Clough and Nutbrown (2002). This involved acknowledging the importance of research as a process of producing meaning along with recognition of the wider social and political context in which the research was situated. In this research context, this related to the geographical, environmental and historical context relating to participation. This Critical Research Approach also related to the emancipatory values of this research.

3.3 (iii) Humanistic Approach

I acknowledge that there is a debate relating to the role for 'Humanist' thinking within a Relativist and Social Constructionist approach, particularly within the Foucauldian (1979) sphere of thinking, where structural factors and political constructions are viewed as impacting on agentic processes and agency is critiqued. Limitations to potential agentic influence in decision-making are outlined in the Foucauldian description of an 'illusion of free and equal

communication which helps to mask the operation of power' (Parker, 1999, p.24). From this viewpoint, participation and involvement in decision-making is more illusory and affected by power relations. I viewed this assertion of limited agency as overly deterministic and reductionist in the sense of impact on the possibility for human action and change.

I refer instead to Parker's (1999) explanation of the role for Humanist thinking within Social Constructionist research, which he suggests should involve 'holding on to a variety of Humanism which is grounded in understanding of social practices if we want to do progressive work,' (Parker, 1999, p.24). The discussion chapter therefore refers to some of the political and current societal factors, which impact on the processes and systems of CYP's participation.

The involvement of CYP as co-researchers is linked to a Humanistic philosophy, (Rogers, 1951; Maslow, 1968). The researcher belief in the possibility of agentic-change through participation was an important methodological consideration and philosophical underpinning. The process of co-researching and joint creation of meaning was also an acknowledgement of the potential for multiple interpretations or social constructions and I was keen to empower the CYP through the '*centralisation*' of their accounts in this research.

3.3 (iv) Participatory Research Approach

A Participatory Research Approach was employed, (Hart, 2001; Inch and Chick, 2007) which included involvement of co-researchers as central to elements of design, data collection and analysis. This approach also influenced the cyclical process of data collection and analysis, outlined in more detail within (*Figure 2*, p.15) and was evident in design decisions, reflective interviews and involvement in the research phases by which the CYP could play a role within the design and carrying out of the research.

The key features of Participatory Research involved: 'carrying out research with the people involved'; that the 'researcher has a commitment to the people involved'; the topic area is 'developed by' the CYP themselves and involves analysis of the topic identified so CYP can themselves 'continue addressing the causes' (Hart, 2001, p.5). This participatory approach underpinned this research.

In addition, the Participatory Research Approach, outlined in Hart (2001), involved CYP being involved in designing, implementing and reviewing the research. This process also included the CYP potentially further developing their own research skills outside this study, through additional exploration of peer views, both school council members and non-school council members, in order to broaden the participation base in school and authority run activities.

3.4 Researcher Positionality

Researcher and co-researcher positionality were both important factors within the research and thought was given to strategies for considering this within the method. It was important to find out and re-confirm, throughout the process, the extent to which the CYP were willing to become involved within the research, and how much support they needed. This also included a consideration of the CYP's existing skills to ensure ethical and practical support of their needs in the research. Opportunities for reflection with the CYP were built into the study.

In terms of the factors affecting my positionality, in a previous role as a teacher and Citizenship Coordinator, I had been involved in setting up school councils and events to involve CYP in decision-making. I was interested in exploring through this research how EP practice could be enhanced by the Participatory Research Approach and model developed (see *Figure 15*, p.101).

I was conscious to maintain a level of criticality throughout and to be aware of some of the potential difficulties of youth participation. This was particularly

pertinent when it was not possible for CYP's decisions to be acted upon and plans carried through due to financial, practical or political reasons, as discussed in Chapter 8.

3.5 Case Study Methodology

A Case Study methodology was employed as outlined in Stake, (1994; Yin, 1994, 2003, 2008). The type of case study used was an 'embedded single case design' (Yin, 1994). This involved exploring the organisation and processes as outlined below.

The case involved within this study was the Participation Unit (see p.9), within the L.A. The 'embedded cases' referred to the group of CYP involved as co-researchers and participants within the study and also to the participation groups involved in the study. The extension of the case to the school council was as part of the process of skill development, for the CYP involved as co-researchers and was a decision made by a key co-researcher as outlined earlier in the introductory section.

The 'embedded single case' version of a Case Study allowed for a more detailed analysis of the component participation groups (A-D), set within the context of the Participation Unit, where the study took place. The Case Study was exploratory in nature and initially involved clarifying issues and hypotheses, in partnership with the CYP (in phases 1 and 2 in this research). This included the focus on co-research, decision-making and skill development.

The rationale for selection of this case design for the study relates to Yin's (1994) criteria for case study design and selection, which was that the case was 'extreme or unique' (p.34) in terms of what it would reveal about the topic. Yin suggested that case studies should have a temporal element, which would facilitate exploration of change over time. It was an approach which allowed flexibility of methods and also a focus on the particular context.

I argue that the Participation Unit in question is a unique case because this unit of analysis had previously been identified as having higher-level participation and skills. This was outlined earlier in the introductory chapter related to key features of the Participation Unit. The case selected or larger 'unit of analysis,' within this study, therefore met the relevant criteria for being a unique case.

Yin's (1994) approach to case studies was adopted which included trying to 'illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result,' (Yin, 1994, p.6). In this research, this related to the processes of decision-making within the participation groups and research, the results of which were analysed through thematic analysis. This case study approach facilitated high-level youth involvement, allowed flexibility in methods and allowed exploration of the contextual basis of participation. This methodology also consisted of a smaller group of CYP and facilitated the development of existing skills.

This case study research involved studying a number of embedded cases (Yin, 1994), which were the participatory groups (A-D), selected to support the process of co-research and skill development and to explore the processes of decision-making within this organisation. This also allowed for comparison through the Thematic Analysis of the types of themes occurring between participants and the different participation groups they belonged to. Further advantages of the case study approach are outlined below and limitations are outlined in Chapter 8.

There are several advantages of case study research as outlined below. Firstly, it was possible to utilise and explore a range of methods of data collection within the case study, which I believe is ideally suited to the process of co-researching and CYP's involvement in the research. This also facilitated the use of one method of analysis (Thematic Analysis) which enabled the searching for themes and patterns across a whole data set (interviews), as outlined, by Boyatzis

(1998). Secondly, it was possible to explore participation with co-researchers as partners, allowing flexibility with selection of the participation groups. Thirdly, the case study also involved research within its contextual environment (Yin, 1994), which was a central benefit for the CYP involved as they were more relaxed within their environment. The case study approach and thematic analysis adopted were also useful in terms of cross-referencing of data from different research phases. Lastly, case studies were also described in Wellington (2000) as being 'illustrative', having a strong hold on reality and being accessible.

3.6 Interviews

Interviews were used as the primary methods of data collection with additional questionnaires within the pilot and interim stages (phases 1 and 2). These methods were selected because of the opportunity to involve the co-researchers within the design of the questions, to facilitate opportunities for the co-researchers to be involved in collecting the data through acting as facilitators within the interviews and to be involved in elements of the coding and analysis.

The initial cohort of co-researchers (Group A) involved in the design of data collection methods (see *Figures 1 and 2*, p.13, p.15) agreed that discussion-based approaches such as interviews were their preferred method. During discussions with CYP from Group A and in the pilot, a number of methods were explored, which are outlined in the results chapter. Interviewing provided opportunities to build on existing strengths and skills, which the CYP felt they had developed through being members of the participation groups. Opportunities for reflections from the co-researchers were included in the research and interview processes, through reflective interviews.

A semi-structured interview format was adopted and decided upon initially, based on the typology of interviews outlined by Noaks and Wincup (2004) (cited in Silverman, 2009, p.110). This allowed some 'probing and rapport with the

interviewee', but provided a framework for use by the CYP acting as co-researchers (appendix A).

Facilitation skills were needed for the interviews by the co-researchers. The ability to support other CYP in expressing their views, along with flexibility on the part of the co-researchers was required. This is why the interview method was adopted, within the main research. The CYP involved had been carefully selected and had already conducted interviews within their participation groups. The decision to utilise the above methods was related to my critical and relativist ontological approach as the researcher, outlined earlier, and to the CYP's expressed interests and preferences.

3.7 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998) was employed as the method of analysis as it enabled analysis to be 'bounded' within the case study. It also allowed cross referencing between the interviews and other data. Thematic Analysis was a method of analysis which the co-researchers were able to understand and join in with coding and grouping of themes identified. This was more manageable for the research team and consistent with the qualitative approach adopted. Researcher positionality was acknowledged in the design and analysis. Thematic Analysis as a method allowed for interpretative analysis, a cyclical process of inductive analysis and reference to the context of the research.

The rationale for the selection of Thematic Analysis, in contrast to other methods, was informed by Boyatzis' (1998) descriptions of Thematic Analysis as not being linked to a specific framework or theoretical approach. It is a broad method of analysis, which can be adopted by researchers working from within the relativist to more realist spectrum.

The Thematic Analysis application was consistent with the researcher's 'Social Constructionist' approach. This meant that the processes involved working with the CYP to actively construct meaning (Harre, 1990). The focus of analysis also included reference to the 'socio-cultural context and structural conditions that enable the individual accounts' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.85). This in practice involved a high level of interpretation and reflective processing of the data by the research team. This also included reference to the constructions of childhood and the current political situation outlined in Chapter 6.

A specific combination of Boyatzis's (1998) and Attride-Stirling's (2001) approach to identifying and then organising themes was adopted within the Thematic Analysis. Boyatzis's (1998) data driven approach was utilised, which involved a cyclical process of linking the data and refining themes with reference to the literature and theoretical context to organise into thematic groups. This was completed by myself and resulting thematic areas discussed with the co-researchers. The 'inductive approach' involved checking back to the transcript data and provided an account of data linked to the different cycles of research and enabled focus on the research questions. This approach was selected as the research questions had already been identified.

Boyatzis method was considered to be useful as a method for structuring the data as it offered a framework for the organisation and identification of codes. This compares with Braun and Clarke's (1998) method which has been critiqued for being too interpretative and without a specific set of criteria for the identification of themes. The Boyatzis approach adopted is more systematic I would argue as there is a clear rationale and level of rigour in terms of the process of selecting and identifying codes and themes. This process is outlined in *Figures 11 and 12*, (p.78, p.81) and offered criteria for organising and grouping codes into themes.

It was then decided to combine this with Attride-Stirling's (2001) approach in order to organise the themes into a hierarchical structure, to identify *global* themes. This process is outlined within *Figure 13*, p.83. This process of structuring the data into themes and organising into *global* themes; (Attride-Stirling, 2001) was also consistent with the Social Constructionist and 'relativist ontology,' outlined at the start of this chapter. This was because multiple meanings and interpretations were discussed within the initial 'coding' and in the research team.

Organising themes were 'middle order' themes, which are labels to summarise groups of themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Global themes were the most cross-representative and over-arching themes. The process for organising themes is outlined in more detail within *Figure 12* (p.81) and *Figure 13* (p.83).

The organisation of the basic themes emerging from the transcripts and statements into 'organising themes' then 'global themes' as outlined in *Figure 13* (p.83) took place after initial discussions with co-researchers and comparison of the data across interviews. This allowed additional time to consider alternative methods for organising the themes. Themes from the analysis were outlined, in terms of the initial basic themes, as well as 'higher-level' (organising and global) themes, to allow for additional interpretation.

3.8 Rationale for Method Selection

During the research design phase, a number of alternative methods were explored by the research team, which included the co-researchers. Some methods were not selected due to their incompatibility with the researcher ontology and values. Other methods explored were not selected due to their incompatibility with the research design and CYP's views.

3.8 (i) Pilot Sessions and Methodology

The pilot sessions involved trialling Q methodology and rating scales as an approach for exploring the CYP's views of participation. Watts and Stenner's (2005) suggestions relating to piloting Q methodology were utilised, where a group of participants with experience and expertise in the area were involved in the compilation of potential statements for the q set; in this instance as co-researchers and members of participation groups.

The CYP and I decided, during the pilot phase, against the use of Q methodology for a number of reasons. The time consuming nature of the q sort design with the CYP and their reduced interest in the method meant they had less opportunity to become directly involved. The student-led nature of this research called into question the future applicability of Q methodology as an approach, as it did not build on their skills and interests. As a researcher, to continue with a method that had been rejected by the CYP appeared to me to be contrary to the values of this research, in particular the focus on research as student-centred. For that reason, Q methodology was discounted and semi-structured interviewing was utilised.

3.8 (ii) Quantitative Methods

Quantitative methods and approaches, including surveys and large-scale interviews were determined not to be appropriate. This was due to the qualitative focus within this study. This was also because of the purpose of the case study approach, which was to gather descriptive data, encompassing CYP's views and a rich description of a particular locality. This was also related to the researcher's ontology, where data produced and interpretation was a reflection of an on-going process of social interaction. I was aware that the focus on qualitative methodology could be criticised due to the inherent subjectivity of elements of a largely qualitative study, but aimed to rigorously explore and account for the ways in which the interpretation was arrived at during the process of analysis.

3.8 (iii) Focus Groups

Focus groups were initially selected as a possible method of data collection, but due to issues of obtaining parental consent for large numbers of CYP involved, changes to the Youth Leaders and time constraints, it was not possible to carry these out in practice. One benefit of using focus groups would have involved uncovering additional opinions emerging through the process of group interaction, as well as the identification of different perspectives between groups, (Krueger and Casey, 2009).

3.8 (iv) Narrative Research

Narrative Research approaches would also have been potentially appropriate within this study, in terms of providing the opportunity to 'hear individual stories or accounts'. Narrative approaches are based on the premise of the construction of reality through focus on both individual stories (Parker, 2005) and the personal identity formed through accounts, along with reference and consideration to the cultural and political elements of the wider narrative discourse. An additional benefit for Narrative Research as an approach is that it would appear to be more aligned to representing the complexity of human interactions, as afforded by a social constructionist paradigm, and to allow opportunities for exploration of competing and alternative narratives.

Although recognised as an applicable and valuable research approach Narrative Research was not considered practical, within this study for these reasons. Firstly, in terms of the time involved for the CYP involved as participants. Secondly, narrative was regarded as a difficult approach within which to fully involve co-researchers in obtaining and analysing narratives, particularly as this was an approach I had only recently discovered in terms of research skills. Lastly, the Narrative research approach may not have provided sufficient scope to fully explore the research questions which involved the focus on the pre-determined and specific areas of decision-making, skill development and co-researcher involvement.

3.8 (v) Action Research

Action Research was subsequently explored as an approach, as derived from Lewin (1946) because it centralised the involvement of the researcher and the researched group. One feature of this method is on exploring and facilitating change. This approach also involves cycles of planning, action and fact gathering, which was then extended by Elliott's (1981) Action Research spiral approach. Lastly, this approach often involves research in the original context and has a potential for co-researcher involvement.

The Participatory Research Approach adopted within this study is regarded within the typology by Reinartz (1992) as being a form of action-in-research. This was distinguishable from the more traditional form of Action Research, where Reinartz (1992) argued that action and evaluation need to take place separately but simultaneously and that the focus is on directly changing behaviour.

The Participatory Research adopted within this study, involved the co-researchers 'studied making decisions about the format and the analysis' (Taylor, 1994, p.111). This participatory approach outlined involves altering the role relations of the people involved within the project and aims to form 'egalitarian relationships' (Taylor, 1994, p.111) as part of the research process. This approach is often conceptualised as being part of a broader definition which encompasses action based research principles.

Within this study the focus was less on changing the situation for the CYP involved as a principle of the research, as typified in the traditional Action Research approach. Although it was acknowledged that as a result of the research, suggestions linked to changing participatory and decision-making processes may have emerged. Case study methodology and a Participatory Research Approach were, therefore adopted in this study for the reasons described above.

3.8 (vi) Alternative Thematic Analysis Methods

The thematic approach adopted in this study was a combination of Boyatzis (1998) method of Thematic Analysis and Attride-Stirling's approach to ordering themes, as outlined earlier in this section. This combination of methods was selected to support rigour within analysis through Boyatzis's (1998) approach and to allow for multiple levels of analysis through the Attride-Stirling (2001) Thematic Network Approach.

Alternative models of Thematic Analysis were also considered, including Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, and King's (1998) approach to Template Analysis. Although these approaches were also useful they were not selected for particular reasons. Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach did not have a framework considered as sufficiently explicit or rigorous for the identification of codes then themes as discussed earlier.

King's (1998) Template Analysis was similar to the approach used within this research, although the basic codes were still referred to during the additional interpretation. The Thematic Framework (appendix K, p.162) was utilised to analyse all the data after the initial stage, but this was then organised into a hierarchical structure, determined by the prevalence and significance of the themes identified to participants. This process involved additional analysis of data through discussions with co-researchers.

3.9 Bias, Validity and Generalisability in a Qualitative Context

During the research, the method of data collection and analysis aimed to be rigorous and to minimise bias in interpretations by the research team. However, interpretation of the data and production of meaning within qualitative research is acknowledged as having an unavoidable bias, if compared to a more Realist ontology and Positivist methodology. The closeness of the research team to the topic studied also resulted in a level of bias acknowledged within the research.

Processes including rigorous Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) as outlined earlier were used to minimise as far as possible bias related to the case study and co-researcher based approaches. This bias to be minimised, for instance included leading questions and identifying only preferred themes within analysis. The Boyatzis (1988) method was employed inductively so that codes and themes emerged from the data, rather than being pre-identified.

The Thematic Analysis approach aimed to minimise researcher bias as data emerged inductively. This was different to the Content Analysis approach, as outlined by Krippendorff (1980), which involves codes being identified using a mixture of 'emergent' and 'a priori' coding. Stemler (2001) outlines the differences between emergent and a priori-coding systems are that, emergent coding involves initial analysis of the data to identify categories, while a priori coding is established based on pre-defined categories, which relate to existing theory.

The method for structuring codes and identifying themes is outlined in *Figures 11-13* and in *Appendix K*, p.162. A cyclical process of checking and refining codes was therefore adopted in this research. This process is outlined within Chapter 4.

To reduce bias from myself as the researcher and power relations inherent in the research, CYP were involved in the process of designing, coding and reflection. Although it was also acknowledged that multiple levels of interpretation from the research team existed, there was an attempt to rationalise these through joint coding.

Researcher interpretation and Reflective Practice was viewed as a 'resource' (Parker, 1994, p.13) in this research. It was still important that contextual factors related to data collection and analysis were considered through the Thematic

Analysis. This process was a method of supporting qualitative rigour and related to the 'indexicality', described by Parker (1994).

'Indexicality' is a term used as re-positioning the positivist conception of ecological validity, identifying and then using it as an interpretative aspect in the research. 'Indexicality' (Parker, 1994, p.10) and the context were important within analysis of the research data. This related to the Critical Research (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002) approach, where contextual factors were key considerations. In addition, the case study approach involved analysis within a real life situation where the context was of key importance.

In a practical sense, the process of 'indexicality' involved consideration of a process outlined by Henwood and Pidgeon, (1992) in Parker, (1994, p.10). This process was where: 'patterns of influence on the research setting would be identified and how these patterns have played a part in the outcome of the study' (p.10). The political and social context of the participation groups was therefore relevant to explore. The focus on contextual factors or 'indexicality' is, therefore, an element within the discussion section.

Parker (1994) also pointed out qualitative research has the feature of 'inconcludability', meaning that if the context changes then the results will be different in some key elements. This is because interpretation and conclusions are largely context specific, as discussed within the explanations relating to Thematic Analysis.

Accurate or realistic representation of the groups or topics studied was aimed for through providing insider representations of CYP's experiences of participation, rather than researcher imposed interpretations as a central element in this research. In addition, observations and discussions with the groups took place to cross-reference some of the contextual information with the individual interviews.

Additional mechanisms linked to validity included the involvement of co-researchers within the pilot, in the design of the interview questions, in reflections relating to the choice of method, in carrying out of some of the interviews and in reflecting on the coding and emergent themes. The interviews and case study methodological approach used aimed to obtain an insight into the experiences of this group of CYP, although it was not the intent to generalise as Krueger and Casey (2009) point out, but to 'identify trends...in perception' (p.2), which would happen between and within groups.

As this research was qualitative and small scale, generalizability was not a key focus within this study. Mitchell (1983) suggested that case study research cannot produce generalizations outside of the case, but results could be utilised, in order to explore elements within other cases and to identify exceptions to the rule linked to other participation groups in practice. It may therefore, be feasible for people working in other authorities to recognise elements from the research and similarities to their own groups and councils and apply ideas in practice.

3.10 Ethical Procedures

The research conformed to guidelines and procedures of Sheffield University, as outlined in *Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants* (University of Sheffield, 2006) and *The British Psychological Society Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Ethical Approval in Psychological Research* (2004).

3.10 (i) Reduction of Harm

There was potentially a risk of stress for the CYP involved as co-researchers. This was both in terms of time involved in the research, during busy periods of schoolwork, and tensions between themselves acting as co-researchers and interviewing peers. The focus on minimising stress and risk was important due to the age and existing levels of responsibility of the CYP, who were sometimes involved in several groups.

Additional mechanisms were put in place, which included cycles of co-researchers involved within different phases of the research, reflective interviews and careful selection of participants with a particular level of skill and existing relationships with peers. The selection of the CYP with relevant skills took place during negotiations with the CYP and youth workers.

Additional meetings with youth workers also took place to reduce any potential tensions relating to the topic of research, which was focusing on participation as their area of expertise. The leaders were reassured about the purposes of the research and fully involved in the data collection planning during participation meetings. Within the initial stages of the research, during the design and pilot stage, one of the groups involved within the research, were young children 'in care' and the other participants were aged under 18, who are defined as 'particularly vulnerable' in university ethical guidance (University of Sheffield, 2006, p.7). For this reason, measures adopted included a detailed process of obtaining relevant consents and minimizing of risk for the CYP.

The research took place within the 'participation unit' (see p.9 for a definition) and a school. This was during organised sessions and in school during school council sessions, which aimed to reduce any disruption. Additionally, a member of staff was present, known to the CYP, who had completed relevant training. Health and Safety procedures of the L.A. were followed, including fire procedures, first aid and other relevant policies.

3.10 (ii) Safeguarding

Consideration was given to potential disclosure of information and child protection. This might have possibly occurred during the reflective interviews, although the topics discussed were relatively neutral as they were linked to participation. If disclosure had occurred, L.A. procedures for child protection and safeguarding would have been followed. This would have included contacting

the relevant social care lead and informing my line manager in line with L.A. and EP protocols.

In a situation of potential risk, the priority is to protect the CYP. Billington (2006, p.158) clearly explicates the ethical issues involved in working with vulnerable children arguing that: 'as part of the process we have a clear responsibility to the individual child to engage with them in such a way as not to compound any harm already suffered or encountered' (p.158). This was a pivotal consideration in working with and gaining views of CYP.

3.10 (iii) Power within the Research Process

I aimed, to ensure that the process involved CYP's decisions, as outlined earlier. There were occasions when, due to the nature of the research and specific methodological processes required for a Doctorate, I needed to take the lead in some elements of analysis and design. There may have been power relations, existing as part of the research process and potential tensions between me and the youth leaders. I aimed to acknowledge the power relations and address them through the design and pivotal involvement of co-researchers and leaders within the process. The reason for the centrality of co-research and 'participatory research' to minimise power relations, was therefore evident in the construction of this research.

Power relations linked to research are also outlined by Caputo (1995), who suggests that often 'researcher's representations of the world of children and youth ... are part of the process of creating and to some degree containing' (p.39). It is for this reason that one of the ethical considerations related to my role as a researcher, in terms of the interpretation and presentation of information about CYP's lives.

3.10 (iv) Debriefing

Opportunities were provided for debriefing. This included an initial debriefing session, which involved asking a series of questions relating to the process within the interviews and group. The reflective interviews, with the co-researchers, also facilitated more extensive debriefing. I debriefed participants in the interviews and groups using reflective questions, after their involvement. Additional contact information was included in the researcher information and left with the youth leaders.

3.10 (v) Access to the Participation Groups

Initial permissions and accesses were gained through L.A. representatives, both within the youth service and schools. This process was also supplemented through ethical approvals from the university and consent forms (appendices F to J, p.157-159). Additionally, with each new group, I made several visits to introduce myself to the co-researchers and participants. This process of familiarisation and gaining entry to the group also allowed time for the development of co-research skills, including the skills of interview technique, design and analysis. This is outlined within the discussion section in relation to the themes identified.

3.10 (vi) Informed Consent

Initial contacts were made with CYP from the 'Children in Care' Council during the pilot stage. This was after several meetings to gain agreement from the corporate parenting group and youth leaders. There was also a process of gaining initial consent from the CYP. During the design and main section of the research, informed consent forms were sent to parents and carers. Consent was obtained from the group leader, the participation lead and participation representatives within the L.A.

Additional consents and safeguarding mechanisms including access to additional L.A. representatives were required due to the CYP participating as co-researchers, who were defined under University of Sheffield Guidance (2006, p.7) as 'vulnerable participants.' This is because they were under 18 and because one group involved 'children in care.'

This research was conducted largely in group settings. Participants were made aware of ethical factors and the research was explained in detail, prior to involvement, as part of a process of gaining informed consent. There was a possibility that individuals may have felt persuaded or obliged to take part in the study and that there may have been a difference between adult consent and CYP's views.

To ensure fully informed consent, accessible consent forms were designed (*appendices D, G and H*, p.155-159). Verbal consent was obtained, through meetings with the CYP and groups, prior to interviews and again consent was obtained prior to each individual interview. Initial consent forms were piloted with the co-researchers, to explore their accessibility in terms of language used. Separate forms were used with the co-researchers and the main group of CYP participating. This was because there were different levels of involvement and therefore ethical implications. Consent was on-going, involving the CYP as co-researchers integral to the process.

3.10 (vii) Confidentiality

The research aimed to maintain confidentiality and privacy of data, in adherence to the *Data Protection Act* (HMSO, 1998). The guidance relating to information in research incorporates two principles, which were to ensure: 'That the data are not processed to support measures or decisions with respect to particular individuals, and that the data are not processed in such a way that substantial damage or substantial distress is, or is likely to be, caused.' (Part IV Section 33) *Data Protection Act*, (HMSO: 1998).

Consideration was given as to how much information was shared with others. Opportunity for data to be excluded was also allowed if the participant did not wish to share information, even retrospectively, after the interviews. Personal information collected, that could identify a participant, remained confidential and was restricted to the research team.

The youth workers and co-researchers were aware of the identity of the participants. Participants knew of the topic prior to participation and gave their consent. The names of council groups were changed within consent forms and documents with reference to the L.A. were anonymised. Adults involved, were also informed of the ethical research guidelines and the CYP were supported through the research. The researcher monitored the chance of CYP being in any potential conflict with peers.

The research team conducted the processing and analysis of the data and the digitally recorded data was safely stored in a locked facility. Upon successful completion of the research this data will be destroyed. All participants had the right to access personal information that related to them. Participants were aware of their right, to withdraw consent and for the data to be destroyed relating to their involvement.

4.0 PROCEDURES AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section involves explanation of the specific procedures of data collection and analysis used, which is then followed by examination of the themes emerging from the phases of the thematic data analysis.

4.2 Materials

Within research phase 1, a sorting activity and rating scale was used by the CYP from Group A (*appendix M*, p.176). This involved CYP rating various statements related to experiences of participation, decision-making and skills.

Within phases 3 to 5 an interview schedule (*appendix A*, p.152) was used to structure the interviews. This interview schedule comprised the key questions and additional prompts, to aid the CYP in asking questions. It was devised in collaboration with several of the co-researchers (Group A). Interview questions related to RQ2 and 3.

The interview schedule was designed to be flexible, so that co-researchers could be involved in asking interview questions. It allowed the co-researchers to ask additional questions and supported their emerging research skills by providing a framework. All data obtained was included within the thematic analysis.

In addition to the interview schedule, interviewers also used two additional visual prompts. These were; firstly, an adaptation of Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation, which was used to facilitate a discussion in terms of types of participation and involvement of CYP within the decision-making process, (*appendix B*); secondly, a series of prompts (*appendix C*, p.154) related to skills that the CYP might have developed through the participatory groups. The CYP devised these prompts, within phase 2 of the research. An example of such a prompt was "what I say is important to other CYP." (Phase 2 statements) These

prompts were only used in the initial interviews or if interviewees were finding the interview difficult.

During the interviews, data was recorded using a digital audio recorder. A briefing and de-briefing sheet and information sheet (appendices D-E, pp.155-156) were used, with the intention of establishing fully informed content and adhering to ethical guidelines. Consent forms (*appendices: F-H*, pp.157-159) were used.

4.3 Sample of Informants

Co-researchers were identified using purposive sampling, as outlined in Rabiee (2004). Purposive sampling is described by Rabiee as being relevant when the topic under investigation focuses on a specific topic area and the people were selected on the basis that they would have something relevant to say about this topic area. In this case, the CYP were all members of key participation groups within the L.A. and part of the participation unit. The co-researchers were aged between 15 and 19 and other participants in the research were aged between 11 and 19.

An initial participation group of six CYP including two co-researchers (CR1 and CR2) were involved in the design of the materials, pilot study and phases 1 and 2 of the research, (Group A). Two other co-researchers (CR3 and CR4) were involved in the initial interviews and refining of the prompt questions and four CYP in total from Participation Groups B and C were involved as co-researchers, within Phase 3. This process was outlined in *Figures 1 and 2*, p.13 and p.15.

Reflective interviews took place with two key CYP as co-researchers (CR3, CR5). This was with the intention of gaining their views and reflections of their involvement within the research, including skill development. Details relating to the participation groups are within Chapter 1.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4 (i) Pilot Study and Interim Phase

The pilot study and interim phase involving the co-researchers and participants from Group A was carried out over two sessions. This interim phase involved a prolonged period of meeting with members of Participation Group A during their council meetings, which took place over several months. This process involved establishing trust with the CYP through my attendance at meetings and inclusion in activities, negotiation with the group members and co-researchers relating to their level of involvement and agreement by them about suitable times and dates to attend.

A series of observations and rating scale questionnaires were used which focused on Group A's experiences of participation, involvement in decision-making and their skills. These directly related to the last two research questions. CR1 and CR2 were involved in these phases of the research. They were involved in assisting with the sessions and in the process of designing and reviewing materials with their peers.

Within the pilot phase, Group A completed rating scales (*appendix M*, p.176) which related to 'Experiences of Participation' within the participation group involved. These were organised into a format outlined in *appendix M*, p.176. The questions were rated from -4 to +4 by each of the CYP to indicate the strength of feeling related to the statements. The rating scales comprised a number of statements, previously identified within the pilot stage and initial session by CR1 and CR2. These statements and additional suggestions from the group were later used within the questionnaires and within phases 3 and 4 of the research. Each of the statements was later coded and an overview of data is provided in *Figure 13*, in relation to the organising and basic themes. Some of the data from this research stage, in the form of the statements developed, were incorporated as cue cards in later phases of the research (*appendix C*, p.154).

The phases and data were organised in terms of the organising and basic themes related to the Thematic Framework, as outlined in *appendix K*, p.162 and Figure 12, p.81. Within the analysis attention was given to themes emerging within each of the phases, the relative importance placed on each of the organising thematic areas.

4.4 (ii) Phase 3 – Interview and Skill Development

In this phase a series of interviews were completed by co-researchers with members of the participation groups (B and C) within the case study 'Participation Unit'. The purpose of these interim phases was also to model the questions for future interviews with the CYP, using a cyclical approach, (*Figure 2*, p.15).

I modelled an initial interview with two participants from Group B and C, who were also involved as co-researchers (CR3 and CR4). These co-researchers were also key members of their participation groups, with one co-researcher involved in the Scrutiny Panel (Group C) and another from the Youth Opportunities Panel (Group B).

The interview procedure also included a reflective discussion section at the end, relating to the nature of the questions put in the interview. It provided an opportunity for the interviewees to be involved in refinement of the questions. This refinement then led into the development of the subsequent interviews in terms of process and skills.

A second interview took place with one co-researcher, who had been the interviewee in the first interview now taking the lead as interviewer (CR3). The co-researcher asked and modelled questions to a peer from the participation group, who then later became involved as a co-researcher (CR5). During this process, CYP supported each other in the development of co-researcher skills and interview techniques. Two co-researchers (CR3 and CR5) were then

involved in additional discussions related to refining the prompt questions to feed into the third interview.

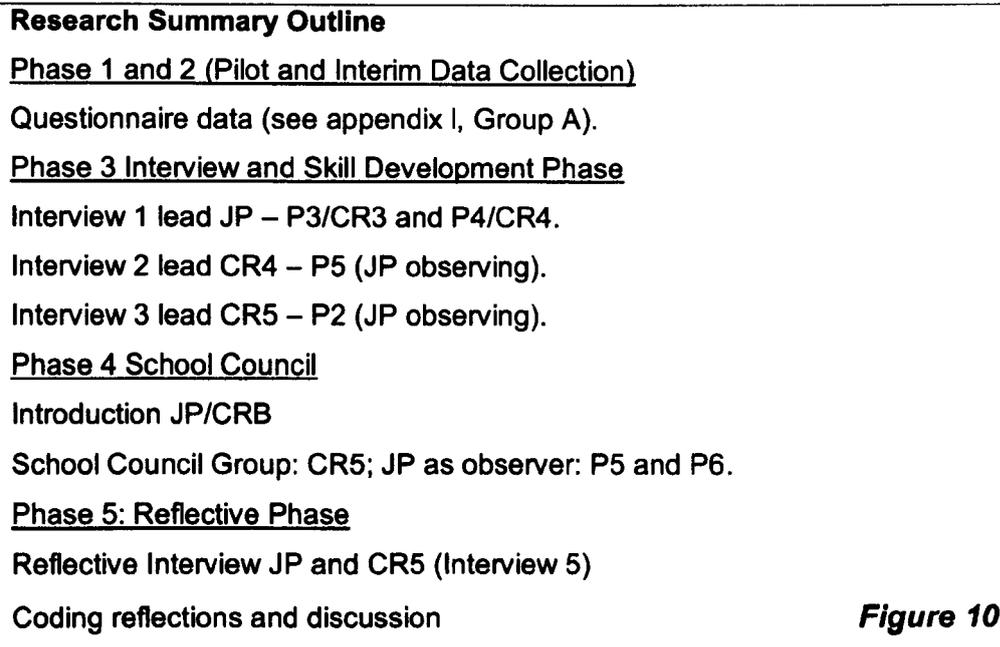
During the third and final interview of phase 3, the last co-researcher in the skill development cycle (CR5) asked the questions initially modelled by (CR3). This participant (CR5) was able to elaborate on the questions and refine them in preparation for asking members of the school council (Group D) in phase 4.

4.4 (iii) Phase 4 – School Council Group

During this stage of the process, group members from the school council identified by the co-researcher were involved in the research. This involvement consisted of an initial negotiation with the school Head Teacher and adult group leader to gain access to the group, observation of the group and attendance at a meeting and an interview with two group members. A group interview took place (involving two interviewees) in a school selected by CR5, who had been involved in phase 3. This meant that CR5 asked the questions. This stage involved meeting and observation in a council group meeting.

4.4 (iv) Phase 5 – Reflective Phase

The main co-researcher (CR5) also participated in a detailed reflective interview, with me at phase 5. This involved a discussion of his experiences both a participant and a co-researcher and a discussion about the skills developed as part of the process. The research model and process as a whole is outlined in *Figure 1, p.13; Figure 2, p.15* and a summary outline follows:



4.5 Presentation of Research Results

Feedback to the L.A. and research participants took place in a number of stages. The manner of feedback was decided through discussion and reflection with co-researchers. This presentation included an overview of the research and results in a student-friendly format. In addition, an overview of results was outlined to colleagues within the EP Service, Participation Unit and School Council involved in the research.

4.6 Procedure for Analysis of Data

4.6 (i) Transcription

The researcher transcribed data from the interviews and the transcription process included the majority of data from interviews. A number of omissions were made from the original recordings for the purpose of confidentiality and clarity. These omissions included information, including the L.A. name, individual's names or places.

4.6 (ii) Method of Data Analysis

The method of analysis involved a combination of the Boyatzis (1998) method of Code Development and Thematic Analysis, alongside the use of Attride-Stirling's (2001) Thematic Networks as an approach to organising the themes.

Data from key phases (2-5) was coded using Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1988). Details of the Thematic Network produced after coding and labelling of themes are outlined in *Figures 12 and 13* (p.81, p.83). The Thematic Network involved organising the data into basic, organising then global themes in accordance with Attride-Stirling's (2001) model. Further details follow below.

4.6 (iii) Coding Development and Thematic Organisation

The first stage was familiarisation of the data and involved listening to tapes, reading transcripts and summary notes. The data was examined and coded using Boyatzis (1998) approach to analysis, which is outlined in *Figure 11*.

The second stage of analysis involved 'generating initial codes' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.87) by myself and later discussed with the co-researchers. Initial codes were generated by highlighting key ideas or phrases within the text and by making comments on the transcripts. The specific method of processing the codes involved the following procedure. For each interview, potential basic themes were written down from the codes as identified during an initial reading and analysis phase emerging from the transcripts.

Codes and emerging themes were cross-referenced to the whole 'data corpus' (Boyatzis, 1998) to check that there were no important omissions. These emerging and basic themes were then linked to the research questions and structured into organising themes. Braun and Clarke's (2006) definition of a theme was used, where a theme: 'captures something about the data in relation to the research question' and is a 'patterned response or meaning within the data-set' (p.82).

Features of a Thematic Coding System

Figure 11

- A) Label – (Name to define the theme),
- B) Definition – (A description of what the theme concerns),
- C) Indicators – (Descriptions of how to know when the theme occurs),
- D) Differentiation – (Descriptions of qualifications or exclusion to theme identification, including examples positive and negative),
- E) Analysis – (System of organising and analysing themes).

The third stage was searching for organising elements in the themes (Boyatzis, 1998). This was then combined with 'Attride and Stirling's (2001) model of Thematic Networks in the production of Basic and Organising Themes,' which were identified at this stage and incorporated in the 'Thematic Framework' (*Appendix K*, p.162).

As a process this involved sorting codes into themes based on initial codes, gathering all data relevant to each theme and making comparisons within and between data 'cases' (Boyatzis, 1998). Phase 2 data was organised into themes relating to the Thematic Framework, with reference to the most frequently occurring and valued statements and which themes these related to.

Processing of data extracts (i.e. phrases within interviews) into thematic areas involved consideration of the context of the data extract or phrase being coded. This was then coded in terms of being placed firstly within the specific basic theme and then cross-referenced with the organising themes within the Thematic Framework. This process avoided a similar phrase being potentially coded in terms of different basic themes, depending on the context to which this referred. Further details and a worked example of this process are included later in this section.

The fourth step was reviewing the themes (Krueger and Casey, 2000), to determine if the codes had applicability in relation to the context of the data within the interviews. A Thematic Framework was then created (*Appendix K*, p.162) which was applied to all the data by JP (researcher). There was an

opportunity at this stage for any additional basic themes emerging to be incorporated into the Thematic Framework and then placed into the organising theme area most applicable. This involved a final check with CR5 for reflections on the whole research process, the emergent thematic labels, the organisational structure, and Thematic Framework.

At the end of this analytical process the themes were refined and then related to the literature and research questions, in order to identify over-arching 'Global' themes. (Attride-Stirling, 2001) Data was then organised in terms of the phases of the research, in order to facilitate comparison between the themes emerging from data from the different participation groups and phases. Further details of research decisions and the process of identifying and coding data extracts into themes are outlined in more detail later and in (*appendices K, p.162 and L, p.166*).

4.7 Worked Examples of Coding and Theme Identification

Initial coding involved identifying basic themes. This was completed using the Thematic Framework as a guide as outlined in *appendix K*. The following examples were taken from the reflective interview phase. Highlighting was used to visually illustrate and compare between the organizing themes identified as part of the coding process. Different colours were used to represent each one of the main organizing themes. Further details are provided below of decisions related to coding of extract sections.

Additionally within these extracts below, both the researcher and co-researcher sections are coded, relating to comments made by myself as a researcher and responses given by the co-researcher. This was a deliberate element to support future comparative analysis and aimed to reduce power differentials between members of the research team. The other interviews and data involved co-researcher and participant comments being coded and organised into thematic areas.

Coding and Theme Identification

Initial coding

The coding process involved the research team (JP initially then CR5) reading the interviews and organising the information into codes which were then transferred into the Thematic Framework. For example the data extract: “valued member of the group” was coded as inclusion/belonging and later incorporated in the Thematic Framework. This extract was identified as being part of the basic theme (4A – *Sense of Belonging*) and organising theme (4) - *Inclusive Features relating to Participation*. This process is outlined in the Thematic Framework excerpt on the next page and in appendix K, p.162.

Theme Identification

The process of organising information into thematic areas relevant to the Thematic Framework is outlined in the following extract from the reflective interview:

Q - “Any things that you think work well?” **(2A-Reflective Practice)**

CR5–“Well I like how you've done it independently from the groups.”
(2A-Reflective Practice; 2I-Reference to Method) You've taken the CYP out and had like a sit down conversation with them two or three times. I have done it... When I did it initially I was being interviewed and then the few times I've interviewed somebody else was all with CYP.” **(2H-Model of Research Participation; 2C-Researcher-Participant Interface)** “The one thing that I've found that's is like a negative if you will
(2A-Reflective Practice is the questions because obviously people will give answers that do not fit in with the questions in the order that they are in or like they do not play or the group does not work” **(2C - Researcher Participant Interface).**

In this extract, the organizing theme frequently referred to is co-researcher skills. Within the rest of the extract, there is reference to many of the additional organizing themes. At this stage some data extracts are organised into two simultaneous thematic areas. The process for determining thematic applicability of the extracts is outlined shortly.

4.7 (i) Organising Themes and Process of Analysis

The Thematic Framework (*Appendix K*, p.162) included definitions of basic and organizing themes, as well as factors relevant in identification of basic themes. Six organizing themes were identified after the process of initial coding as relevant to the research and then linked to the research questions.

The organizing themes identified were labelled as follows: *enabling and supporting access to participation groups; co-research skills; skills developed through participation; inclusive features relating to participation; decision-making processes within participation groups and societal processes* as an emerging category. An example of the Thematic Framework is in *Figure 12* which follows.

Thematic Framework Excerpt

Figure 12

Organising Themes	Basic Codes and Emergent Themes	Behavioural Indicators and Description
<p>This is defined within this research and by, Attride - Stirling (2001) as a 'middle order' theme.</p> <p>This involved 'summarising assumptions of groups of basic themes'</p>	<p>Lowest order theme. This is derived from text data. This is a form of a statement of belief about a topic area. Attride-Stirling, (2001)</p> <p>Labels (codes) of basic themes.</p>	<p>A specific definition of what the theme concerns and how to identify this.</p> <p>Additional descriptions and examples also provided to support differentiation of themes. (Boyatzis, 1998).</p>
<p>1. - <u>Enabling and Supporting Access to Participation Groups</u> (Entry Route)</p>	<p>1A – <u>Process of entry to Participation groups</u></p>	<p>Data relating to entry to participation groups.</p> <p>e.g.) Selection and referral procedure</p>
	<p>1B – <u>Induction process for group members</u></p>	<p>Descriptions of systems or processes for supporting new group members. (Initially)</p> <p>e.g.) Buddy System.</p>
	<p>1C- <u>Broadness and Equity of Entry route</u></p>	<p>Reference to processes for access to participation groups for prospective members and route for views of non- members to be represented.</p> <p>e.g.) Mechanisms for widening access.</p>

During the Thematic Analysis, 'global or super-ordinate' themes were finally identified, using Attride-Stirling's (2001) approach of *Thematic Networks* as an organizational model. The relevant considerations were that the Super-Ordinate/Global themes were central to the research questions and included as many of the other categories and their properties as possible. The *Global/Super-Ordinate Themes* identified were *Skill Development*; *Decision-Making and Power*, *Inclusion and Equity*. These themes were particularly relevant to the research questions. *Skill Development* mapped on to RQ3. *Decision-making and Power* related to RQ1 and 2 and *Inclusion and Equity* was related to RQ2. The following page includes a model (Thematic Illustrative model) deriving from the Thematic Framework, which illustrates the process of code and theme organisation from basic to organising then global themes (Figure 13).

Thematic Illustrative Model

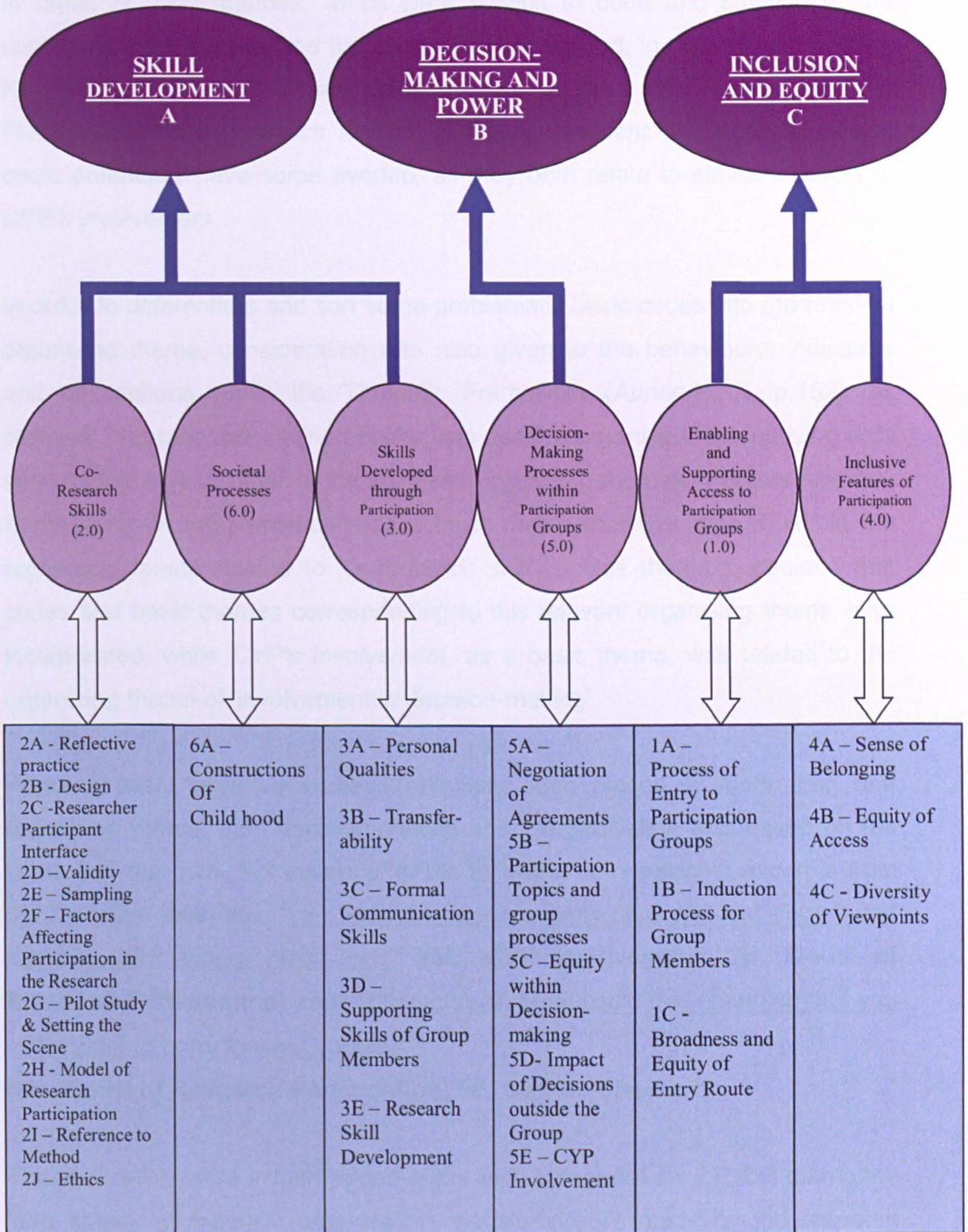


Figure 13

4.7 (ii) Decisions Relating to Theme Categorisation

In terms of basic themes, which were difficult to code and categorise, the context of the sentence and meaning were considered, in order to aid coding. For instance, the codes and basic themes labelled 2F '*Factors Affecting Participation in the Research*' and 5E '*CYP's Involvement*' (Appendix K, p.162), could potentially have some overlap, as they both relate to similar aspects of CYP's involvement.

In order to differentiate and sort some problematic basic codes into the relevant organising theme, consideration was also given to the behavioural indicators and descriptions within the Thematic Framework (Appendix K, p.162), as outlined. The rationale outlined below was used to organize these outlying data extracts into one or other of the identified organising themes. '*Factors Affecting Participation in the Research*' was a basic theme that was located within the organizing theme related to 'co-research skill'. It was therefore decided that codes and basic themes corresponding to this relevant organising theme were incorporated, while *CYP's Involvement*, as a basic theme, was related to the organizing theme of 'involvement in decision-making'.

When a basic code could have rationally been placed in more than one organising theme, then decision-making about organisation was based on the context of the data. For instance, in the following co-researcher excerpts from the reflective interview: "you have taken like a back step and just contributed which I think works really well." (5E, CYP Involvement; 2H, Model of Research Participation) and "up to yourself, but it could be something that you might want to carry forward yourself."

(2H, Model of Research Participation; 5E, CYP Involvement)

These excerpts were initially coded under both categories by J.P, but during the later stages of thematic organisation, decisions were made by the research

team in relation to the most applicable theme. This process involved identifying the most pertinent organising themes.

4.8 Data Analysis from Phases of the Research

Data obtained from participation groups A-D (research phases 2-5) was coded separately initially, in order to allow any unique characteristic of that group, which might be later relevant. For example, in the extract below, '*Inclusive Features of Participation*' were identified as particularly significant for the participants involved in the 'Children in Care Council' (Group A). Further details of these processes are in the appendices. An example of the initial process of organization of data is outlined below and additional data from this phase is included in appendix O (p.184).

Phase 2 Data Analysis Excerpt **Figure 14**
Organising Theme 4: Inclusive Factors Relating to Participation

Basic Codes and Thematic Labels	Statement
4A Sense of Belonging	(2) "Is a place I feel supported by family and friends."
	(10) "Adults help and support me."
	(16) "Important to be part of."
	(36) "I enjoy being in the group."
4B Equity of Access	(9) "I can say what I really think."

Data from the interviews within phases 3-4 was coded using the Thematic Framework and then into the basic and organising themes identified as described in *Appendix K*, p.162 and these organising themes linked to 'Super-Ordinate Global themes,' as demonstrated within *Figure 13*, p.83. Information gathered from interviews was supported by observational data gathered within phases two and four, relating to the participation groups.

Details of data from this phase linked to each of the organising and basic themes is organised in detail within appendix P (p.189). Within the reflective stage, excerpts were coded from both members of the research team. Details of data from phases 4 and 5, is outlined within appendix Q (p.199). This is organised in terms of the basis and organising themes.

4.9 Global Themes and Comparison of the 'Data Corpus'

The process of analysis and interpretation between phases 2-5 of the research indicated three Super-Ordinate/Global themes. These were over-arching themes, which related to each of the research phases and subsumed the organising themes. These global themes are discussed in relation to the research questions and to the literature in the following chapters.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines results from this research and is organised with reference to the research questions and the themes emerging from the research. In this study the CYP involved as co-researchers also developed a participation model, which is also outlined. The *global theme of Power and Decision-Making* was identified as central to all research questions, as explored further in the discussion.

5.2 (RQ1) – To what extent can CYP be involved in the research process as co-researchers?

The most pertinent factors relating to the extent, to which CYP can be involved in the research, were identified as being their existing skills and the extent to which they were empowered to make decisions. An additional factor included practical considerations, one example of which was time commitments. These factors are critiqued in Chapter 8.

The extent to which CYP could be involved as co-researchers related to their existing role within the participation groups and their associated ability to make decisions. The CYP people selected by L.A. participation leads for involvement in the research and those who volunteered were already key members of existing participation groups. Existing skill levels of the CYP, for example their communication and reflective skills, facilitated their involvement as co-researchers.

Within Group A the statement by one group member that involvement in the participatory group “has taught me a range of research skills” was viewed differently by participants. Some members of the group had previously played a role in research carried out by this group, in the authority, which could explain different views. Groups B and C focused on Reflective Practice Skills as being the most important factors relating to high-level participation.

The CYP involved in the interviews (phases 3 and 5) referred to research skills, they had acquired or needed to develop. The co-research skills (organising theme 2 in the Thematic Analysis) most frequently referred to and emphasised were *reflective practice, design, research participant interface, ethics* and *factors affecting participation in the research* (Thematic Framework Appendix K. p.162), as outlined below.

Reflective Practice (Thematic Framework 2A)

(This referred to reflective thinking)

Reflective practice was evident throughout the research phases and indicated that involvement in participation groups of this nature could support development of this skills linked to research. It had been expected that reflective practice would be low in phase 3 compared to the later stages, but a high-level of reflective practice was noted by the participant leads who were co-researchers (CR1 and CR3). Participants in groups B and C discussed the use of reflective and systems as in the excerpt:

“We talk through with (youth worker) how we thought the meeting went and the standard of applications” and “we always put down a little feedback with reasons why we have given or not given the grant” (Transcript 1).

Interview participants were also able to reflect on the model of participation, in relation to Hart’s (1992) model, suggesting adaptations including:

- “Swapping level seven and...eight because this is...youth based,” (Transcript 3)
- “Level eight of the model might...needing a bit more change because shouldn’t we make our own decisions on what we want all the time?” (Transcript 2)

These quotes indicated skills relevant to research and reflective practice.

Design 2B (Comments relating to question wording and designing of materials).

This theme was not discussed in detail within phases 2-4. Factors identified by CR5 included altering questions through “adapting things to meet individual needs.” and making questions “specific to certain areas.” (Transcript 5) Suggestions were made by co-researchers related to interview design and administration including adapting the questions for specific purposes. The use of different methods was discussed, which could be adapted so that interviewing methods used with experienced participants, could differ from approaches used with the younger council members.

Research-Participant Interface 2C (Information related to the research relationship)

Co-researcher reflections outlined strategies to support the research and participant interface, this included reference to keeping “the conversation flowing” in the interviews and observations that the approach can be used to “fit in with people” and “go off in directions.” (Transcript 5) This showed understanding of researcher relationships.

Factors Affecting Participation in the Research 2F This referred to factors impacting on participation (e.g. attendance and motivation).

Factors identified relating to participation included current attendance (Group D), work commitments, (Group A) and confidence in the reflective interview. Individual differences in participants between the research phases were considered to have affected the nature of responses as well as changes to groups. Publicity about becoming involved with future research was suggested.

Ethics 2J This referred to ethical considerations (e.g. confidentiality)

The CYP from participation groups B and C identified ethical considerations in relation to their group involvement, for instance in relation to asking for consent for photographs to be used within their groups. The lead co-researcher (CR5) and an additional participant asked for copies of the recordings (transcripts).

In the reflective interviews, consent, confidentiality and data protection were referred to. For example, it was discussed whether to keep the L.A. name confidential when CYP suggested it may be more appropriate to name the authority with youth leader consent. This is outlined in the following quote “helpful not to remain anonymous” (Transcript 5).

5.3 (RQ2) What is the Level and Nature of CYP’s Involvement, in Participation and Decision-Making?

Relatively high levels of involvement in decision-making in the participation groups and in the research were identified through the thematic analysis by the CYP involved. Participants identified themselves as being involved in decision-making in terms of levels six and above, in relation to Hart’s (1992) model, although some CYP involved were participation leads in the L.A. ‘High-level’ decision-making described by CYP interviewed included: taking part in decisions relating to elements of school practice, such as anti-bullying, anti-discrimination; L.A. strategic work including ‘scrutinising local priority leads’ and determining funding for youth applications.

The features of L.A. practice, which facilitated positive environments for ‘higher-level’ decision-making, included a high-level of adult facilitation in terms of recognising strengths and skills of group members, establishing of policies such as the ‘safe space policy’ (which was a strategy supporting positive peer relations) and buddy systems (peer mediation structures) to supporting skill development.

The key elements identified by the CYP related to the level and nature of decision-making (research question 2) included *decision-making processes in groups* (organising theme 5) and suggestions for increased *inclusion and equity in decision-making* (organising themes 1 and 4). Themes identified as relevant to decision-making processes in the participation groups are outlined below.

5.3 (i) Decision-Making Processes in Groups

Negotiation of agreements (In Decision-Making) 5A

Group A CYP said that involvement within the participation groups had supported their ability to negotiate and make decisions. This was a strong theme in Group A and participants agreed that group membership “gives me knowledge of decision-making.’ Not all CYP in the group experienced the same level of involvement. There was also less emphasis on this group influencing decisions elsewhere.

In groups B and C a high-level of negotiation in decision-making was outlined, with processes for approaching new applicants, scrutinising L.A. ‘leads’ and assessing funding applications.

Decision-making for funding is outlined in the statement: “Say like there are more people saying yes and a couple of people saying no, we would go to them for an interview...decisions go on the majority.” (Transcript 1) CYP also discussed “whether [it was] a good application”; “how many CYP...benefit” and “pros and cons.” (Transcript 1) If decisions were difficult to reach, then CYP would approach the adult group leader, who would offer alternatives.

Participants in the school council (Group D) discussed “looking at forms and taking out questionnaires to “see other people’s views on” topics (Transcript 4). Important decisions and topics were raised in the council meetings and then additional groups branched out to explore this area, such as the ‘diversity group.’ The diversity group were a group of CYP responsible for activities linked to inclusion.

Equity within Decision-Making 5C (reference to all views being considered)

Equity in decision-making was linked to group processes, such as the “safe-space policy” (procedure within the L.A. participation unit to support positive peer relations). There was discussion of “going around the group so everyone had a chance to say what they thought about the project in general.” Being “listened to” (Transcripts 2, 3) was considered important in terms of views within meetings. Groups were concerned to be fair in their allocation of funding and resources.

Group A said they were involved in decisions, as identified in the statement “I have a chance to make decisions,” although there were individual differences.

Participants in Groups B and C identified structures which were in place to support the process of equity within decision-making.

In the emergent school council (Group D), different priorities and mechanisms of participation were identified. There was a high-level of CYP involvement in decision-making identified by the CYP but adult involvement in decision-making was identified as being higher by CR5 indicative of a lower level of participation.

Impact of Decisions outside the Group (Transfer) 5D

Reference to the transfer of decisions outside the participation group:

Group A, CYP expressed differing opinions about whether people in the area “listen to my views” and whether “My views affect policies...for CYP.” Participants wanted opportunity to change things for other children in care.

In Groups B and C, transfer outside the group included distributing money for youth projects and ‘scrutinising’ L.A. policies. The CYP said their decisions could “change events or activities” (Transcript 3) and views were listened to.

- Further examples of transferability included involvement within the Youth Parliament, where a participant joined a debate in the House of Commons and booklets designed for home-educated CYP.
- There was also a sense of the impact of decisions outside the groups involved in the research identified by the school council (Group D) through fundraising.

CYP's Involvement 2E (This refers to CYP's involvement in decision-making)

In Group A statements from CYP indicated a mixture of CYP led and adult involvement within decision-making. The CYP said they "set the agenda," and "decide what to do," although youth leads had a key role.

In groups B and C relatively high-level decision-making was identified. CYP identified their participation as being level seven (Hart's model) because "we do take our own roles...but when we are out of the meeting the work is getting done by" (adults) (Transcript 1). There was recognition that giving out money needed adult consent and shared decisions. CYP led decisions in ideas for extending CYP involvement and selecting group members "we as the panel decide on someone who wants to come on the panel." (Transcript 1)

The balance of power in decision-making is outlined in the statement that "CYP and adults are looking for the same thing but differently...that there should be different levels of participation for different purposes" (Transcript 2) and that CYP were "as involved as we could be at this point." (Transcript 1)

CYP's involvement in Group D was rated as about seven or eight, in Hart's (1992) model because adults are involved and CYP lead decisions. The adult's role was seen as to "get the idea bigger and...make it work," (Transcript 4, School Council). Participants recognised they needed permissions. There was potential to alter things and take part in L.A. processes.

CR5 identified a high-level of participation with respect to the research, rating this as stage six using Hart's (1992) model, but suggested this could move to seven or eight when involved in data analysis. This outlined in the statements: "I have had a chance to get involved and say my own questions and...interviews...now you've taken charge of it more." (Transcript 5) It was recommended that more CYP should be involved in participation and research.

5.4 (ii) Inclusion and Equity (Nature and Context of Participation)

Inclusive and equitable features of participation were identified as important by CYP in this case study. This encompassed reference to entry to the groups, equity of access to decision-making and transfer of decision-making processes to other areas. This also included reference to a sense of 'belonging' and purpose. The CYP in the research considered 'fairness' important. The entry processes to participation groups were described as equitable, with a range of systems operating as outlined below.

Enabling and Supporting Access to Participation Groups (Organising Theme 1)

Process of Entry to Participation Groups 1A

In Group A, it was necessary to be a Child 'Looked After' and there were varying views expressed by CYP involved linked to having this separate group. This was in terms of labelling processes and potential discrimination.

Group B and C entry processes were described by an interviewee in comparison to other groups which "you can just join" (Transcript 1) in the statements:

- ❖ "We apply to join and the group and CYP say if you can go in or not" (Transcript 3, Interview number 3);
- ❖ "We as the panel actually decide who comes on the panel...they have an interview as well." (Transcript 1, Interview number 1).

In Group D an opting-in system was employed for members to join the council and a voting system was then used. This was identified in the statement "We usually fill in a form and hand it in to a teacher...the teacher usually reads out the names and they get elected in their year assembly by a vote," (Transcription 4). This meant some self-selection took place with people with existing skills.

Induction Process for New Members 1B

The induction was described by one participant as like a: "buddy system" where "we explain what goes on in the group," (Transcript 1). The buddy system involved the adult participation leads outlining parameters around youth involvement, in terms of what was achievable by CYP and where the decision-making would need to be transferred to the adults involved. Induction included learning roles, responsibilities and skills expected of participation members.

Broadness and Equity of Entry Route 1C

The process for access to Group A was viewed positively and the group was valued. The CYP identified that "It is important to have a, children in care council." Some CYP thought that membership of Group A could result in other CYP knowing their background as 'looked after children,' while other CYP argued that having a separate distinct group was necessary due to different experiences. This is identified in the statement: "It is important to have a separate group for children looked after" (Statements Phase 2). The existence of this group also assumed homogeneity, whereas experiences of children in L.A. care varied.

In Groups B and C the theme of broadening access appeared frequently and in more detail, indicating that it was more significant. The Youth Opportunity Panel (B) participants mentioned adaptations to ensure equity of access including:

1. Altering materials to make them "CYP friendly;"
2. Online facilities to broaden access;

3. Treating applications “fairly;” (Transcript 1)
4. Increasing publicity to reach “CYP where they are;” (Transcript 1)
5. Selecting people to join groups from a range of backgrounds; (Transcripts 1-3)
6. A supportive system to facilitate this inclusive selection process;
7. Democratic systems for selecting new group members involving CYP voting.

Group D participants argued that access to their group was encouraged for pupils of all ages, and was seen to be equitable. Participants outlined mechanisms for increasing broadness of participation, which were to:

- “Get the pupil voice throughout the school...what the children want.”
- “Taking out questionnaires to see like other people's views.”

(Transcript 4).

In the reflective interview with (CR5), increasing the ‘broadness of route’ to participation was highlighted as relevant to the school council group D. Gaining views of other CYP in school was identified as a target. This was outlined in the statement: “bringing people to get involved with it...outside as well.” There was also reference to “barriers that CYP face to get involved,” relating to including some groups within the process.

Sense of Belonging 4A

The sense of belonging related to Group involvement was highest for Group A participants who identifying strongly with the views “I feel like a valued member of the group,” “Is a place I feel supported” and that it is a group that it is “important to be part of.” Participants said it was important to have a group for Children in Care.

Organising Theme 6 Constructions of Childhood

An additional theme identified by CR5 was about the changing nature of childhood. This is outlined in the following statement relating to youth leaders and the involvement of CYP that: "the situation right from when they were a CYP is different to how it is now because society is constantly changing...the problems people face now and the barriers." It was considered important to have CYP involved in decisions as they understood the needs of other CYP.

5.4 (RQ3)

What are the Skills Relevant to CYP's Involvement in Decision-Making?

Personal qualities developed were identified as relevant in all research phases. These included communication and group based skills. Personal qualities were considered to be subject to some level of environmental influences and extended through participation, although it was acknowledged that personal qualities are also partly inherent. CYP experienced as participation leads identified formal skills relevant to meetings and interviewing skills. There was variability in skills identified by each group. The effect on 'confidence' was variable, as was 'transferability.' 'Resiliency skills' and processes for supporting new group members were highlighted in Groups A-C.

The process of skill development linked to decision-making was described as like a: "buddy system" where "we explain what goes on in the group" to other newer group members (Transcript 1). The skills gained through involvement within participation groups were similar to skills relevant to research. Skills developed are outlined below.

Skills Developed Through Participation (Organising Theme 3)

Personal Qualities 3A

Groups (A-C) CYP identified personal qualities relevant as: being able to "get on well," "meeting new people," sociability and public speaking, (Transcripts 1, 2, 3)

Group D CYP identified personal skills including “working together;” “listening to people;” “meeting a lot of people” and “making friends.” (Transcript 4)

- Reflective skills were identified by CR5.

Transferability 3B

- Skills developed through involvement in the participation groups were perceived by the CYP as having an impact on influencing change for others outside groups and being linked to jobs, although CYP said that there was less impact on education.

Formal Communication Skills 3C

Interview participants in Groups B and C described how group members were involved in deciding how “paperwork looks and application forms,” (Transcript 1). They were also involved in processing applications. Skills identified were “rationality, when...looking at ...applications;” “to be decisive” linked to funding decisions and “the power to analyse text...and...read between the lines” (Transcript 2).

Supporting Skills of Group Members 3D

Ideas suggested within Participation Groups B and C relating to supporting group member’s skills included a “suggestion box,” “working under the “safe space policy” and “respecting each other’s opinions” (Transcript 1). During observations, youth workers and group leaders supported CYP developing these skills, by discussing situations and supporting positive peer relations through the ‘buddy systems’.

CR5 suggested supporting skills of members within meetings and research by “anticipating what they are...wanting to say” and “developing skills” (Transcription 5). The CYP critiqued the notion that participation groups should be the only method for gaining views and suggested web-based approaches.

5.5 The Participatory Model Developed with the Co-Researchers

This model was produced as the last stage of the research, as an outcome of discussions with co-researchers. This participatory model is shown in (*Figure 15, p.101*). This model outlined elements for *high-level participatory practice* involving CYP as identified in the research which were:

- 1) *'Skill Development –*
processes for supporting skills for high-level participation.
- 2) *'Inclusion and Equity' -* in participatory practice;
- 3) A system of sharing *'Power and Decision-Making'* between adults and CYP.
- 4) Contextual factors relevant to Higher Level Participation (local and wider).

The above factors were identified as key foundations of 'high-level' participation in practice, whether they related to the research or to the participation groups. The difference between inclusion and equity and shared decision-making was broadening access to decision-making to CYP not currently involved in participatory processes.

The CYP suggested that appropriate structures for skill development were needed such as additional support of those involved in participatory groups by their more experienced peers through 'buddying' systems and through adult support. This involved participation leads explaining their rationale for decision-making.

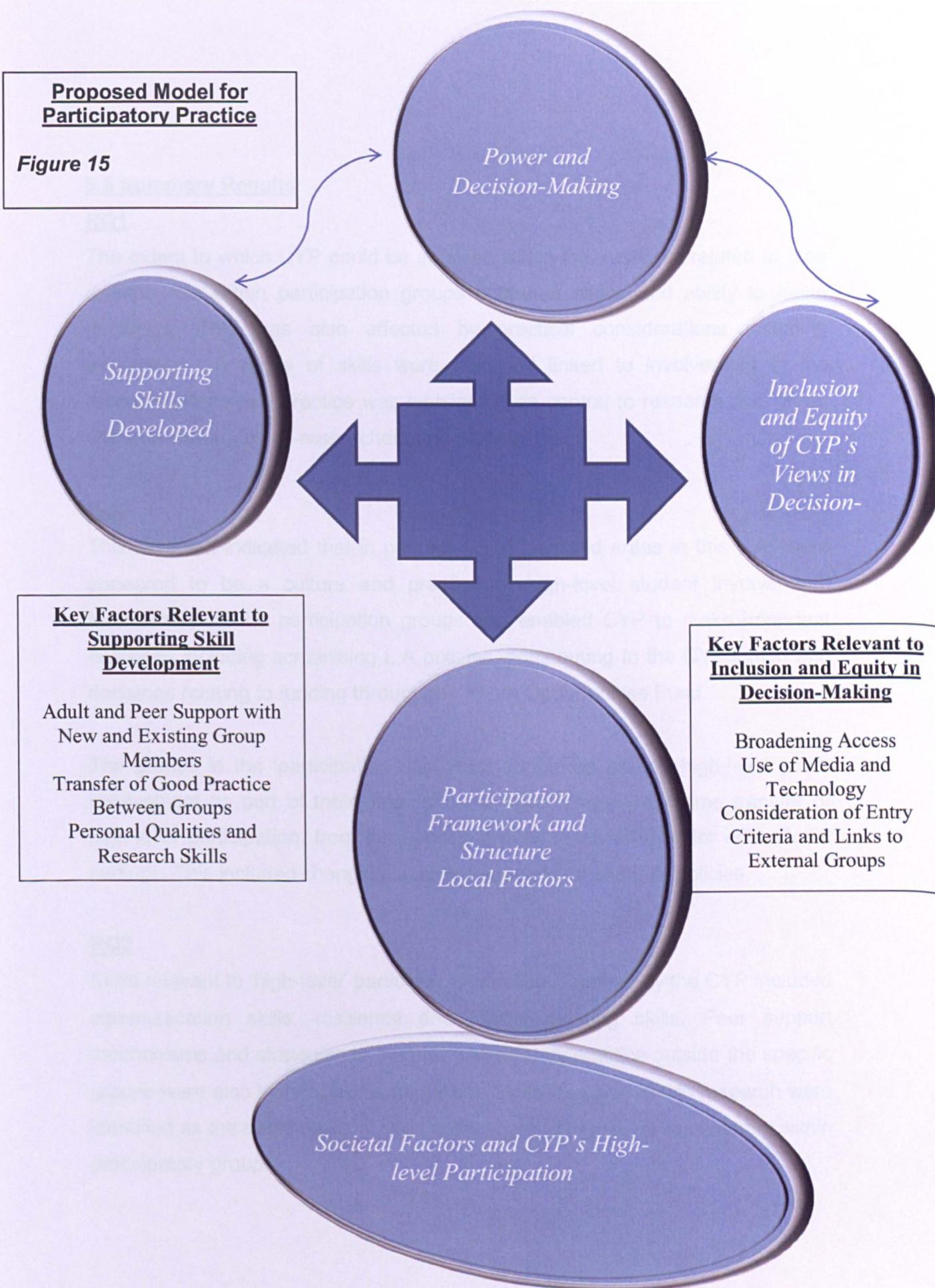
In relation to inclusive and equitable participation, the CYP involved within this research, highlighted extending processes for including a wider range of CYP in decision-making, through forums, questionnaires and web-based discussions. The importance of representative entry procedures to participation groups was

also highlighted in terms of initial processes for joining groups and strategies for incorporating some of the views from CYP within the wider school or L.A context.

The last key feature identified by participants within this case study related to the system and structure of decision-making. This involved a process of sharing discussion and decisions between CYP and adult leaders involved. A visual representation of this participatory model follows. (*Figure 15*, p.101).

Proposed Model for Participatory Practice

Figure 15



5.6 Summary Results

RQ1

The extent to which CYP could be involved within this research related to their existing role within participation groups and their associated ability to make decisions. This was also affected by practical considerations including availability. A range of skills were identified linked to involvement in the research. Reflective practice was highlighted as central to research and group decision-making by co-researchers and participants.

RQ2

This research indicated that in particular and localised areas in this L.A. there appeared to be a culture and practice of high-level student involvement. Membership of the participation groups had enabled CYP to make important decisions including scrutinising L.A policies, contributing to the CYP's plan and decisions relating to funding through the Youth Opportunities Fund.

The groups in the 'participation unit' were structured around high-level youth involvement as part of their organisational style. There was some transfer of high-level participation, from the specific groups involved to wider educational settings. This included changing localised educational and L.A. policies.

RQ3

Skills relevant to 'high-level' participatory practice identified by the CYP included communication skills, resilience and formal meeting skills. Peer support mechanisms and strategies to transfer participatory practice outside the specific groups were also highlighted as important. Skills identified in this research were identified as the same types of skills appropriate to high-level involvement within participatory groups.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction and Outline

The discussion of the results of the research and how the results link to relevant areas of literature is outlined in the following sections. Research questions 1 and 2 are combined within this chapter to facilitate a discussion relating to CYP's involvement in decision-making, both within participation groups and in the research. This is because similar mechanisms are involved in CYP's involvement in all participatory processes.

The discussion is organised in terms of the following areas: 1) the nature and level of participation; 2) relevance to EP and Participatory Practice; 3) reference to participation models; 4) inclusive and equitable features of participation; 5) local factors relevant to participation; 6) wider factors relevant to participation, including constructions of childhood and the changing political and societal context and 7) skills relevant to involvement in participation groups and research.

6.2 Nature and Level of CYP's Participation as Co-Researchers and Involvement and Decision-Making in Participation Groups (RQ1 and 2)

6.2 (i) Nature of Participation

Participation was initially conceptualised in this research as being a process where (CYP's) views might be obtained in a formalised manner through participation groups. This concept of participation, as a result of CYP's views, later extended from involvement within participation groups into a broader definition. This broader definition adopted by the CYP included establishing additional mechanisms for involving additional school pupils or L.A. youth group members in decision-making (with the groups acting as conduits for facilitating access to decision-making processes).

'Participation' involved taking part in research in the role of co-researcher, research participant or both. Participation group members were positive about

the impact of their decisions to other CYP and groups. CYP expressed positive views about involvement during the interviews in terms of feeling valued and being able to effect change.

There was a strong commitment from adult group 'leads,' to put into practice ideas suggested by the CYP and, to communicate clearly when this was not the case and the reasons why. This process of acting on CYP's views had already been indicated within the literature, for example Thompson and Holt (2007) as being an important feature of the success of participation and youth decision-making. The CYP questioned indicated that there was potential for positive action and change if their views were listened to and validated by action (Thompson and Holt, 2007).

Mechanisms for supporting the involvement of pupils which were evident in this case study were also identified as being an 'intrinsic element of genuine participation' by Gersch (1996), who argued that: 'involvement of pupils is impossible without appropriate vehicles for conveying their beliefs' (Gersch cited in Harding and Atkinson, 2009, p.127). This would relate to the widening of vehicles for participation from school councils to web-based approaches.

6.2 (ii) CYP's Participation as Co-Researchers

The involvement of CYP as co-researchers was dependent on several key factors. This included the need to facilitate a positive environment for research involvement, where a tokenistic approach to involvement in decision-making was not evident. I would suggest that Hart's (1992) model could be applied to analysis of CYP's participation, within research, in terms of adult/child power relationships. There are elements of the research process where CYP need support. Peer and adult support mechanisms involved are discussed in this chapter and were previously outlined in the Results Chapter.

Engaging CYP as co-researchers in cycles of research and exploring additional methods for extending participation were identified as important for increasing access to *high-level participation*. This cyclical approach can be applied to Participatory Practice, in terms of CYP's involvement, gaining the views of other CYP through a range of methods such as interview, web forums and questionnaires as discussed in Chapter 7.

In terms of the role and purpose of co-researching as an approach, the involvement of CYP as co-researchers could also potentially be a mechanism for broadening types and routes of participation and equalising power relations, as discussed by Nespor (2008), in his suggestion of being able to understand 'participants' worlds' through co-researching. Insights have been obtained into the CYP's views in the participation groups through their 'centralised' role as co-researchers. Further research would be needed involving a wider range of participation groups as discussed in Chapter 7.

Chilokoa and McKie (2007) argue that: 'in research with children, the hope is that the child will provide the knowledge and the adult will learn' (p.207). This was found within this study with additional themes related to participation identified by the CYP involved. These themes identified included reference to broadening access to decision-making and inclusive participation. Co-researchers also identified additional methods for gaining the views of their peers including media based approaches.

Suggestions from the CYP relevant to gaining the involvement of their peers in both the research and also participatory processes were similar to those identified by the CYP in Inch and Chick's (2007) research. These suggestions included listening, accepting what people say and getting to know each other. This sense of equity, in terms of including a wide range of views, appears to be important to CYP outside this research and may be a more generalizable feature for CYP's involvement.

The recommendation from Billington (2006) that we should 'listen to ourselves when working with children' (p.8) and to seek participation on a more equal level, was aimed towards within this research through the following: 1) the Critical Research approach; 2) through the high level of CYP's involvement as Co-Researchers; 3) CYP's involvement as active participants in *high-level* decision-making processes within the participatory groups. A high level of reflective practice was also identified in the co-researcher accounts and in the descriptions of decision-making within participation groups B and C.

Further suggestions for extending this process and reference to power relations impacting on participation are discussed in later sections of this chapter.

6.2 (iii) CYP's involvement in Decision-Making in Participatory and EP Practice

Some of the factors identified within this study and other research to support extension of student involvement in decision-making included the following suggestions: 1) Setting up meetings so that CYP can contribute and 2) setting up alternative support systems enabling a wider range of CYP to communicate their views. This would include web-based forums as outlined earlier. This process of CYP's involvement is discussed further in the following sections with reference to EP and Participatory Practice.

Relevance of CYP's Decision-Making to EP Practice

The CYP within this research clearly demonstrated their capacity for high-level involvement in decision-making, including their ability to make responsible and measured decisions about funding projects and LA initiatives (Groups B and C). I would argue that these systems of CYP's involvement as outlined in the Participatory Model should also be transferrable to EP practice.

Thompson and Holt (2007, p.225-6) argue that, listening to children's voices is relevant in 'education programmes to better meet the needs of the children

[where] their involvement in decision-making and acceptance of the relevance of change is a major factor in the success of the new arrangements.' This viewpoint highlights the importance of successful change being influenced by CYP's involvement. I would argue that for to CYP with S.E.N and educational decisions, this is an area where CYP's participation is still developing. This was elucidated in Burden's (1996) view that EP's do things 'to children and for children, but not often with children'.

Although there have been recent changes, the level of CYP's decision-making, which I have experienced in my EP practice and as outlined in research (Harding and Atkinson, 2009; Aston and Lambert, 2010) is still arguably at a *tokenistic* level of Hart's (1992) model. This involves seeking CYP's views, in situations, which are not the most conducive such as during multi-agency meetings. CYP's involvement in important educational decisions relating to themselves was also less evident in this research.

Harding and Atkinson (2009), outline a number of suggestions in relation to including CYP in decision-making within educational processes including involving pupils in more than just a 'tokenistic' (Hart, 1992) manner within meetings, reviews and casework. Aston (2005) suggests increasing techniques such as MAPs (Making Action Plans) and PATH, Forest, Pearpoint and O'Brien (1996), which are pupil-centred methods for gaining views recommended in Chapter 7.

Relevance to Educational Practice

Harding and Atkinson (2009, p.126), cited Todd (2003) arguing that: 'If pupils are part of the decision-making process, they can provide appropriate information about their skills and abilities and offer views about possible interventions enhancing the likelihood of successful outcomes.' This suggests that there is a significant and real value to gaining genuine views in relation to the CYP's educational experience.

This research has similarly shown that CYP's participation would benefit from being extended from a purely *tokenistic* or *consultative* function to an approach which involves their active inclusion in a wide range of decisions, with extension of these processes to their own education, behaviour and learning. It is expected that this process would include the use of participative approaches relating to the higher stages of Hart's (1992) model and the factors identified within the participation model developed (Fig 15, p101).

6.2 (iv) Models of Participation Revisited

There was some agreement by the participants, within this study, relating to the presence of some of the features of participation identified within these models as existing in their participation groups, in terms of Hart's (1992) higher stages of participation. CYP in this research also felt that they were "looking for the same thing but differently" (Transcript 2) from the adults involved through participation and the CYP felt that they were as involved as they could be at this point.

There was also a sense expressed by the CYP questioned that Hart's (1992) model, was simplistic in relation to the nature of decision-making in practice. The CYP suggested swapping some higher levels and argued that participation in reality operated with different levels of youth involvement depending on the specific context. It was recognised that there were actual legal and practical constraints to CYP involvement including signing paperwork linked to funding. In addition the CYP suggested that access to decision-making and higher-level participation needed transferring to other CYP outside the participation groups.

Hart's (1992) model is a useful starting point to explore participation, with reference to the notions of power and equality between adults and CYP. In reality, however, there may be multiple levels of power and involvement in decision-making operating concurrently. Kirby et al's (2003) model (*Figure 5*,

p.31) of parallel levels of participation may therefore be applicable to some elements of participatory practice. In participatory practice, as outlined in this research, different group members may experience differential access to decisions, because of their age or skills and role in the group. In addition, in some topic areas discussed, a group may have a high-level of involvement, but adults may still take the lead and consult with others.

Hart's model was an exploratory structure, in this research, although there were already existing critiques and extensions to the model that had been suggested. Reddy and Ratna (2002) critiqued Hart's (1992) model by suggesting that the ladder based nature of the model could suggest a sequential system, whereas in reality one level may not necessarily progress to the next. I would agree with these comments relating to Hart's model and would extend the critique further, based on interview comments including that "Level eight of the model might...needing a bit more change because shouldn't we make our own decisions on what we want all the time?" (Transcript 2) The idea of exploring the level of participation and to move away from *tokenism* is still important to consider in participatory practice.

The McKinsey 7S Model, outlined in Children's Alliance (2007) (*Figure 6*, p.32) highlighted the importance of shared values in decision-making, as well as strategies and structure as impacting on the nature of decision-making. CYP in this research also highlighted the roles and values of adults and leaders impacting on their decision-making and the importance of having their own views valued within the process. Skills including communication skills and resiliency were also highlighted in this study as well as structures, which included peer support mechanisms and the environment for participation outlined in the participation model developed.

It was not surprising that the CYP studied identified with this structural model of participation, as the 'Hear by Rights' (Participation Works, 2007) approach,

developed from the McKinsey model, had also been used to develop and extend participation by youth leaders, when the participation groups involved were originally set up. The variability in experiences of participation between participation groups identified in this study could relate to different values between groups as outlined in McKinsey's model.

6.3 Model of Participation Developed in This Research

CYP's involvement in the research resulted in the development of a participation model (*Figure 15*, p.101). The elements identified within the model relevant to decision-making, included access of CYP to *Power and Decision-Making* structures, *Inclusion and Equity* within participatory structures, opportunities for *Skill Development*. This model also included reference to the local context in supporting participation and the wider societal and political factors (features of participation) relevant to the Bronfenbrenner (1979) model. These wider societal and political factors are discussed later in this chapter.

Adult scaffolding and support for the CYP involved in the participation groups studied were viewed as facilitative mechanisms for supporting CYP's involvement and development of their decision-making skills. This process of adult scaffolding included development of skills, including reflective and decision-making skills, in order for CYP to make appropriate and measured decisions based on evidence. It was intended that this model could be a children's version of participatory practice, which incorporated some ideas from earlier participation models such as Hart 1992 (*Figure 4*, p.29), McKinsey 7S Model (*Figure 5*, p.31) and the Children's Alliance model, 2007 (*Figure 8*, p.35).

6.4 Discussion Relating to Participation, Inclusion and Equity

CYP in all phases of the research identified that they had learnt about the processes of decision-making in practice, through their experiences within the participation groups and additionally identified 'equity of access,' to decision-making as a key theme across the interviews. This referred to the processes of

ensuring that different people's views were given consideration, through negotiations within decision-making processes and reducing power differentials between older and younger group members and adult and youth leads. This process of reducing power differentials was discussed in this research, in relation to younger group members, when a 'buddying system' was outlined in terms of extending participation from formal participatory groups.

Equity of involvement for all participants was a central theme in this research and a sense that these CYP are being "listened to." Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) similarly highlight the importance of providing equality of opportunity for all CYP as part of this more inclusive process of consultation. In relation to involvement in this research and the participation groups, it was interesting to observe that some CYP were reluctant to be included or to take part. It was observably often the same key skilled participation young leads who were involved in a range of groups and projects, such as Youth Parliaments, School Councils and Youth Opportunities Panels. It was also noticeable within meetings that particular group members spoke out considerably more. This could suggest underlying marginalisation of particular group members, as discussed below.

Facilitating High-level Participation of a more equitable nature it is expected would also aim to increase inclusion and involvement for the CYP who are described as being 'hard to reach' by Hughes (2007) and Pomerantz et al (2007a). The CYP defined as hard to reach included CYP who have disappeared from education; those in school but who are hard to engage; CYP who are highly visible and possibly disaffected in terms of the nature of their behaviour and involvement with the Youth Justice Service. In relation to this research, equitable practice could relate to the inclusion of views of 'children looked-after' through the 'Children in Care Council' and the broadening of routes to the participation groups. CYP discussed the inclusion of the voices of under-represented pupils and mechanisms for more 'inclusive participation.' It was agreed that formal participation groups may not be the best forum for under-

represented groups and that web-based methods may be more relevant. The process of transferring views and actions, within and outside of the group, was seen by CYP to be a key component of inclusive and equitable practice.

Fielding (2001) outlines some of the basic inequities of access to decision-making and participation, linked to school councils. This included over representation of middle class girls and under-representation of some other groups of CYP including children with behavioural and special needs. This was reflected upon within this study in relation to the experience of the CYP involved in Group A, who had expressed views relating to criticisms of their behaviour during some previous meetings. This included reference to the CYP's use of language and terms of reference to leads in the authority, when they were invited to formal meeting events. This suggested that additional formal meeting skills needed acquiring to facilitate greater inclusion of CYP.

It is relevant to consider that, in a recent publication from May 2010 called *CYP Now*, (NCB, 2010) Maria Ahmed reviewed the implementation of the policy of the 'Children in Care Council's.' This participation mechanism was a direct result of the recommendations from '*Care Matters*' (2007). Despite this, during 2010, only one in ten L.A.s were reported to have a 'Children in Care' (CIC) council. This literature suggested that the authority, where the research took place, was an example of good practice as it had an established council group.

A survey of 108 Children in Care group members completed by England Children's Rights Director, Roger Morgan and outlined in *CYP Now*, (NCB, May 2010) found that two thirds of participants said that their views made a difference but one eighth felt that they made no difference to effecting change in their lives. Involvement within the groups was linked to 'self-worth' and a 'chance to change futures for others.' Participants within the L.A. groups chosen for my study commented positively on their role in changing practice and making a difference for other CYP. This suggested that feelings of equity and a sense of

inclusion were relatively strong for this group of CYP. This may indicate there is a future role in terms of working with schools and L.A's to raise the profile of the 'voices' of children with S.E.N and children in care.

Increasing a sense of inclusive and equitable participation also has clear links to EP practice as a route to bring alternative narratives, (Billington, 2000) into the open. This would be in order to recognize and provide a forum for the views of all CYP. The mechanism of councils is one option, but there are additional approaches that could be equally effective and more accessible for CYP. This includes web-based forums as identified by the CYP within this study and classroom based discussions to gain views.

In addition, increased CYP involvement within decision-making in research could also be an important mechanism for addressing inequities in the inclusion of *children looked after* and pupils with S.E.N as identified by the CYP and discussed by Fielding (2001). CYP should be involved in EP practice and research at a higher participatory level, for example through co-researching and contributing to educational policies.

6.5 Factors Impacting on Participation

6.5 (I) Local and Contextual Factors

Local and contextual factors linked to facilitating high-level participation were identified in the study as outlined in the participatory model (p.94). Aston and Lambert (2010) also identified a number of factors that would contribute to CYP's involvement, which included 'culture, environment, attitudes and systems' (p.41). It was felt by CYP in this study that these participatory elements and supportive systems would need to be in place, to support genuine decision-making.

Some local and contextual factors identified by the CYP in this research also related to the Children's Alliance (2007) model of participation. The transferrable

features of this model included the idea of participation being valued and embedded, that senior managers were committed to participation and that the process of change and impact was examined through consultative mechanisms for CYP. Participants in this case study believed that they had an important role in decision-making, which was facilitated through the positive environment for participation created. Hobbs (2000) additionally suggested that factors such as construction of power, the construction of pupils' identity and the school environment were all important factors to consider, with respect to facilitating an environment for CYP's decision-making.

Additional factors identified as supporting 'consultative systems' by Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) included a high time commitment from the adults and CYP involved, a climate conducive to participation and appropriate consultative and feedback mechanisms. These features of participation also supported high-level participatory practice within this study and would relate to the section in the participatory model developed linked to local factors and systems. The idea of 'mediated consultation' discussed by (Ruddock and McIntyre, p.39), involving other methods such as drawings and supported activities for gaining CYP's views, could also be transferrable to the CYP's explanation of peer-support systems in their groups.

6.5 (ii) Wider Participatory Context

The wider societal and political context linked to participation, as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model, was important to consider in terms of the wider structures impacting on participation. Within the participation model developed by the CYP, in this research, there reference to the wider societal and political environment in facilitating high-level participation. Societal factors linked to supporting participation, were also outlined in Aston and Lambert (2010). In particular the impact of societal features was discussed where: 'society does not want CYP to have a voice' (p.46) and that the culture prevents CYP's views

being taken into account in decision-making. This suggests a politicised element to including CYP in decisions, as discussed on p.115.

Involvement in Decision-Making and Changing Social Constructions of Childhood

In this research, the theme 'constructions of childhood' was identified as an emergent theme within the higher levels of reflective thinking from the co-researchers. The idea of youth involvement in decision-making is related, I argue, to the 'changing construction of childhood' and the relatively historically recent positioning of children's views as important, resulting in setting up of council and participatory structures. This changing involvement of CYP in decision-making could be linked to a particular changing construction of childhood as outlined by James and Prout (1995), who argue that CYP are now viewed in society as being able to make valuable decisions and regarded to be 'citizens,' this view would be critiqued by Aston and Lambert's (2010) as outlined above.

It is interesting, from a Critical Research Perspective (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002), therefore, that the overall decisions relating to the types of topic areas that CYP are involved in are still often determined by the adults involved and the L.A. and political systems. Discussion of the political context of participation follows.

Citizenship Agenda, Power Constructions and the Participatory Context

The CYP involved in the research or participation groups may not always have been aware of the wider political systems and dominant 'discourses' or 'narratives' (Billington, 2000) operating, which determined topics for discussion in the participation groups and their existence. This also links to notions of the socially constructed nature of CYP's involvement in decision-making and constructions of childhood.

Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) highlight the ambiguity expressed by governments linked to CYP's consultation (active participation). This was in the sense that governments can often state support of 'listening to pupil voices' but practical support is not always offered in the context of 'prioritisation of performance' (p.3). This may suggest from a critical point of view that there are rationales for facilitating participation of CYP. The social and political context of participation was also discussed by Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) as linked to the rise of citizenship education.

As the research was finishing, a 'hidden political agenda' and the underlying 'power relations' linked to participation became very apparent to the CYP involved, when the possibility of reduced funding to the *Participation Unit* became a real concern. When the CYP involved, became aware of the proposed changes they demonstrated a high-level of motivation and 'citizenship' by campaigning through leaflets within their local schools, in order to protest against the possibility of the participation leads losing their positions. This demonstrated, I would argue, the CYP's existing skills and willingness to become involved as central to decision-making processes, impacting on their lives. This is contrary to the 'Citizenship education' narrative as discussed shortly around youth apathy and indicates a motivated political group of CYP.

A Foucauldian interpretation of the changing nature of youth involvement related to participation would be to view this as an expression of 'ethical and political commitments' of a particular society. Also relevant is the Foucauldian assertion that the goals of power and the goals of knowledge are integral and cannot be separated (Foucault, 1979). This approach calls into question the idea that youth participation is purely emancipatory, indicating that participation is linked to the political context and that there may be potentially politicised motivations for facilitating CYP involvement.

It is interesting, therefore, from a more critical point of view that the increased participation in schools between 2000-2010 outlined in Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) and associated policies, for example Every Child Matter's (2004) and the Children Act (HMSO, 2004) emerged within schools linked to the process of Citizenship Education (Crick Report; QCA, 1998). This has been linked to encouraging skill development of active participation within the wider community.

Participation also emerged during a time when concerns were being raised within the media about 'voter apathy' and youth participation. This process of increasing Citizenship of CYP was outlined in a BBC News online article (Hannam, 2001), which linked the low voter turnout of 59% to youth apathy and suggested a 'targeted programme.' This later resulted in the development of Citizenship Education in schools, which became statutory in 2002.

A report by the Education and Skills Committee (2007) outlined the intended purposes of Citizenship Education and the link to school councils as mechanisms for the delivery of this approach. Citizenship education was related to 'greater engagement with the formal processes of democracy,' for CYP. This process was also intended to result in 'positive changes to CYP's attitudes and dispositions' (p.6), and lower levels of anti-social behaviour. The questions may arise, therefore, from a critical point of view in terms of what particular skills are being encouraged in participation groups, which CYP are involved and to what extent CYP influence policies which affect them. Further exploration of links between participation and skill development follow.

6.6 Effects of Participation and Participatory Skills (Research Question 3)

6. 6 (i) Participation, Agency and Empowerment

Despite the potentially hidden purpose of youth involvement as linked to the local systems of power distribution, this research has shown that there can be a localised emancipatory effect of youth involvement, as illustrated by the CYP's

actions after cuts were announced. This is also outlined in Nespor's (2008), view about participation 'opening up new questions and new understanding of children's worlds' (p.369). This could result in real change in schools and youth services for individual CYP.

From a Humanistic and Agentic view of human experience (Maslow, 1968), change and 'self-actualisation' is still possible on a more individualised level, given the specific context and environment. Billington (2006) highlighted the role of the voice of the child as having 'emancipatory intent,' which could be a counter argument to the Foucauldian (1979) critical suggestion that CYP's involvement in decision-making is simply a reflection of the existing power structures. From Billington's viewpoint, access to decision-making could potentially be a mechanism for supporting emancipation by questioning dominant narratives.

The challenge for this process of facilitating a sense of agency within CYP's decision-making is to continue to extend and develop the process to include more 'marginalised' groups of CYP, particularly those with educational and behavioural needs. These groups, in my personal experience, and also as expressed in this research and in the literature, (Pomerantz et al, 2007; Billington, 2000) are often excluded or marginalised from the process, which links to Morrow's (2000) assertion that participation is only meaningful in the practical application is empowering.

A sense of disequilibrium could be a result in terms of young people challenging more 'dominant' adult or political discourses. These factors could therefore impact on the topics discussed by CYP and the level and nature of their involvement.

6.6 (ii) Participatory Skills Identified

a) Resiliency

In terms of supporting resilience skills, participation within some groups, particularly from the 'Children in Care Council' appeared to support a *sense of belonging, inclusion and resiliency skills*. The group was viewed as a 'secure base' where CYP felt they could influence factors relating to their life experiences and support each other as group members. This would relate to Dent and Cameron's (2003) notions of resiliency, as mediating for other factors and supporting potential for real growth in the CYP involved.

Brown et al (2001) and Henderson and Milstein (2003) linked participation to building resiliency through peer support strategies and mechanisms. These peer support strategies were also central features of the participation groups studied in this research, with peer support and scaffolding being central processes for inducting new members and extending skill development of new members as discussed in the previous section.

Self-efficacy to make meaningful decisions, as outlined by Prilleltensky et al's (2001) model of power, was evident in some of the comments expressed by some of the CYP. Self-efficacy in this context refers to CYP's ability to perceive themselves as competent individuals who are able to act with initiative. There was reference to a range of processes evidenced by the co-researchers and youth leads, including CYP organising meeting processes themselves.

b) Personal and Communication Skills

Personal and communication skills were highlighted as important in the comments by CYP in all participation groups. Inch and Chick (2007) outlined suggestions from CYP involved within their research including: adopting skills of listening; getting to know each other; expressing yourself and what people say. The CYP involved in this research, identified similar suggestions relating to 'communication skills', 'listening' and 'respect.' It is also of central importance

that skill development was also closely related to the extent to which CYP had access to 'higher' level decision-making and involvement within participation processes.

6.6 (iii) Transfer of Skills to Education

The CYP involved in the research did not think that the skills they practised and learnt in participatory processes, although useful outside the school, were utilised within education practice. This does not mean, however, that relevant skills are not obtained through participation, but that the CYP involved did not make active links between participation, decision-making and educational practice. Within the participatory groups studied there was also less discussion about important educational decisions and less transfer of CYP's high-level involvement to educational systems.

Fielding (2001) also suggested that there was a form of self-censorship within school councils in terms of the topic areas explored. There was less involvement from young participants relating to teaching and learning decision-making involvement (Fielding, 2001), which could relate to constructions of power and decision-making. This was also found to some extent within this case study, although the CYP were playing a role in projects linked to pupil support including anti-discriminatory activities.

Transfer of skills linked to education is discussed within McIntyre and Ruddock's (2007) research into pupil consultation (in their definition consultation was viewed higher than participation) where involving pupils in decisions linked to their education was recommended, while at the same time some of the practical constraints were acknowledged as "consulting pupils about teaching and learning [were described] as altogether more risky and difficult to manage" (p.8). The impact and direct benefits of CYP consultation linked to education were highlighted in research by McIntyre and Ruddock (2007) in terms of being a

“route to more effective, meaningful and enjoyable learning” (p.9), through supporting their engagement with learning.

6.6 (iv) Supporting Skill Development (Peer and Adult Support Mechanisms)

The results of this research indicated that support and scaffolding could happen through ‘peer buddying’ and adult support structures. This process of supporting decision-making is also outlined in Lewis (2002) and Cohen, Manion and Lawrence (2000) where similar mechanisms were advocated.

Mechanisms suggested for supporting skill development would include ‘buddying systems’, where relevant adults (EP’s, youth workers and teachers) would support the skills and enthusiasm of the CYP involved, to gather the views of peers and broaden the access of other CYP to decision-making.

Peer-support systems were identified as mechanisms to extend inclusion within participatory practice and research. Transfer of skills from participation groups to other CYP, who might potentially be involved in decision-making processes, could result.

6.7 Conclusion

The processes of supporting and facilitating co-researcher involvement were discussed as routes for empowering the CYP involved and to provide further insights into the experiences of other CYP. Reflective practice was identified as being a key feature of co-research processes and higher-level participation.

This research identified a high level of decision-making within participatory groups studied, which related to the higher levels of Hart’s (1992) model. There was variability in some of the types of decisions that CYP influenced.

The important features of facilitating higher-level decision-making within groups studied included values, shared decision-making and the creation of a positive climate for decision-making. These factors were discussed with reference to alternative models including the McKinsey (2007), Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Kirby et al (2003) models. This was along with the participation model developed in this research.

Strategies for extending the approaches adopted within the participation groups to other CYP in order to facilitate more inclusive and equitable systems of participation were discussed, with reference to the literature.

Features supporting *high-level* CYP's decision-making included the local and structural context of decision-making in participation groups. This was with reference to constructions of childhood and the changing societal and political context.

Skills identified and effects of participation by the CYP included agency and empowerment, personal and communication skills, resiliency and self-efficacy. Peer and adult support mechanisms for developing skills were discussed. These skills were also discussed in terms of the potential transfer to educational settings.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FOR EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE, WITH SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Introduction

Recommendations are organised in terms of their relevance firstly to EP practice and secondly of their relevance to Educational Participatory practice. Suggestions for future research are then outlined.

7.2 Recommendations for Educational Psychological Practice:

The theoretical framework which would best support these recommendations would be person-centred approaches involving CYP in decision-making. This would include Humanistic approaches as outlined by (Rogers, 1961); Solution Focused techniques, De-Shazer (1985) and Motivational Interviewing techniques, as outlined in McNamara (1992). These approaches centralise the importance of active student involvement as a mechanism for facilitating positive change to their lives. Proschaka and Diclemente's (1982) model of change suggests that individuals need to be involved and supported in cycles of decisions that affect their lives to support the future process of change.

7.2 (i) CYP's Involvement in Decision-Making

1. Heightened awareness of participatory structures leading to CYP involvement can affect the success of EP led interventions and EPs should consider :
 - ❖ Application of 'student-centred' techniques, to gather views from all CYP, such as: 1) MAPS and PATH (Forest, Pearpoint and O'Brien, 1996); 2) 'Solution Focused' approaches (De-Shazer, 1985); 3) the 'In My Shoes' approach (Calam et al, 2007); 4) Online web-based forums are also recommended for gaining wider views of CYP.
 - ❖ 'Hear by Rights' Standards (Participation Works, 2007), applied to EP practice, as an aid to systemic working and gaining the views of a wider range of pupils, about their education.

2. Extending the process of 'high-level participation' to include more 'marginalised' groups of CYP. This could be through a broadening access to participation groups and extending mechanisms for participation through web-based forums and questionnaires. As the CYP in this research suggested, online forums could be used as a mechanism for increasing inclusion of their peers, providing that the security of such online sites is maintained.

7.2(ii) Skills Relevant to CYP and Participation

1. EPs could usefully develop social skills groups in schools as a mechanism for development of the communication, resilience and personal skills associated with CYP's ability to engage in higher level participation.
2. EPs should have greater regard to the suggestions of CYP in developing materials used in their practice. For example having an input in the design and publications of materials and involvement in policies.

7.3 Recommendations for Educational Participatory Practice in Youth Services and in Educational Settings

7.3(i) CYP's Involvement in Decision-making

Adults working with CYP could consider:

1. Applying the Participatory Model (*Figure 15*, p.101) for group based and individual involvement of CYP, with emphasis on the following elements:
 - o Skill Development – adult and peer scaffolding of skills (support to develop relevant meeting and communication skills) and to extend participation to peers within school and in the L.A.'s.
 - o Aiming for participation at stages six and above of Hart's (1992) model and involvement of CYP in decisions relating to education and L.A. policies.

- Increasing opportunities and broadening access for a wider range of CYP to access decision-making by formal systems for inclusion of peer views.
 - Creating an inclusive environment for participation (broadening entry criteria through positive discrimination and increasing participation).
2. Using a wider range of mechanisms for gaining pupils' views, this could include the use of youth web-based forums identified by the CYP within this study and classroom based discussions. Embedding the processes of adult and pupil support, in order to increase CYP decision-making within education.
 3. Using CYP as co-researchers to explore and obtain the views of a wider range of CYP through a series of questionnaires and forums. This would be in order to gain a wider range of peer's views in and outside participation groups.
 4. Applying the Hear by Rights standards (Participation Works, 2007) to youth group and schools participatory practice at a systemic level. This is to ensure participation is embedded as a structural element of practice. This would involve evaluating organisational systems for CYP involvement in decision-making.

7.3 (ii) Skills and Participatory Practice in CYP (Educational Practice)

Adults working with CYP could develop:

1. Processes to support 'skill-development' and to enable involvement of a wider group of CYP in decision-making, for example peer and adult support with decision-making and development of research skills;

2. Extend processes of peer and adult 'buddy' and support systems in order to scaffold participation. This approach of mutual support, modelling and skill development could also have relevant applications to supporting resiliency and scaffold abilities of CYP in social skill small groups.
(e.g. using the SEAL materials)
3. Access to involvement in decision-making and participation groups may also support development of skills relevant to CYP involvement in research, although research skills would need to be taught discretely.
4. Involve CYP in Educational Research, this could be done by:
 - The creation of additional or formalised opportunities for CYP to reflect on their experiences within education, through evaluative cycles (for example a plan, do and review of initiatives) in schools or youth groups.
 - Involving CYP in order to evaluate educational initiatives.
 - Mechanisms to develop CYP's research skills to support their involvement in research including through Buddying Systems and approaches such as 'Enquiring Minds' and the Citizenship curriculum.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

7.4 (i) Inclusion and Equity in Participation

This research has suggested that increasing inclusive participation would be particularly relevant for CYP with social, emotional and behavioural needs. For this group of CYP, their engagement and involvement in decisions related to their education may be a key feature of the success in motivating them to succeed in the education system and potentially sustaining their inclusion within mainstream environments. This could also involve CYP from participation groups supporting the inclusion of other CYP.

Extension of the research to additional participatory groups as well as additional involvement of marginalised CYP within decision-making is recommended for exploration in future studies. This may include processes for transferring *high-level* participation and opportunities for co-researching experiences for pupils with special educational needs, in order to support more inclusive EP Practice.

7.4 (ii) High-Level Participation

A gap may exist in terms of some elements of EP and educational practice, along with meaningful or active participation in decision-making involving CYP. There is an emerging move towards genuine pupil participation in therapeutic and motivational approaches and sometimes through 'pupil-centred planning', but this is not always the norm for all pupils. Further research is needed to explore CYP's views of the level of their influence in terms of decisions that affect their own lives, during EP involvement.

7.4 (iii) Suggestions for Future Research Involving Co-Researchers

An additional suggestion for future research studies, to extend student involvement, would be to have a higher level of involvement within the research from the adults supporting and leading these groups.

Collaborative Enquiry and Action Research (Lewin, 1946) approaches involving CYP and adults working in partnership would be recommended, alongside a 'Grounded Theory' (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) based approach to data collection. This would be through the phased approach to data collection where the CYP could be involved in discussing methods and next directions within the research. I believe these methods would extend decision-making by the CYP and support participatory research, (Hart, 1992, 2001). They were not used in this study due to time constraints.

7.4(iv) Context of Participation

It is important to locate the recent changes in CYP participation within a social and political context and to fully explore the impact of political and societal changes on participatory structures. Further research is recommended, to examine the impact of political changes on participatory practice within educational settings and systems.

7.5 (v) Skills and Participation

Further research is recommended to explore fully the skills that CYP develop within a wider range of participation processes and the potential for transfer of these skills to other CYP and to educational and wider settings.

8.0 LIMITATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This section summarises the practical constraints which were imposed on this smaller scale research. It also reflects critically on the methodology employed and suggests how the research might have been conducted differently.

8.2 Practical Constraints

Key constraints relating to CYP's research involvement included:

- ❖ Time periods involved in the research cycles;
- ❖ Adult 'gatekeepers' enabling research access to the groups initially and later;
- ❖ Issues relating to personal commitments and consent forms.

Further details of these elements are outlined below:

1. Research involving CYP involves a high-level of time and commitment from the adults, and a period of skill development. In this research, practical constraints included revision for examinations for CYP and changes in leadership of groups.
2. The initial significant factor relating to facilitating CYP's participation in the research was access to the groups, which was largely through adult 'gatekeepers' or leaders. At all stages within the process, in the different groups involved, I identified this as a key factor. The presence of youth leaders was sometimes a supportive factor in facilitating access to the CYP involved but sometimes a barrier, when leaders changed and meetings were re-arranged.
3. Personal commitments and consent forms were problematic. Some CYP had study or work commitments meaning they could not attend earlier. Some CYP also forgot to return consent forms on time.

The research topic and local context were relevant factors. The exploration of CYP's involvement in decision-making and participation groups was perceived by some adults involved as an assessment of the groups and youth leader's skills and competencies. This emerged during a meeting mid-cycle through the process. At one participation meeting I attended, there were a number of questions from the youth leaders investigating the specific nature of my involvement in order to ascertain if they and their practice was being assessed. This was despite earlier agreement and consents. The participation leader most interested and supportive therefore took part in the later stages of research, but this affected access to some of the groups, and affected the research construction. This acted as a constraint upon the ability to involve more CYP.

During additional discussions with the participation panel of adult youth leaders, it emerged that the research was taking place at a time coinciding with some uncertainty and political change relating to the future of the youth service and funding. This was additionally pertinent during the feedback stage, the timing of which coincided with changes proposed to the way in which youth services were funded.

8.3 Methodological Critique

8.3 (i) Co-Researcher Participation

A limitation of the research was that the groups and CYP selected had existing high levels of positive participation and the CYP self-selected involvement. This may have resulted in a biased sample of CYP supportive of participation groups. A longitudinal study would also have been appropriate to further support skill-development and the structure of co-researcher involvement.

Some methodological decisions were considered in partnership with the CYP involved in the study. The Social Constructionist (Gergen, 1985) Ontology and Critical Research (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002) approach did limit the range of methods to some extent, including the potential use of large scale survey

approaches of a quantitative nature. This could have potentially conflicted with experiences and views of some of the CYP who may have existing knowledge of more quantitative approaches. These factors outlined above are important to consider relating to the role of CYP as co-researchers.

Analysis using the Thematic Analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998) did involve a level of researcher involvement in the coding and organisation into themes. This process of analysis could have been influenced to some extent by the research questions and pre-existing views of the research team. For this reason, the inductive process of organising themes from the data was followed as outlined within Chapter 5.

8.3 (ii) CYP's Involvement in Decision-Making

Methods used to analyse CYP's involvement in decision-making in this study included self-reporting perceptions of the level of involvement. This could have resulted in over-estimation of the influence of CYP's decisions and involvement in decision-making by the CYP themselves. Further exploration of the direct impact of CYP's views on wider L.A. policies could have clarified this further. The nature of participation in this research was also specific to the particular case study groups.

8.3 (iii) Skills and Participation

This study highlighted some skills related to CYP's participation and involvement in the research, however, the sample of CYP participating in the study were often the CYP with existing skills which allowed them to have high-level involvement in decision-making, including reflective practice. It is likely that pupils in school or other peers outside the participation groups may have expressed different or contradictory views.

In terms of skills identified, it was noted through discussions within the research that the CYP most heavily involved in participation groups were often confident

and with good social skills. It may be that CYP self-select their own involvement as a result, so skills were pre-existing before membership of the groups. It is also relevant to mention that the skills discussed were largely self-reported by the CYP, so that an element of bias could be implicit within this process and over or under-representation of particular skills. This was relevant linked to the sample size of the case study. Cross-referencing through observations in the research did support existence of skills identified.

8.3 (iv) Case Study Research

Case study research has limitations as outlined in Silverman (1993) and Willig (2008), which were also applicable to this study. Triangulation of methods is often used to arrive at a better understanding of what is going on but this approach can also result in approaches which are not 'epistemologically compatible' (Willig, 2008, p.85).

In this research, when working with the CYP designing methods, a range of approaches were reviewed and some of these tensions were apparent. This included discussion related to larger scale quantitative web-based surveys along with qualitative methods.

Yin (1994) additionally focused on features to address within case studies, which included 1) the need to report all evidence fairly, 2) difficulties in terms of the length of time involved and 3) case studies being difficult to replicate or generalise from. I adopted mechanisms within this case study to ensure that the data collected and thematic analysis represented the CYP's views.

The time-scale was an issue within this study. The research process started by gathering consents from L.A representatives in autumn 2008, prior to the pilot phase of research, and gaining contact to the groups involved in the case study. The final stage completed 20 months later. Sufficient time is essential for co-research in terms of getting to know the groups and organisations.

The case study methodology (Yin, 1994) in this study limited the possibility for generalising results, although this supported the process of co-researcher involvement. As the participation groups were known to the co-researchers and in a contained locality, it was possible to explore co-researcher's involvement more easily and to support the process of co-researching and skill development.

During my time as a Trainee EP, working in several L.A.s, I experienced varying levels of CYP's participation and involvement in decision-making and had identified this as a target area for practice. This determined the exploratory nature of this case study.

8.4 Researcher Reflections on the Research Process

Rationale for Research Topic and Focus 'Emancipatory Intent'

My values as a researcher and the focus of this research included emancipatory intent, empowering the CYP involved in this study and on the structure and climate of more active or 'high-level' participation. These values and focus areas had an impact in terms of the choice of topic, methodology adopted and the staged process and decisions within the study, as outlined shortly. This focus may have also impacted on the research questions and global themes resulting including *Decision-Making* and *Inclusion and Equity*.

The topic area of participation and decision-making was partly determined by my previous occupation as a teacher and my experiences of participation as a Trainee Educational Psychologist. I had previously been involved setting up a participatory framework within my school, and I had associated experiences of school councils and participation. I had also attended a variety of different meetings in the EPS which had incorporated CYP's views to varying extent. I had encountered situations where CYP's accounts were marginalised or their wishes were not acted upon and I had been acutely aware of the tensions linked to CYP's participation as a concept. These experiences provided me with knowledge of some of the potential strengths and difficulties of CYP's participation, which directly impacted on research decisions including the central involvement of co-researchers.

Some of the particular issues which I had previously encountered relating to participation and CYP were similar to those discussed by Fielding (2001) and Aston and Lambert (2010) including the need for more inclusive participatory systems. This system would also include more males, pupils with emotional and behavioural needs and from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. It was therefore appealing and important to me to research existing participation groups which had adopted positive discriminatory and inclusive processes for selecting group members and for including CYP's views.

Researching With CYP (Dilemmas, Decisions and Reflections)

A reflective element aimed to underpin each of the decisions within the research, resulting in a potentially more ethically sensitive study. This included negotiation with the CYP co-researchers at particular decision points within the research. These decision points often related to the particular tensions inherent in the aim to centralise CYP's involvement, including tensions between the CYP's preferred choice of methods, researcher (social constructionist) ontology and practical constraints.

One of the important decision points within the research related to the choice of methods used, as discussed within the pilot phase. A process of negotiation and compromise was evident in the initial phase of the research when some of the CYP suggested that they would like to set up web-based forums or utilise larger scale surveys. This was not carried out for a number of reasons, including my concerns about confidentiality and consent linked to online research and the practicalities of carrying this out. On reflection, it would have been preferable to trial some of these web-based methods, with the support of the CYP's technological skills and expertise, as a method for additionally supporting equalising power in research.

The decision about use of particular methods was also related to my socially constructionist researcher ontology, leading more typically to smaller scale qualitative research. This was when some of the CYP may have been more familiar with larger scale studies and not understanding the rationale linked to social constructionism. In reality, mutual agreement was reached in terms of the choice of methods between me and the CYP within the groups. The extension of the research study in terms of time periods was also influenced by the views of the CYP as they wanted to take the research forward.

The doctoral research process itself, in terms of time constraints and written composition, did impose some constraints on further involvement of the CYP. It

would have been desirable to have had additional time to support the further development of CYP's research skills and to incorporate awareness of particular epistemological positions informing the research. The existing level of CYP's research knowledge and the complexity of the process were acknowledged as limitations to involvement of CYP as co-researchers. On reflection, I would have also liked to have included an audio transcript of CYP's views of the research and participation more centrally in the doctoral process.

In order to minimise the influence of me as the researcher, co-researchers were also involved jointly within these design processes and decisions. There were still elements where CYP had limited involvement as outlined in Chapter 5 and where wider power relations and changes to the groups impacted on the approach used. I would argue for the further extension of the role of CYP in research, through additional skill development which could extend the level of participation of the CYP.

Factors Impacting on CYP's Participation

This research aimed to be empowering in terms of CYP's involvement. As the study started, I had envisaged encountering specific frameworks for more equal and child-centred participatory processes. The notion of a more linear progression to support active participation also informed initial research conceptions. As this study progressed I became more aware of some of the existing factors impacting on the types and levels of participation involving CYP within both the research and decision-making within participation groups.

Within this research, there were observed to be some actual limits to CYP involvement in decision-making as co-researchers and in participation groups. These limits were due to the wider societal structures which influenced some of the topics for discussion and also the continued existence of participation systems, as illustrated in the discussion chapter, when participation groups were closed down due to funding constraints and changes to wider political systems.

There were some adult imposed constraints observed and evident relating to constructions of the capacities of CYP for involvement in research and decision-making, which could also be viewed as critiquing elements of participation linked to changing constructions of childhood, outlined by Tomas (2008) and Veitch (2009). There was also an indication of residual prejudices, which may still exist, impacting on CYP's active involvement in decision making, which are often related to actual or socially constructed views of the role of CYP. These prejudices were also illustrated by the presence of adult 'gate keepers' within the research process, who aimed to have a role influencing the design and also monitoring the completion of the study.

Tensions relating to CYP's involvement in research and linked to the constructions of childhood were evident within the research process. This had included some of my colleagues critiquing the focus on CYP's central involvement and the need for further adult moderation or guidance within these processes. The behaviour of some CYP with emotional and behavioural needs participating in some meetings was also critiqued. This related to one particular situation when CYP from one of the groups were actively debating and using 'inappropriate' language during a meeting with senior members from the L.A. and this was used as evidence for imposing additional barriers to CYP's participation, including additional selection criteria and monitoring. Constraints on CYP's participation based on their age were also discussed and that adults should be having the veto on particular decisions.

There are obviously some legitimate constraints for CYP's participation, which the CYP involved in this study also recognised. These constraints included adults signing paperwork for funding and health and safety based support within the organisations. The CYP did have a wider notion of the remit for their participation than some adults in the L.A. Some constraints also existed, to CYP's involvement as co-researchers, for instance, including the need for

additional adult support linked to skill development and relating to awareness of wider ethical implications of studies.

Tensions were also apparent between adult constructions of participation (formal meeting based groups) and the CYP's concepts of active participation or democratic systems, which were often much less formal, wider ranging and potentially democratic and web-based systems. These tensions could also be viewed as reflective of the rapidly changing social and technological context and illustrated the complexity of decision-making processes. This also supported, in my view, the continued need for systems to extend inclusive and equitable (higher-level) participation for all CYP within educational and EP practice.

Differing power relations between individual adults in the participation unit and the wider L.A., different CYP in the groups and outside the participation process were also highlighted during the study. These inherent power-based structures would also merit further exploration in future research.

Impact and Wider Implications of Supporting CYP's Active Participation

These factors described above made me reflect more explicitly on the wider power relations embedded in participation systems and the socially constructed nature of participation. This has enabled me to reflect on elements of my own EP Practice, with the aim of centralising CYP's views in EP decisions. This research has also enabled me to develop additional critically reflective skills about the socially constructed nature of research and CYP's decision-making, which I aim to apply when supporting the needs of all groups of CYP, within future EP practice.

This research process illuminated aspects of participation, that I had not previously fully considered which were identified by the CYP. These aspects included the mediated consultation processes between adults and CYP,

structured peer-buddy systems and the additional consideration of the socially constructed nature of participation.

After the research was completed, the importance of supporting democratic systems of participation for including CYP was highlighted through political rallies and events in wider society during 2011. This research suggested that the CYP involved were already actively involved in the participatory and democratic processes, with the potential for further supporting the inclusion of their colleagues and classmates.

This process of 'democratic intent', together with active citizenship and participation was also illustrated when CYP in the study set up web-forums and handed out the leaflets after the research was ending to protest against the cuts and impact on their participation groups.

I would also suggest that it is more important in the current societal context to support the adoption of a broader conception of participation and voting, developed within schools and active participatory groups. These participation processes would involve listening to the views of those CYP and young adults, who are currently more disenfranchised from politically democratic participatory systems. I would argue that it is particularly important at this time of political and global change and financial uncertainty to maintain and centralise the processes of supporting active participation of CYP, as a route to democratic involvement and engagement of future generations.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

Some co-researchers had high-levels of existing skills and were able to be involved in many key elements of the research, although there were some limitations. Extension of reflexivity and co-researching practice was recommended.

A high-level of involvement in decision-making was reported by the CYP, related to participation groups, which had some impact on decisions within the L.A. There were fewer mechanisms for the transfer of high-level decision making to other CYP. Increasing 'equity and broadness of entry route' to participation groups and decision-making was advocated, by the CYP.

Skills relevant to participation included reflective practice and resiliency. Peer and adult systems supported the process of 'skill development.' Key research skills were similar to high-level participation skills.

The participation model devised (*Figure 15*, p.101) involved a focus on the local and societal context of participation, shared decisions between CYP and adults, mechanisms for modelling skills, equity and inclusive systems to support participation.

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Appendix A - Interview Outline and Prompts

Views on Participation

Introductions (explanation of the research and starter)

We are interested in finding out about your views of taking part in this group, the types of things you do and how you have been involved in making decisions, as well as any ideas you have for being more involved in decision-making in the group and activities.

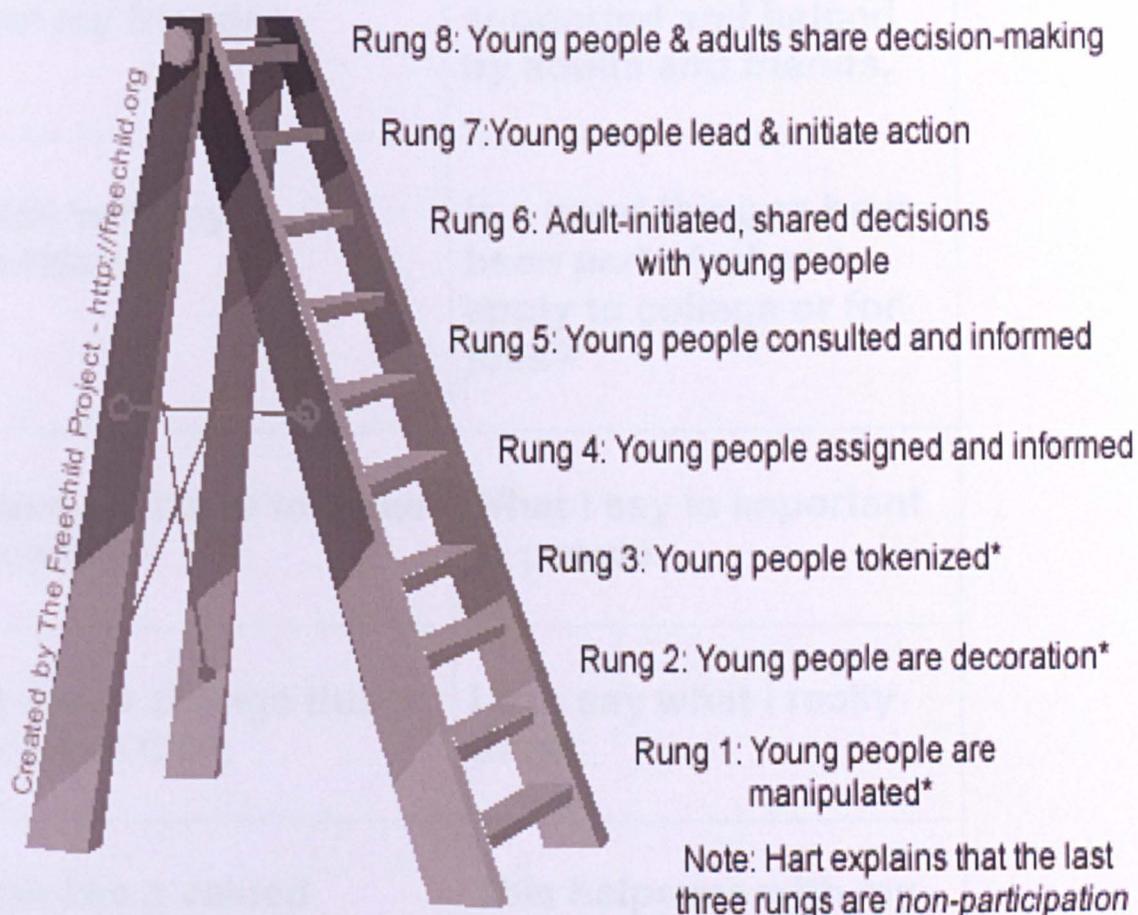
This interview is a discussion to find out your different views about participation. Some of your ideas will be discussed with youth leaders and written down in a research project as ideas for other groups.

General Prompt Questions and Activities

- 1) Could you tell me about your experiences of taking part in the group?
 - Which types of things do you discuss in the group?
(can you give some examples?)
 - How do you decide the agenda or meeting plan?
 - Does everyone have a chance to take part and be in the group?
- 2) Can you tell me how you reach agreement or make decisions?
 - Do you think your views are listened to by people in or outside the group? (can you think of examples)
 - How could your views be listened to more?
 - Which type of participation do you think is most closely like this group? (Triangle model activity to look at and discuss)
 - What would be different and what skills and help would you need to reach the top type of participation?
- 3) What types of skills have you learnt from being part of the group?
(How has it helped you?) Activity – (see sheet p154).
- 4) Do you have any ideas for how you could be more involved in decisions?
- 5) Any other suggestions for helping other CYP to be included in decision-making?

Thank you for taking part (discussion).

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Level 8 - CYP and adults share decision-making.

Level 7 - CYP take a lead on actions and their own ideas.

Level 6 – Adults suggest ideas and decisions are made jointly.

Level 5 – You are asked about your views and told decisions.

Level 4 – You are given roles and kept up to date with ideas.

Levels 1-3 – CYP don't play an active role.

Appendix C – Skill Development Prompts

It gives me a chance to meet my friends.	It is a place I feel supported and helped by adults and friends.
Helps with my confidence.	Is a good thing to have been part of when I apply to college or for jobs?
I have a chance to make decisions.	What I say is important to people.
My views change things for other CYP.	I can say what I really think.
I feel like a valued member of the group	This helps me with my discussion skills.
Helps me meet new people.	Other people think our group is important.
Any other views?	

Appendix D – Research Information (CYP)

CYP Research Information

Title of Project: An Exploration of What Participation Means to CYP (Co-research with CYP from Participation Groups)

The following information is about a research project I am carrying out as part of my study in Educational and Child Psychology at Sheffield University. I also work within schools.

What is the study about?

Experiences of participation and involvement of CYP in decision-making processes

Why Participation and what about it?

The topic is linked to recent changes in schools and youth groups.

This means that your views are often asked in some situations and you may be involved in groups making important decisions. I would like to find out:

- Your views about being part of these groups;
- Your role in making decisions in the groups;
- Skills you may have developed taking part.

What is planned?

It is planned to carry out an interview, with some other members of your group. Your views on being part of the groups and being involved in decisions would be gained. Some other CYP from another group will be working with me or co-researching. This means that they may ask some of the questions and record answers. I will also be using a digital recorder to remind me of what is said during the discussion. This recording will be deleted later and all your names and details kept secret or anonymised. You can say as much or as little as you like; taking part is voluntary.

When and Where?

These discussions will take place in the normal place during or just before one of your normal planned meeting times, with youth leaders there as part of this. You should also have a chance to meet with me first to chat. This will take place during October this year.

What do I need to do next?

If you would like to take part in the project, just read and sign the form and then discuss your views as part of the focus group session.

Anything else?

The co-researchers will also take part in individual interviews to discuss their views of being involved in the study. They will not discuss you as part of this. The information and results will be included within my study.

Appendix E – Research Information (General)

Research Information and Summary

**Title of Project: An Exploration of What Participation Means to CYP
(Co- Research with CYP from a Participation Groups)**

This research is being carried out as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, which is currently being completed by the researcher, from Sheffield University and within-----Council, where I am currently employed as an Educational Psychologist in training. I am therefore fully cleared in terms of CRB procedures, relating to working with CYP. The research will be completed with full reference to all local authority procedures for working with CYP and with reference to ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society. This will mean that full consent will be obtained, information collected will be confidential and full care will be given to reduce any potential issues. Local youth group meetings and facilities will be used to complete the project, with youth leaders present and involved. An outline of the project is included below and further details can be provided.

Aim

To examine experiences of participation and involvement of CYP within decision-making processes

Background

The topic area is linked to the *United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and *Every Child Matters* (2004) documents, which have participation as central principles. This is alongside current initiatives, in education, relating to the student-voice.

It is planned to explore CYP's views of involvement in participation groups and decision-making, as well as the skills developed. This research will involve some of the CYP working as co-researchers, which relates to current developments in the area of participation and research. These CYP have already been involved in some of the planning stages of the research and will be closely supported, throughout the process.

Method

The research will involve a number of interviews, which involve gathering the CYP's views about experience of participation. The discussion will be recorded with a digital audio recorder, with data later destroyed once included in the research. The CYP working as co-researchers will also be involved in planning and assisting with some of the group discussions, with support. The co-researchers will also take part in interviews to discuss their views of being involved in the research. The information and results will be included within the research and possibly within local authority information.

Appendix F – Guardian/Parental Consent

Guardian/Parental Consent Form

Title of Project: An Exploration of What Participation Means to Children and Young People (Co-Researching with CYP from Participation Groups)

Name of Researcher: Jenny Parker

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the enclosed sheet dated August 2009 for the above project and give consent for (participant name) to take part in the research outlined.

I understand that participation is voluntary and that (participant name) is free to withdraw at any time without giving Any reason. Please contact the lead researcher on: 01.....

I understand that responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have Access to anonymised responses to questions.

I agree to (participant name) taking part in the above research.

I agree to anonymised findings being included in a research write up and potentially included in future research and local authority publications with consent.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of person giving consent

Date

Signature

Lead Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix G - Co-Researcher Consent Form

Co-Researcher Consent Form

Title of Project: An Exploration of What Participation Means to Children and Young People (Co-Research with CYP from participation groups)

Name of Researcher: Jenny Parker

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the enclosed sheet dated August 2009 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to Withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Please contact 01.....

I understand that my responses will be anonymised. (This means my name will not be included or linked to my comments). I give permission for the research team to have access to my answers.

I agree to take part in the above research project.

I agree to anonymous findings being included in a research write up and possibly as part of future research and local authority publications.

Name of Participant

Date
Signature

Name of Person taking Consent

Date
Signature

(if different from lead researcher)

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant.

Lead Researcher

Date
Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant.

Appendix H – Participant Consent Form

CYP's Consent Form

Title of Project: An Exploration of What Participation Means to Children and Young People (co- research with CYP from participation groups)

Name of Researcher: Jenny Parker

Participant Identification Number for this project: Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the enclosed sheet dated August 2009 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to Withdraw at any time without giving any reason. Please contact.0....

I understand that my responses will be anonymised. (This means that my name will not be included or linked to my comments). I give permission for the research team to have access to my answers and comments.

I agree to take part in the above research project.

I agree to anonymised findings being included in a research write up and as part of future research and local authority publications.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person Taking Consent
(if different from lead researcher)

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Lead Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Appendix I – Meeting and Briefing Notes
Meeting with Corporate Parenting Group October 2008

Item: Doctoral Research

Purpose:

- To outline initial formulations of research.
- To discuss feasibility of involving a group of older children from an existing participation group for 'looked after-children' as part of the research and procedure.
- To identify any considerations and ethical issues for the research.

Strategies:

Outlining of current research ideas:

- To explore looked-after children's views and experiences,
- To identify ideas for increasing participation of CIC groups.
- To further develop a model for student-led research and participation (Student as Co-Researchers).
- Identification of potential strategies for, supporting equality of access to the participation agenda, and supporting resiliency factors for *children looked after* within Local Authority.

Through:

- Links with existing youth and participation groups.
- Liaison with corporate parenting and the *Virtual School*.
- CYP's involvement as central to the research.
- Research with younger groups of CYP through a variety of potential methods including focus groups, student-led research.

Intended Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of the views of *children looked after* and strategies for supporting resiliency.
- A greater range of opportunities for participation and inclusion within pupil groups for *children looked after*.
- Routes for two- way dialogue between student groups of *children looked after* and local authority/ education representatives.

Review: for consideration and further discussion:

- Potential considerations/ safeguarding (ethics);
- Protocols for gaining access to the groups of CYP;
- Local Authority priorities and initiatives;

Appendix J – Ethical Approval Letter

Jenny Parker

Head of School
Professor Jackie Marsh

Department of Educational Studies
388 Glossop Road
Sheffield S10 2JA

Telephone: +44 (0114) 222 8081

Fax: +44 (0114) 222 8105

Email: f.r.gilligan@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Jenny

**Ethical Review Application: An Exploration of what Active and Inclusive Participation Means to CYP:
Co-Researching with CYP from a 'Children in Care' council group**

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that you can go ahead with your research project. Any conditions will be shown on the Reviewers Comments attached.

Please note one of your reviewers has approved your ethical review with suggested amendments.

Yours sincerely

**Mrs Felicity Gilligan
Programme Secretary**

Appendix K – Thematic Framework

The identification of themes and a Thematic Framework is based on inductive identification of recurrent issues and then linked to theoretical data and research questions. The Thematic Framework is based on an adaptation of Attride-Stirling's (2001) model of Thematic Networks, which is used to facilitate organisation of themes and structured using Boyatzis (1998) coding model. Boyatzis (1998) Model of Coding consisting of the following features:

Label – name, definition of what the theme concerns (How to identify this); definition of how to know when the theme occurs; description of qualification or exclusion of theme; examples (positive and negative to eliminate confusion); (Boyatzis, 1998, p52)

Thematic Framework

Organising Themes	Basic Theme Labels	Behavioural Indicators and Description
This is defined, within this research and by Attride- Stirling (2001), as a 'middle order' theme. This involves 'summarising assumptions of a group of basic themes'.	<p>Lowest order theme. This is derived from text data. This is a form of a statement of belief about a topic area.</p> <p>Attride- Stirling, (2001)</p> <p>Labels of the basic themes.</p>	<p>A specific definition of what the theme concerns and how to identify this.</p> <p>Additional descriptions and examples also provided to support differentiation of themes.</p> <p>(Boyatzis, 1998).</p>
<u>1. Enabling and Supporting Access to Participation Groups</u>	<u>1A – Process of entry to Participation Groups</u>	Information relating to entry to participation groups, i.e.) selection and referral procedure
	<u>1B – Induction process for group members</u>	Descriptions of systems or processes for supporting new group members. (Initially), i.e.) buddy system
	<u>1C -Broadness and Equity of Entry route</u>	Reference to processes for access to participation groups for prospective members and route for views of non-members to be represented, i.e.) Publicity and mechanisms for widening access to groups.

2 Co- Research Skills (Development)	2A – <u>Reflective practice</u>	Suggestions relating to next steps and reference to moving forward, i.e.) ratings of involvement and self-reflection.
	2B – <u>Design</u>	Comments relating to question wording and design of materials, i.e.) reference to making materials accessible.
	2C – <u>Researcher Participant Interface</u>	Information relating to the research relationship – positionality elements, i.e.) examples relating to the research relationship.
	2D – <u>Validity</u>	Reference to establishing a ‘best fit’ of data in relation to the participation groups, i.e.) accurate representation.
	2E – <u>Sampling</u>	Discussion relating to targeting particular groups or individuals to obtain (valid/reliable) data, i.e.) targeting the group to obtain ‘relevant data.’
	2F – <u>Factors Affecting Participation in the Research</u>	Factors relating to participating in the research, i.e.) individual characteristics and barriers to participation.
	2G – <u>Pilot Study and Setting the Scene</u>	Reference to preliminary studies and pilot research, i.e.) pre-consultation.
	2H – <u>Model of Research Participation</u>	Discussion relating to a current or future model of research participation, i.e.) future research model
	2I – <u>Reference to Method</u>	Suggestions relating to the current or potential type of method for gathering information from CYP/others, i.e.) online questionnaires.
	2J – <u>Ethics</u>	Reference to Ethical Considerations. i.e.) Confidentiality or Debriefing.

<u>3 Skills Developed Through Participation</u>	<u>3A- Personal Qualities</u>	Reference to personal skills or qualities or social skills developed through participation, i.e.) (personal skills) and meeting new friends (sociability).
	<u>3B-Transferability</u>	Applicability of skills outside the specific participation groups referred to initially, i.e.) discussion relating to relevance of skills to potential employers.
	<u>3C – Formal Communication Skills</u>	Reference to skills relating to meeting organisation, roles and duties. i.e.) writing agendas, minute taking and chair/lead.
	<u>3D – Supporting Skills of Group Members</u>	Reference to strategies for supporting the skills of other group members.(Not just initial members), i.e.) reference to younger or newer members.
	<u>3E – Research Skill Development</u>	Mention of skill developments relating to research participation, i.e.) Interview skills.
<u>4 Inclusive Features relating to participation</u>	<u>4A – Sense of Belonging</u>	Information related to the way other people or situations support inclusion. Inclusion specifically related here to a sense of perceived belonging, i.e.) “a place where I feel supported.”
	<u>4B – Equity of Access</u>	Reference to group member’s views being considered and/ or valued, i.e.) “being listened to” and “Ideas being shared.”
	<u>4C-Diversity of Viewpoints</u>	Reference to the ‘inclusion’ of different views or individuals, i.e.) respecting other people’s opinions and backgrounds.

<u>5 Decision-making processes within participation groups</u>	<u>5A – Negotiation of Agreements (in decision-making)</u>	The process by which different viewpoints are listened to, i.e.) strategies for managing disagreements in decision-making or arriving at consensus.
	<u>5B - Group Processes</u>	Information related to the features of the specific group, i.e.) role of the group and activities.
	<u>5B- Participation Topics</u>	Descriptions of particular topics discussed within the participation groups, i.e.) activity groups/funding.
	<u>5C-Equity within Decision-Making</u>	Reference to a perception that people's individual views are given equal or comparable consideration, i.e.) different views are listened to and respected.
	<u>5D - Impact of Decisions Outside the Group (transferability)</u>	Reference to specific factors or features of decisions that are applicable/ elsewhere. (Outside of the participation groups in the study), i.e.) the Youth Parliament/ other school councils.
	<u>5E – CYP involvement</u> <u>5E i adult led</u> <u>5E ii child led</u> <u>5E iii joint</u>	Reference to the involvement of CYP and their role in the decision-making process, i.e.) CYP as decision-makers/ reference to Hart's (1992) model and levels of participation.
<u>6 Societal Processes</u>	<u>6A – Generational Changes</u>	Reference to different time periods and different experiences of CYP/youth leaders, i.e.) things are different now.

NB – The coding categories in section 5 were altered in the final version – with group processes and participation topics merged into one category.

Appendix L – Worked Example of Coding

Reflective Interview

Completed with co-researcher and JP
(Joint reflections and joint coding)

Coding Colour Key

Please refer to Thematic Framework for definition of the theme Labels.

Organising Theme 1 – _____

Organising Theme 2 – _____

Organising Theme 3 – _____

Organising Theme 4 – _____

Organising Theme 5 - _____

Organising Theme 6 - _____

JP - This interview is a reflective interview (2I, Reference to Method)

With the key researcher involved within the project and the kind of areas that I am interested in is your experiences and your views of being involved.

(5E, CYP's Involvement)

In the process of research. (2H, Model of Research Participation)

Any things that you think work well. Any things you would want to do differently if it was carried out again. (2A, Reflective Practice)

Shall we just start off with your general views about the process as a whole?
(2A, Reflective Practice)

P1 -Well I like how you've done it independently from the groups.
(2A, Reflective practice; 2I, Reference to Method)

You've taken the CYP out and had like a sit down conversation with them two or three times. I've done it you've had when I did it initially I was being interviewed and then the few times I've interviewed somebody else was all with CYP. (2H, Model of Research Participation; 2C, Researcher-Participant Interface)

You have taken like a back step and just contributed which I think works really well.

(5E- CYP Involvement; 2H, Model of Research Participation - inferred)

The one thing that I've found that's is like a negative if you will
(2A, Reflective practice) is the questions.

Because obviously people will give, answers that do not fit in with the questions in the order that they are in or like they do not play or the group does not work
(2C, Researcher Participant Interface)

With all of the questions and so, we try to adapt things to meet the individual's needs. (2B, Design).

JP –...When we went through this last time (referring to questionnaires)...you were...amending...and changing it and sort of altering things.(2B, Design) Also implicit reference to 5E, CYP's involvement I mean if there had been more time would you have liked to... (I mean because these questions were...

Partly designed by some of the other groups and partly designed through discussion (5E, CYP's Involvement- also reference to 2D, Design) weren't they earlier on?

Would you like to have had your own personal set of questions or broader how would you like to extend?
(2A, Reflective practice; 2I, Reference to Method)

P1 –Yes, I think with more time (2A, Reflective practice).

It would be best to redo the questions for every group to make them individual (2B, Design).For instance, this time we had two members and so they would not have... they would not have known a lot about ...

Writing up an agenda or certain areas of the actual group because they're not involved with them. (5E, Group Processes) It is not necessary for them to be involved, within that area of the group.

JP – Yes.

P1 -But then certainly...
If you'd have had the head boy and head girl (2E, Sampling)...

They would be involved in the whole thing then obviously, your questions can be a lot more specific to certain areas (2B, Design).

JP – Yes did you think that you covered that reasonably (2D, Validity) though yourself when you did veer off?

P1 –Yes, I tried.
The questions are quite good because they give you a like a basis of what to ask it's just like wording (2B, Design; 2A, Reflective practice) it so that it fits in with the people. (2C, Researcher-Participant Interface)

JP – Yes I would agree it's always a difficult balancing act (2A, Reflective practice) isn't it because you want something as a prompt but then if the CYP go off in one direction...

(2C, Researcher-Participant Interface)

P1 –You cannot try and bring them back because it might not be as effective.
(2A, Reflective practice; 2C, Researcher Participant Interface)

JP – Yes and what they're talking about is worthwhile and valuable as well and like you said this...
sort of format allows for you to sort of add in extra things**(2B, Design)** but it might have been that if ...

we had had more time to do that maybe to have a discussion previous.
(2G, Pilot Study and Setting the Scene; 2A, Reflective practice)

as to what extra things you might want to say might have been sort of quite helpful
(2A, Reflective practice) as well.

So your experiences generally using this format of taking part in the... activities would you say - Thought of in a scale of 0-10 where 10 is fantastic and 0 is...really awful and 5 ... middling **(5E, CYP's Involvement)**. What would you say...and your reasons?

P1 –Personally I'd go for about 8 I think the participation has been good being able to have the chance to get involved...**(5E, CYP's Involvement)** but then like I say it's...

It is not perfect so there is still room to move, manoeuvre to make it better. What could work with another chance. **(2A, Reflective practice)**

would be like maybe sitting down before hand with the people you're going to interview to just say these are the types of things you're going to get asked like whether or not they want to plan something they want to say **(2G, Pilot Study and Setting the Scene; 2A, Reflective practice)** about a particular group.

JP – Right that is a good idea!

P1 – Because obviously if you sit down with them...how it's worked you've got like what you could call a real representation of what they're doing **(2D, Validity)**...

Because it is off the bat but they might forget something or be nervous **(2F, Factors Affecting Participation in Research)** obviously but if they've got...

like planned what they're going to say or they have an idea what they're going to ask you **(2G, Pilot Study and Setting the Scene).**

JP – Yes I think that's happened in a previous situation...where there was a discussion about various issues and people did have a bit of time to prepare.(2G, Pilot Study and Setting the Scene)So you think that might get away from the sort of the nervous situation that people might be in?

(2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the Research)

P1 –Yes, I think so. It would give you a chance to get a lot more with your research

(2D, Validity) as well because you'd have a broader representation **(2E, Sampling)**...

They would not be forgetting anything or with the nerves, they would not say the wrong thing. **(2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the Research)**

JP –Is that something that could be an addition in a way? **(2B- Design)**

Do you think maybe if we did not carry out...If for instance not all the CYP were, able to come to the interviews then they might be able to write something down and pass it in? **(2H Method; 2E, Sampling).**

P1 –Yes, that is a definite possibility!

JP – Because it may be that some people are a little bit nervous **(2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the research)** about taking part in interviews, but they may be OK?

P1 – To write a statement or a bit about participation...

(2H, Model of Research Participation; 2I, Reference to Method)

JP - Do you think that is something we could do before we finish this project?

P1 –Yes, I think so.

JP – Maybe in terms of...How would you structure it? **(2B, Design)**

P1 – I think you could give

Edited versions of the same questions **(2B, Design)**...

to say the school council **(2E, Sampling)**...

who are already involved because it's tailored for that type of participation group, **(2B, Design; 2E, Sampling)**...but then put...

On-line a more generic version of it for the entire school onto the website like an email type thing **(2I, Reference to Method)** so then you get a...

Complete representation of participation. **(2D, Validity; 2E, Sampling,)**

Not everyone's involved in the school council(1C, Broadness and Equity of Entry Route)or the ... council but most people attend some kind of group whether it is inside or outside of school (1C, Broadness and Equity of Entry Route)and their views are the ones you're trying to listen to (1C, Broadness and Equity of Entry Route).

JP – Exactly right. Therefore, there is a two-pronged sort of effect or next steps in terms of when it would be carried out.(2I, Reference to Method) It may be that we could maybe do the school council element possibly if...

Mrs ... agrees to that asking some more questions and just getting CYP if they want to give feedback (5E, CYP Involvement) and it maybe that the next stage...It's up to yourself but it could be something that you might want to carry forward yourself.(2H, Model of Research Participation; 5E, CYP Involvement)...

Just because the project stopping in the next few months doesn't necessarily mean (it needs. to stop) because the whole purpose of it really is to

Develop your skills (3D, Supporting Skills of Group Members) and to give you the knowledge which you've already got anyway to take it forward. (2H, Model of Research Participation) so...If that is something you wanted to take forward and develop it for the whole school because... (2H, Model of Research Participation)

P1- Yes that would be good

JP - I do not see that as an issue really, because it is about you being able to generate it and take it forward yourself (2I, Reference to Method; 5E, CYP Involvement).

Does that sound OK?

P1 –Yes, that would be good.

JP –And you know there are no problems about using any of these questions or ideas yourself or adapting it...(2B, Design) I would say is if I am not involved...make sure the parents are aware in a generic letter that you are carrying out some research(2J, Ethics; 2B, Design) within school.

P1 –That is definitely something I would take forward at the next school council meeting (2I, Reference to Method).

JP – All right...

P1 – We have one of the members...I think he is called...actually, he does a lot of on line stuff. He set up a forum for the school council purely so they could feed in to discuss the next agenda and what items should be on so I'm sure I

could work with him to try to get some kind of on-line questionnaire set up. (2I, **Reference to Method**)

JP – That sounds fantastic and if in the meantime.

If you do get the questionnaire set up quite quickly if you wanted to pass it to me (2I, **Reference to Method**; 3E, **Research Skill Development**) that would be...helpful.

P1 – Yes sure!

JP –It is a cyclical process of research so that you explore something... (2I, **Reference to Method**) which is in this case it is skill development and involvement of your-self in the process. (2H, **Model of Research Participation**)

Then you take it forward to the next level and then the CYP or the teachers or whoever is involved within the setting take the idea forward themselves. (2H, **Model of Research Participation**)

Really, it is about changing something...so it has just to extend it further ok.

JP – So we have talked about that how you make and agree decisions in terms of ourselves... (5A, **Negotiation and Agreement in Decision- Making**) the Co-researchers...How have you felt that that has gone? Have you felt you have had enough say? Not enough say. (2A, **Reflective practice**).In terms of...How things were run, the questions, everything else? (2B, **Design**)

P1 – Yeah I would say I have had enough say...Say like been able to take charge in the interview asking the questions and having like a free scope... (5E, **CYP Involvement – as co-researchers**)
If you will to adapt the questions to how I feel they are suitable to the people I am asking them to (2B, **Design**).

JP – Ok. Is there anything I should have done more of less of? ... Would you say? In terms of you being involved and central to the research... (2A, **Reflective Practice**; 5E **CYP Involvement**) You as a sort of representative of the CYP (5E, **CYP Involvement**)

P1 – The only thing I can think of possibly like I say is the pre consultation for like going through the questions with the people we are going to ask them to before we ask them(2G, **Pilot Study and Setting the Scene**) to see...What they think is suitable, what they want to answer, what do they like to give and for your research, what answers would be suitable. (2D, **Validity**)

JP – yeah I mean a broad spectrum of ideas and answers (2D, **Validity**) would be fine you know from my point of view there are no restrictions on what answers people give...and for me in terms of... If you prompt ideas...you might

only get the questions that you are prompting so that may be a little bit of an issue.

(2B, Design; 2A, Reflective practice) I do agree totally that if you do prompt the CYP that will help their confidence **(2F, Factors Affecting Participation)** immensely...really.

All right, is there anything in terms of thinking about this model in terms of your involvement within this research? **(2H, Model of Research Participation)**...there are some elements for instance with the coding and other Later analyses, which you are very welcome and I would really appreciate you being involved... **(2A, Reflective practice, 5E, CYP Involvement)**. In terms of the model where would you say **(5E, CYP Involvement)** you were and if you could explain why...ok?

I think I would agree with you there what do you think made it a six what do you think first of all what do you think would move it further to seven or eight in terms of future projects? **(2H, Model of Research Participation; 2A, Reflective Practice)**

P1 – I would say about six. I think making a six was like I have had a chance to get involved and say my own questions and conduct in the interview in a way that that I think is appropriate and now you've taken charge of it but it's like a little bit more improvisation and like you say at the moment, I have not been involved with what comes after the interview type thing **(2H, Model of Research Participation)**. I am more than happy to. Therefore, I think obviously if we take it on quite later together. Like if I take this to the school council, like you said with the latest **(2H, Model of Research Participation; 5E- CYP Involvement)** steps of your research **(5E, CYP Involvement)** and get involved with then it would go up to seven or eight **(5E, CYP Involvement)**.

JP – Ok alright. It is always difficult from a research point of view to involve CYP **(5E-CYP Involvement)** I do not personally think it should be but it is a new area really even within research itself. That is why I am exploring it because there are such...they are quite complicated some of the methods **(2I, Reference to Method)** that are used and the ethical rules **(2J, Ethics)**. Therefore, a lot of researchers have veered away from CYP... **(5E, CYP Involvement)** so any ideas that you have you know are...useful. That is good. The Last thing if you think about sort of from the first time you were involved, middle time and to now can you think of any skills you might have learnt if any... **(2A, Reflective Practice)**

P1 –I think I have got a bit better at like at reading ahead... **(3E, Research Skill Development)** and trying to anticipate what the other person is trying to say to make up my mind and what to ask next in terms of being the interviewer and from actually being interviewed.

I think I have a better idea on how to answer questions. (3E, Research Skill Development; 3A, Personal Qualities)

So obviously, you can get the best idea of what we do...

give a good representation an accurate representation, of what actually happens

(2D, Validity; 2A, Reflective practice) give as much detail as possible trying to keep the conversation flowing (2C, Researcher-Participant Interface) and not answer questions with one definitive answer like a leading type thing to get a discussion going. (3E, Research Skill Development).

JP –...Did you think in the interviews we carried out that that was a little bit of an issue trying to keep the conversation flowing some times?

(2C, Researcher-Participant Interface)

P1 – I think when we did it first few times with ... council but I don't think that was much of an issue because the people we were interviewing...the CYP have a lot more experience (2C, Researcher-Participant Interface) with that type of thing so are a lot more confident, than today when we did it (2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the Research). The CYP's life is not quite the same experience. They were a bit younger than what we have done before so their confidence was a little less and (2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the Research)...

So the discussion did not flow as well as it could have

(2C, Researcher-Participant Interface) I do not think it was too bad.

JP – I think it went very well yeah and as you say. I would say part of the skills you developed (3E, Research Skill Development) as well were in terms of you being reflective and examining the process of change.

(3E, Research Skill Development). As your looking at the CYP involved, you're thinking about did this work last time. I do not think it is going to work this time. I would alter this I would change this. I would encourage the CYP to write it down. That in itself is part of the reflective cycle. (3E, Research Skill Development, 2A, Reflective Practice) Therefore, I would say that is a pretty good skill as well.

In terms of these, ones (reference to prompt and cue cards relating to skills). (3E, reference to Research Skill Development; 3A, Personal Qualities). Just before we finish are there any of these that apply to the research today that we have carried out or any that don't apply or any that are just as prompts really in terms new skills?

(3E, reference to: Research Skill Development; 3A, Personal Qualities).

P1 – I agree with that (Points to one of the statements related to qualities). (3A, Personal Qualities)

I'd say it's difficult without one because obviously...people who haven't been involved with the research wouldn't know about the group.

(3B, Transferability)

Although possibly like...publicize what you are doing with the research and why you are doing the research to get CYP more involved.

(1C, Broadness and Equity of Route) I think most people would agree it's a very- important cause. **(5E, CYP Involvement)**

JP – Or would think our groups important? **(3B, Transferability)** Yeah I mean the end result of the research in the next few months I will be writing it up in a book myself and I will be doing a summary for the council and the school so that may be an effect.

(3B, Transferability)

I will need to have a discussion with you about whether you want to sort of remain anonymous as a group or not **(2J, Ethics)**...You know within that sense.

P1 – I think it would be good too. Obviously you would have to talk to Mrs...and the other... because at the youth services as well.

I think might be helpful not to remain anonymous **(2J, Ethics)** in things because obviously...

You have got publicity from both working, for both sides, as well for your work for the groups as well and then people know like where they can go together certain types of participation and how effective it is **(5D, Impact of Decisions outside the Group, 1C, Broadness and Equity of Route).**

JP – Yeah I mean it is a difficult one I mean my personal view on it is again sort of trying to get your ideas the research is yours as well as mine **(2H, Model of Research Participation; 5E, CYP Involvement)**, As far as I am concerned I think the university version is probably better if it is anonymous **(2J, Ethics)** because it's going to other people elsewhere and going be in a library but in terms of...

I think as long as the groups agree with that **(2J, Ethics).**

I would say that would be fine, yeah!

(Looks at skill development statements – refer to appendix c).

P1 – yeah I would agree with most of these about helping with confidence **(3A, Personal Qualities)** and feeling like a valued member of the group. **(4A, Sense of Belonging)** all very positive.

JP – So right ok... and anything we have missed out any other suggestions for helping other CYP**(2I, Reference to Method)**...be involved with research.**(2H, Model of Research Participation)** or to be included with decision-making in the future. **(5E, CYP Involvement)**...

P1 –I would say there is a lot out there bringing people to get involved with not just inside schools but outside as well.**(1C, Broadness and Equity of Entry Route).** It is just how much do you want to get involved with it **(5E, CYP**

Involvement) and actually go to the meetings and put yourself out there, (3A, Reference to Personal Qualities) apply for positions (3B, Transferability of Skills) to be elected to a committee (5E, CYP Involvement) or to get your face shown or get your voice heard (4B, Equity of Access). It is all positive and everything you will do a CYP will serve you well in later life involved with stuff getting experience (3B, Transferability)...Definitely recommend it.

JP – Ok so you think there will be benefits in the future. (3B, Transferability) You would say. And in terms of research it's self...you know, like involving CYP, exploring their situation and analysing it and coming up with sort of ideas. (3B, Transferability)

What do you think the benefits of all that might be in terms of change and development?

(2H, Model of Research Participation; 2A, Reflective practice)

P1 – I think it is very important, because obviously no two real situations between CYP are different. (Error) (2I, Reference to Method). So especially with CYP having an adult telling you (5E, CYP Involvement; 5C, Equity Within Decision-making– as related to CYP and adults) what the situations right from when they were a CYP is different to how it is now, because society is constantly changing.(6A, Societal Processes – emergent category). There are all the problems that CYP are having to face and the barriers they have got to face to get involved (1C, Broadness and Equity of Entry Route; 2F, Factors Affecting Participation in the Research) with participation and decision-making. So continually researching (2H, Model of Research Participation) it I think it is a very good ideaYeah.

JP – So you would like to take this forward.

(2I, Reference to Method; 2H, Model of Research Participation)

Appendix M Pilot Study Rating Scale - Experiences of Participation

Sort the statements, using the numbered line, in terms of your views, on whether they are most or least relevant to you, and experiences being part of your group. Scoring: -4 would be least like/ not at all like my experience of being in ...and + 4 really like my experience (the things you think are most important within the group and to you could be placed here). The scores in the middle would represent if something happens sometimes but not all the time

Statement	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
1) Gives me a chance to meet my friends									
2) I feel supported by adults and friends.									
3) Helps with my confidence.									
4) Has taught me research skills.									
5) Is good /to have on my CV.									
6) I have a chance to make decisions.									
7) What I say is important.									
8) My views affect policies for CYP.									
9) I can say what I think.									

10) Adults help and support me.									
11) I feel like a valued member of the group.									
17) Gives knowledge about meetings.									
18) CYP set agendas									
19) We are treated as equals									
20) Helps develop resiliency skills (supports me)									
21) People in the local area listen to my views.									
22) Develops skills working with others.									
23) Being in the group helps if life is difficult.									

24) It is important to have a 'children in care' council.									
25) I can change things for me and others.									
26) Gives knowledge of decision-making.									
27) There's a chance for CYP to join.									
28) In the group I feel valued.									
29) Our group links to others.									
30) This group gives a voice for <i>children looked after</i> in the area.									
31) Gives me skills to help in school.									
32) Is good for my education.									

33) Could help with jobs.									
34) In this group CYP decide what to do and when.									
35) In this group we do what youth workers say.									
36) I enjoy being in the group.									

Appendix N Pilot - Data Analysis Table
Questions, coding reference and ratings

Question and Coding Reference	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4
Gives me a chance to meet my friends (3A – Personal Qualities)	+4	+2	0	+4
Is a place I feel supported (4A – Sense of Belonging)	+4	0	0	+2
Helps with my confidence (3A – Personal Qualities)	0	0	-4	+1
Has taught me research skills (2 – Research Skill)	+3	+1	-4	+3
Is a good activity/group to have on my CV (for jobs) (3B – Transferability)	0	+1	-4	+1
I have a chance to make decisions (5C – Equity within decision-making processes)	+4	+2	0	+4
What I say is important to people (5D - Impact of decisions outside the group -transferability)	+4	+4	+3	+4
My views affect policies and things for CYP (5D - Impact of decisions outside the group transferability)	+4	+2	+3	+3
I can say what I really think(4B – Equity of Access)	+4	+1	+4	+4
Adults help and support me (4A – Sense of Belonging)	0	0	+3	+4
I feel like a valued member of the group (4A – Sense of Belonging)	+4	0	+4	+4

Helps with discussion skills (3A – Personal Qualities)	+2	+1	+4	+4
Helps me meet new friends (3A – Personal Qualities)	0	+3	0	+4
It is recognised in the council and by others (5D- Impact of the decision outside the group)	0	0	+4	+3
It is important to have a group for <i>children looked after</i> and care leavers (4C – Diversity of Viewpoints)	+4	+4	+4	+4
It is important to be part of... (4A-Sense of Belonging)	+4	+4	+4	+4
It gives me knowledge of meetings and what to do (5E-Group Processes)	+4	+4	+4	+4
CYP set the agendas (5E II- CYP's Involvement – child-led)	0	+4	+4	+4
We are treated as equals (4B – Equity of Access)	+4	+4	+4	+4
Helps develop my resiliency skills (supports me) (3A – Personal Qualities)	-4	0	0	0
People in the local area listen to my views (5D - Impact of decisions outside the group transferability)	0	+3	+3	-4

Develops skills working with others (3A – Personal Qualities)	+4	+3	+3	+3
Being in the group helps if life is difficult (3A – Personal Qualities)	+4	+3	+3	0
It is important to have a: 'Children in Care' council (1C- Broadness and Equity of Entry to Participation Groups)	+2	+3	+4	+4
I can change things for me & other CYP (3B- Transferability)	+3	+4	+4	+4
Gives me knowledge of decision-making (5A – Negotiation of agreements indecision-making)	+4	+2	+3	+3
There is a chance for other CYP to join the group (1C- Broadness and Equity of Entry Route)	+3	+4	+4	+4
In the group, I feel valued (4B - Equity of Access)	+4	+4	+3	+4
Our group links to others (1C – Broadness and Equity of Entry Route)	+4	+3	+3	-4
This group gives a voice for children, looked after in the area (3B- Transferability)	+2	+3	+4	+4
Gives me skills to help in school (3B- Transferability)	-4	+1	-4	-4
Is good for my education (3B- Transferability)	-4	0	-4	-4
Could help with jobs (3B- Transferability)	-4	0	-4	-4

In this group, CYP decide what to do and when (5E- CYP's Involvement – Child led)	+4	0	+4	+3
In this group we do what youth workers say. (5E – CYP's Involvement – Adult led)	+4	0	+4	+4
I enjoy being in the group, (4A – Sense of Belonging).	+4	0	+4	+4

Appendix O Pilot and Phase 2 Data

Organising Theme:

Enabling and Supporting Access to Groups

Basic Theme: 1C - Broadness and Equity of Entry Route

"It is important to have Children in Care Council" (Positive).

"A chance for other CYP to join the group" (Positive).

"Group links to others" (Range of views and opinions).

The process for access to the group was viewed positively and the group itself was valued and recognised as important by the CYP questioned. The statement exploring views of links to other groups reflected different viewpoints, which reflected participant's experience of involvement in these.

Organising Theme 2: Co-Research Skills

"Has taught me research skills," (Range of views).

Different members of the group had previously played a role in research carried out with CYP from this participation group, in the authority, which could explain different views.

Organising Theme: Skills Developed through Participation

Basic Theme 3A - Personal Qualities Statements

"Gives me a chance to meet my friends," (Neutral to Positive);

"Helps with my confidence" (Range of Views);

"Helps with discussion skills" (Positive);

"Helps me meet new friends" (Neutral to Positive);

"Helps me develop resiliency skills" (Neutral to Positive);

"Develops skills working with others" (Positive);

"Being in the group helps when life is difficult" (Positive).

Personal qualities and skills were identified as important in this group, although there were different views relating to the qualities and skills developed. For instance, this included the effect on confidence, which could relate to individual differences. The key skills identified were working with others, discussion skills and resiliency factors. This could also relate to the later theme of inclusion in terms of working as a group, which was a strong theme.

Basic Theme 3B - Transferability

"Is a good activity to have on my CV" (Neutral to Negative);
"I can change things for me and CYP" (Strong Positive);
"This group gives a voice for children looked after," (Positive);
"Gives me skills to help in school," (Neutral to Negative);
"Is good for my education," (Neutral to Negative);
"Could help with jobs," (Neutral to Negative).

This basic theme also featured strongly within this group and was a target for development in some areas. This was in terms of development of skills, which had transferability to jobs and education. These factors received a more negative or neutral perception rating. There was a stronger positive agreement that being a participant of this group can change things for other CYP and can give a voice to *children looked after*. This suggests that the CYP regarded 'transferability' as important, in terms that other CYP might benefit as an important feature of the group.

Organising Theme – Inclusive Features Relating to Participation

Basic Theme 4A - Sense of Belonging

"Is a place I feel supported by adults/friends" (Neutral to Positive);
"Adults help and support me," (Neutral to Positive);
"I feel like a valued member of the group," (Neutral to Positive);
"Important to be part of," (Strong Positive);
"I enjoy being in the group," (Strong Positive).

This theme received strong support from group members in relation to the value of the group and being in the group. Sense of value within the group and support from adults was a neutral to stronger positive view.

Basic Theme 4B - Equity of Access

"I can say what I really think," (Positive);
"We are treated as equals," (Strong Positive);
"In this group, I feel valued," (Strong Positive);

In terms of group members' views being considered or listened to, there was strong positive agreement about being treated as equals and of feeling valued. In terms of being able to "say what I think," there was less strong agreement.

This could indicate either individual differences or some situations where CYP felt their views were not included or listened to fully.

Basic Theme 4C - Diversity of Viewpoints

"It is important to have a group for children looked after"
(Strong Positive).

In relation to the inclusion of different views represented by this particular group, there was strong agreement from group members.

Organising Theme– Decision-Making Processes in Groups

Basic Theme 5A - Negotiation of agreements (In Decision-Making)

"Gives me knowledge of decision-making," (Positive).

CYP felt that involvement within the group had supported their knowledge of decision-making. This was a relatively strong theme.

Basic Theme 5B - Group Processes

"It gives me knowledge of meetings and what to do," (Strong Positive).

CYP within this participation group all agreed strongly that they had developed knowledge of meetings and group processes.

Basic Theme 5C - Equity within Decision-making

"I have a chance to make decisions," (Neutral to Positive).

In terms of whether individual views were given equal or comparable consideration, the group members generally felt that they could get involved in decision-making, although there were individual differences.

Basic Theme 5D - Impact of Decisions outside the Group (Transfer)

"What I say is important to people," (Strong Positive);
"My views affect policies and things for CYP," (Positive);
"Is recognised by the council and others," (Neutral to Positive);
"People in the local area listen to my views," (Range of Views).

In terms of specific features of decision-making linked to the group that apply elsewhere, there were some areas which were felt to apply, including the effect on policies and on other CYP and the importance of views. There were differing opinions relating to whether people in the local area "listen to my views" and in whether the group was recognised elsewhere.

Basic Theme 5E: Young Person Involvement

"CYP set the agenda," (Neutral to Positive);
"CYP decide what to do and when," (Neutral to Positive);
"In this group we do what youth workers say," (Neutral to Positive).

In terms of CYP's involvement, varying views were expressed from neutral to strongly positive, in relation to all questions. Statements indicate a perception of a mixture of CYP led and adult involvement within the process of participation and decision-making.

Appendix P Phase 3-4 Data

Organising Theme: Enabling and Supporting Access to Groups

Basic Theme 1A: Process of Entry to Participation Groups

The process of entry to the Youth Opportunities Panel is described in the following statements from the transcripts:

- “We apply to join and the group and CYP say if you can go in or not” (Transcript 3, Interview number 3);
- “We as the panel actually decide who comes on the panel... they have an interview as well.” (Transcript 1, Interview number 1).

These statements also refer to the ‘Global Theme’ of ‘Decision-Making and Power,’ in terms of the process of decision-making and CYP’s involvement negotiating access to the groups.

There seemed to be a variety of ways to gain entry to the Youth Opportunity Panel, although the CYP said there were set criteria of being between “13 and 19.” (Transcript 1, Interview 1).

The following statements explained routes of entry to the Youth Opportunities Panel:

- “You can be referred by a youth worker...or like I joined the group, through a (separate participation)...group;”
- “Some people have seen it in the paper and applied themselves.”
- “Referrals come from different sources such as “groups and youth leaders.” (Transcript 1, Interview 1).

This suggested different routes for group entry to the Youth Opportunities Panel from participants involved.

The Youth Opportunity Panel entry process was described by an interviewee in comparison to other groups which “you can just join” (Transcript 1). This

indicates reference to different entry routes and criteria between participation groups, recognised by the CYP. An additional feature of the access to the groups was the pre-existing skills of individual participants. Good “communication skills” (Transcripts 1-3) were identified as key features and a requirement for involvement in all the participation groups.

In comparison, the Scrutiny Panel had less strict criteria linked to the process of entry to the group, as outlined in the following statement: “The groups are open to anyone within certain ages” (Transcript 3). This was contrasted to the Youth Opportunity Fund, in both this interview 3 and by participants in interview 1. Both groups operated a selection criteria process, but one was perceived to be more selective by the participants.

Basic Theme 1B: Induction Process for New Members

Particular group members highlighted this process, as a supportive system for helping skill development. This was described by one participant as like a: “buddy system” where “we explain what goes on in the group,” (Transcript 1).

Basic Theme 1C: Broadness and Equity of Entry Route

This basic theme appeared more frequently within discussions by group members in this phase and was mentioned in more detail, indicating that this theme was viewed as more significant and important to the CYP involved. The Youth Opportunity Panel participants also mentioned access by non-group members to materials. Adaptations were discussed to ensure equity of access such as altering materials to make them “CYP friendly,” so that they can “approach the panel.”

In addition, online facilities were mentioned as routes for broadening access, and the process of treating applications “fairly” (Transcript 1) was repeated. Several CYP identified additional ideas for increasing publicity through local newspapers and online sites and of “reaching the CYP where they are.”

(Transcript 1) The process of selecting different people to join the group from a range of existing groups and backgrounds was highlighted (Transcripts 1-3) along with the recognition from the Scrutiny Panel that not all CYP want to take part.

In relation to the Youth Parliament, in which a participant was also involved, there was a sense of restricted access, but with recognition that this was due to pragmatics and practicalities. This viewpoint was indicated in the statement: “you can't get everyone's voices heard because it is a national thing” but “CYP from every part of the country get heard” (Transcript 2).

A sense of fairness was, therefore, still perceived in terms of democratic involvement and linking of different participation groups. This also showed how involvement in participation groups within the case study unit had transferability to external groups and decision-making.

Organising Theme: Co-Research Skills

Basic Theme 2A - Reflective practice

Within this phase of the research, it had been expected that reference to Reflective practice would be relatively low, compared to within the later stages of the phase. A high-level of Reflective practice was still noted by all the participant leads (CR1 and CR3), who were youth leads within the participation groups. This was also highlighted by the key co-researcher (CR5) interviewed, within the reflective interview. This skill of Reflective practice was confirmed through observations of groups, where participants referred frequently to group processes and research. This could be interpreted as an indication of skills developed through participation.

In terms of the types of 'Reflective practice' identified by interview participants, this particularly related to decision-making and group dynamic processes. This Reflective practice is indicated in the following excerpt:

- “We talk through with (youth worker) how we thought the meeting went and the standard of the applications” and “we always put down a little feedback with reasons why we have given or not given the grant” (Transcript 1).

Observations and interviews indicated that the CYP within these participation groups are actively taught reflective skills through their roles within either the Scrutiny Panel or the Youth Opportunities Panel.

One of the participants also discussed the use of reflective and evaluative systems, such as “like internal polls and stuff and...what you think worked best in interviews” (Transcript 2) and “having a suggestion box” (Transcript 1). Within both the participation groups, in this phase, there was a process of justifying decisions made and reflecting on processes after each meeting, which operated in practice.

The CYP involved in the interviews were also able to reflect on the particular model of participation, in relation to Hart's (1992) model, suggesting additional adaptations to the model, such as:

- “swapping level seven and level eight because this is a youth based unit;” (Transcript 3)
- “Level eight of the model might be needing a bit more change because shouldn't we make our own decisions on what we want all the time?” (Transcript 2)

This indicated some skills related to research and reflective practice in terms of Reflective practice within discussions. This was also indicated in terms of comments by both co-researchers and participants relating to the questions used within this study and relative effectiveness of the prompt and skill questions.

It was noted that a higher level of Reflective practice, in terms of frequency and detail of comment was evident in the co-researchers and participant group

'leads', who took part in the research. This was evident throughout the research phases and suggested that involvement in participation groups of this nature could support development of skills linked to research.

Basic Theme 2B – Design

This basic theme was referred to in relation to CYP designing materials and publicity and in relation to additional suggestions about materials used, but was not discussed in detail within this research phase. This theme (2B) figured within the reflective phase in more detail and was expressed in the comments of co-researchers.

Basic Theme 2J - Ethics

The CYP involved identified some ethical considerations in relation to their group involvement, for instance in relation to asking for consent for photographs to be used within their groups. The lead co-researcher (CR5) who was involved in middle and the later stages of the research and an additional participant asked for copies of the recordings (transcripts) and asked about the process. There appeared to be some awareness of ethics relevant to personal involvement.

Organising Theme: Skills Developed Through Participation

Basic Theme 3A - Personal Qualities

The following skill based qualities were identified by participants:

- Getting on well, meeting new people and socialising (sociability);
- Communication skills and public speaking;
- Group based skills (Transcripts 1, 2, 3).

Additional skills were identified linked to the Youth Opportunities Panel, which were “rationality, when...looking at particular applications...to decide clearly;” “to be decisive” linked to funding decisions; “to say no some of the time” and “the power to analyse text...and...read between the lines” (Transcript 2), in relation

to the application forms received. Personal qualities were the most relevant skills here, which encompassed communication skills and sociability.

Basic Theme 3B - Transferability

Many of the participants were also involved with other groups. This theme was highlighted less by participants within these interviews, but was implicit in some of the statements related to including participants and extending the process of participation.

Basic Theme 3C - Formal Communication Skills

Interview participants described how group members were involved in deciding how “paperwork looks and application forms,” (Transcript 1). They were also involved in processing applications. This skill was viewed as important by all participation groups linked to understanding of meeting processes.

Basic Theme 3D - Supporting Skills of Group Members

Ideas suggested relating to supporting group member’s skills included a “suggestion box,” “working under the “safe space policy” and “respecting each other’s opinions” (Transcript 1). During observations, youth workers and group leaders also supported CYP further in developing these skills, by discussing situations when they arose, resolving conflicts and supporting positive peer relations.

Organising Theme – Inclusive Features Relating to Participation

Basic Theme 4A - Sense of Belonging

Participants strongly agreed that their participation group was a place where they felt supported by adults and friends,” (Transcripts 1 and 3). This was a commonly occurring theme within the research phase.

Basic Theme 4B - Equity of Access

Within these participation groups, group views were regarded as being important and listened to. There were multiple references to views being listened to, heard and acted upon, which were regarded as important features of the group. This included reference to views from outside the group as well as inside and respecting each other.

Basic Theme 4C - Diversity of Viewpoints

Ranges of viewpoints are encouraged within these groups as indicated in the following statement: “everyone on this panel is unique” and “we all share similar experiences working with youth groups.” (Transcripts 1 and 3)

Organising Theme – Decision-Making Processes in Groups

Basic Theme 5A - Negotiation of Agreements (in Decision-Making)

Within these participation groups, a high-level of negotiation of agreement in decision-making was discussed, with a range of processes adopted. This linked both within the group generally, in terms of approaching and including new applicants and assessing funding applications as part of one of the group mechanisms. The process of decision-making relating to funding is outlined in the following statement:

- “say like there are more people saying yes and a couple of people saying no we would go to them for an interview;” “If we are un-decided we will say right we will interview that application” and that decisions “go on the majority,” (Transcript 1).

This indicated that detailed discussion and a process of negotiation were described in relation to making decisions. In addition, the CYP consider factors relating to the application. This includes “whether this is a good application”; “how many CYP...are going to benefit” and “pros and cons,” (Transcript 1). If decisions were difficult to reach and options considered, then CYP would approach the adult group leader, who would offer alternatives.

Basic Theme 5B - Group Processes and Participation Topics

A range of group processes and participation topics were outlined, as applied to the participation groups involved. These included deciding on whether to approve applications in relation to grants, making decisions in relation to group lead priorities in the authority during scrutiny meetings, reading applications and discussing interviews.

The CYP in the Youth Opportunities Panel said they would often “go into separate groups and go through the interview forms” and review applications, (Transcript 1). The group members were also involved in making decisions relating to group activities, such as residential trips and appointing new members within the group. One participant who was also on the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, was involved in discussing a wider range of topics including politics, peer-pressure and bullying (Transcript 2). The groups within the ‘participation unit’ were structured around a high-level of youth involvement as part of their organisational style, which was also observed during visits.

Basic Theme 5C - Equity within Decision-Making

The process of equity or fairness within decision-making was linked to group based processes, such as the “safe-space policy” and anonymous box to include all group members’ views. Within the groups, there was discussion of going around the group so everyone had a chance to say what they thought about the project in general. Being “listened to” (Transcripts 2, 3) and “considered” (Transcript 3) were considered important, in terms of views expressed within meetings. Decisions about funding were viewed from an equitable point of view in relation to which group needed the money the most.

Basic Theme 5D - Impact of Decisions Outside the Group (transfer)

Within this set of participation groups, there are active effects of group decisions, including distributing money for youth projects and scrutinising local

authority performance and policies. The CYP felt that decisions they made could “change events or activities” (Transcript 3) and that their views were listened to outside their participation group.

An example of this transferability included involvement within the Youth Parliament, where a participant joined a debate in the House of Commons, and involvement relating to change for home-educated CYP, through helping design booklets.

Basic Theme 5E - CYP Involvement

CYP involvement as expected was a strong theme across the participation groups. A high-level of youth involvement was identified, but with adults supporting some decisions. In relation to Hart’s (1992) model, the CYP identified the group as a seven because “we do take our own roles as vice-chair and all that but when we are out of the meeting the work is getting done by (adults),” (Transcript 1).

In particular, in relation to the process of deciding on funding and giving out money there was recognition that this aspect needed adult consent and involvement and shared decision-making in some situations.

CYP led decisions in the following areas:

- Suggesting ideas for extending youth involvement;
- Group decisions relating to agreeing to particular projects;
- Designing websites and publicity materials;
- Selecting future group members – “we as the panel decide on someone who wants to come on the panel,” (Transcript 1).

The balance of power and adult or CYP involvement is outlined in the statements:

- “CYP and adults are looking for the same thing but differently... (That in relation to the participation model, there should be), “different levels of participation for different purposes,” (Transcript 2).

- That in relation to further involvement, the CYP were: "just about as involved as we could be at this point," (Transcript 3).

There was a sense that Hart's (1992) model was rather simplistic in relation to the structure of decision-making outlined as participation operated with different levels of youth involvement depending on the specific context.

Appendix Q – Phase 4 and 5 Data and Analysis

Organising Theme: Enabling and Supporting Access

Basic Theme 1A: Process of Entry to Participation Groups

The process of entry for the school council members was outlined in the following statement from a participant:

- “We usually fill in a form and hand it in to a teacher and the teacher usually reads out the names and they get elected in their year assembly by a vote,” (Transcription 4). This process involves some element of initial self-referral and then group selection. Additional mechanisms to support inclusion of ‘marginal’ groups were not discussed as an option.

Basic Theme 1C: Broadness and Equity of Entry Route

The School Council interview participants outlined mechanisms for increasing participation, which were to:

- “get the pupil voice throughout the school...what the children want, not just the teachers;”
- “taking out questionnaires to see like other people’s views;”
- “that teachers can get the word around” and that
- “CYP can “put up posters,” (Transcript 4)

Access to the council group was encouraged for pupils of all ages, and was seen to be relatively equitable by participants.

Within the reflective interview (CR5), the process of ‘broadness of route’ was highlighted as a theme. In particular, the ideas of listening to people’s views as important and that not everyone is involved in the school council, so that gaining views of other people outside the group was identified as a target by research participants. This is outlined in the following statement: “bringing people to get involved with it not just inside schools but outside as well.” In relation to the research process, additional publicity was suggested. Additionally, there was reference to “barriers that they have got to face to get involved,” relating to including particular groups within the process.

Organising Theme: Co-Research Skills

Basic Theme 2A - Reflective practice

Participants within the school council reflected on their involvement in decision-making, rating it “about seven or eight, because not just the CYP in the school council make decisions, adults do also.” This was felt to “work really well” as a process (Transcript 4). This element of Reflective practice was only mentioned once within this interview and this was the only time that research skills were included within this phase (4).

The co-researcher reflective interview included a high-level of Reflective practice relating to involvement in the research, decision-making and skill development. This was indicative of a relatively high-level of research-based skills. The following suggestions were outlined in terms of improving the research process:

- “To have a discussion previous...extra things you might say.”
- “More time” (this was a recurring consideration).
- “Still room to manoeuvre and make it better.”
- Issue identified - “The one thing I have found that is a negative...is the question” and the solution was to redo the questions for each individual group.”

(Transcript 5, Reflective Interview).

Additional Reflective practice was observed within the interviews, by co-researchers, this involved co-researchers amending the wording of the questions and style of approach depending on the participants.

Basic Theme 2B - Design

Factors identified by the co-researcher which were related to research design included altering questions through “adapting things to meet individual needs..” “re-do questions for each...group” and making questions “specific to certain areas.” (Transcript 5) The questions were viewed as providing a broad

framework although additional differentiation in term of the use of different methods was discussed. This process would involve variation of methods, which could be adapted, so that interviewing more experienced participants, within the earlier stages of the research, could differ from that used with the younger school council members, also different methods as an option.

Basic Theme 2C - Researcher/Participant Interface

Within the co-researcher reflections, additional suggestions were outlined relating to strategies about keeping “the conversation flowing” within the interviewing process and observations that the approach can be used to “fit in with people” and “go off in directions,” (Transcript 5) This showed understanding of rapport and researcher skills.

Basic Theme 2D - Validity

The co-researcher identified some factors relating to validity included in the following statements: “covered that reasonably,” “a real representation of,” “chance to get a lot more...with...research” and “that “would be suitable” and to “give a good and accurate representation of what actually happened,” (Transcript 5). This basic theme was only identified within the reflective (phase 5) of the research.

Basic Theme 2E - Sampling

Initial reference was made to having a “broader spectrum of ideas” and to have “included the head boy and girl” (Transcript 5) in relation to the council interviews. This was an emerging theme only present in this phase and interview.

Basic Theme 2F - Factors Affecting Participation in the Research

Factors identified relating to participation included current attendance, identified by school council members and confidence within the reflective interview.

Individual differences in participants between the research phases were also felt to have affected the nature of responses. Additional publicity was suggested.

Basic Theme 2G - Pilot Study and Setting the Scene

In relation to setting the scene, several suggestions were outlined by CR5 including “a pre-consultation” involving going through the questions with the interviewees first to determine suitability and to have a “discussion previous as to what extra things you might want to say,” (Transcript 5). It was suggested that extra time would be needed to think about answers before the discussion.

Basic Theme 2H - Model of Research Participation

In relation to the co-researcher’s involvement within the process, this is outlined in the following statement: “I have had a chance to get involved and say my own questions and conduct in the interview in a way that I think is appropriate,” (Transcript 5). Additional suggestions outlined, (by CR5) including carrying the approach forward to future council meetings and to produce future online questionnaires.

Basic Theme 2I - Reference to Method

The methods were described as complicated by the co-researcher and approaches such as interviews and questionnaires were mentioned, within the reflective interview.

Basic Theme 2J - Ethics

Ethical considerations were identified during the reflective interview. Consent, confidentiality and data protection were referred to as key considerations. In particular, discussion related to whether to keep the local authority name confidential.

Organising Theme: Skills Developed Through Participation

Basic Theme 3A - Personal Qualities

The school council, interview respondents, identified a range of personal skill qualities developed including:

- “Working together;”
- “Listening to people;”
- “Understanding what other people want;” (other year groups).
- “Not just absorbing it and letting it go” (idea of positive action);
- “Meeting a lot of people” and “making friends,” (Transcript 4);
- Reflective skills were also identified by CR5.

Basic Theme 3B - Transferability

Examples of skill transfer outside the school council group include:

- “The bullying has gone down a lot” (view expressed);
- “Diversity Group” (Outreach from the school council). This group tries to stop bullying, racism, and related topics.
- “Taking part, joining in and making the school a better place.”
- Links to the “recycling programme” from the school council and for “recycle bins in every classroom...in every playground.”
- “We are planning on getting a new mini bus.”
- “Raising money for...charity,” (Transcript 4).

Ranges of activities were suggested which the school council members were already involved in, which including directly affecting a range of activities within school. As result of the research, methods for including the views of additional peers were discussed an application of research techniques as a potential future aspect of school council work.

Basic Theme 3D-Supporting Skills of Group Members

The co-researcher suggested supporting skills of members within meetings and research by “anticipating what they are”, “wanting to say” and “developing skills” (Transcription 5) through a range of activities.

Basic Theme 3E - Research Skill Development

Through involvement in participation groups, a level of Reflective practice was evident by the co-researchers within this phase and earlier phases of the research (CR 3/4).

Organising Theme – Inclusive Features Relating to Participation

Basic Theme 4A - Sense of Belonging

A school council member stated that they had: “been in the school council since primary school” (Transcript 4) indicating a sense of identity with the democratic process. A co-researcher also identified as a “valued member of the group,” (Transcript 4).

Basic Theme 4B - Equity of Access

Examples of equal access to the group included, “understanding what other people want,” (Transcript 4) “having a chance to take part” in the group or school council, being “listened to” and “joining in.” A sense of equity, in terms of group members being considered was also outlined in the statement by co-researcher (CR5) about the importance of “getting your face shown or your voice heard.” (Transcript 5)

Basic Theme 4C - Diversity of Viewpoints

School council members referred to the diversity of individuals from every group and age included within the group.

Organising Theme – Decision-making Processes in Groups

Basic Theme 5A - Negotiation of Agreements (In Decision-Making)

Processes described by participants in the council included “looking at forms and taking out questionnaires to see other people’s views on it,” (Transcript 4). Participants said that important decisions and topics were raised in the council meetings and then additional groups branched out elsewhere to explore this area, such as the ‘diversity group’ focusing on anti-discrimination. This was a

smaller group of CYP from within the school council who were responsible to activities linked to inclusion. This basic theme was not raised within the reflective interview and decision-making processes were discussed in relation to the research, rather than in relation to participation groups.

Basic Theme 5B - Group Processes

Group processes described in relation to the school council included: “doing our best to keep the ideas going,” “transferring the pupil voice across the school and getting groups members to go to different roles, while some people check the jobs have been completed.” (Transcript 4) Views of younger group members were also described as being supported through the group systems and buddying systems. The topics discussed by the group included the recycling programme and fund-raising for the mini-bus and local charities.

Basic Theme 5C - Equity within Decision-Making

A sense of equity was supported in the council group through the inclusion of people from every year group and there was a sense that all people could be involved. In reality, this was often over-represented by people from particular ages or groups. This viewpoint was also supported by reflections within the reflective interview.

Basic Theme 5D - Impact of Decisions Outside the Group (Transfer)

Some of the decisions within the group are linked elsewhere, such as within the school or to local projects. A co-researcher also identified the potential impact of involvement to future life experiences.

Basic Theme 5E - CYP Involvement

CYP's involvement within the school council group was related to having a say relating to topic areas. This was rated as being at about seven or eight, linked into Hart's (1992) model. This was because adults are involved and CYP lead many decisions. The adult's role was seen as to “get the idea bigger and maybe

actually make it work,” (Transcript 4, School Council Group). There was a recognition outlined by participants that the pupils could not do all the actions and often needed permissions. This was in terms of identifying money and resources. Participants felt that there was a good potential to change and alter things for them and the chance to take part in interviews and other such processes.

Within the reflective phase, the co-researcher (CR5) identified a high-level of participation in relation to the research, rating this as stage six using Hart's (1992) model, but suggested this could move to seven or eight if there was a chance to become involved in the data analysis.

The reflection of the process is outlined in the following statement:

- “I have had a chance to get involved and say my own questions and conduct in the interviews in a way that I think is appropriate and now you've taken charge of it more,” (Transcript 5).

Participation and involvement in the research was seen as an important factor and it was recommended that more CYP should be involved and elected to committees. There was an agreement to take the process forward further.

Organising and Emergent Theme – Societal Processes

Changing Nature of Conceptions of Childhood

An additional theme was identified by the co-researcher (CR5) which is later related to literature about the changing nature of childhood. This is outlined in the following viewpoint relating to youth leaders and involvement of CYP: “the situation right from when they were a CYP is different to how it is now because society is constantly changing...the problems people face now and the barriers.” It was felt to be more important to have CYP involved and making decisions for this reason, as they understood the needs of others.

Appendix R
Comparative Table of the Laddered Participation Models

Ladders of Participation			
<i>Amstein (1969)</i>	<i>Hart (1992)</i>	<i>Thoburn, Lewis & Shemmings (1995)</i>	<i>Shier (2001)</i>
Citizen control	Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	Delegated power Involvement in service design	Children share power and responsibility for decision-making
Delegated power		Child-initiated and directed	
Partnership	Adult initiated, shared decisions with adults	Partnership participation	Children are involved in decision-making processes
Placation	Consulted and informed	Involvement	Children's views are taken into account
Consultation	Assigned but informed	Consultation Keep fully informed	Children are supported in expressing their views
Tokenism		Children are listened to	
Therapy Manipulation	Decoration Manipulation		Placation Manipulation

Adapted from Sinclair and Franklin (2000) and Franklin and Sloper (2004)

Appendix S Key Priorities L.A Children and Young People's Plan (2009-2012)

Children & Young People's Plan intends that CYP should be enabled to:

Be Healthy

1. Lead healthier lifestyles, particularly by maintaining a healthy weight, resisting substance and alcohol misuse and gaining in resilience through improved emotional well-being
2. Become increasingly mature with regard to sexual relationships, able to protect themselves, avoid teenage pregnancy and to resist exploitation

Stay Safe

3. Be protected from maltreatment, neglect, violence and exploitation with particular reference to that resulting from domestic abuse and substance/alcohol misuse in families
4. Be safe from and choose not to engage in bullying, discrimination, crime and anti-social behaviour, both inside and outside school

Enjoy & Achieve

5. Make good educational progress with a particular emphasis on mathematics and on overall performance for those in the Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 4
6. Overcome any barriers to achievement (especially for Looked after Children and those with complex needs.) so as to be able to achieve more in line with their peers
7. Enjoy strong family support for their aspirations and achievement

Make a Positive Contribution

8. Access wider opportunities locally which develop self-esteem, self-confidence and prepare young people for responsible adulthood

Achieve Economic Well-Being

9. Overcome the impact of poverty through effective partnership working which both addresses immediate needs. and contributes to the wider economic regeneration of the town
10. Progress to educational achievement at levels 2 and 3, employment and/or training which enables them to become economically self-sufficient as young adults and future parents

The plan also contains a Golden Thread that 'children and young people are engaged in and influence decision making.' In addition, each priority has to:

- Consult children and young people before services or activities are planned
- Give responsibility to children and young people to run activities / sessions under the direction of adult workers
- Involve children and young people in decision making through influencing and planning activities

Adapted from, L.A Children and Young People's Plan (2009-2012).