

Roseanna Bourke · Judith Loveridge
Editors

Radical Collegiality through Student Voice

Educational Experience, Policy and
Practice

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Foreword

Me huri kau koe i ngā whārangi o neherā; ka whakatuwhera i tētahi whārangi hōu mō ngā mea o te rā nei, mō āpōpō hoki.

You must turn over the pages of the past; you must open a new page for the things of to-day and to-morrow.

Sir James Carroll

When the New Zealand Government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Children’s Convention) in 1993, New Zealanders made a promise to ensure the voices of tamariki and rangatahi of Aotearoa would be heard and acted upon. The Children’s Convention is the most widely signed international instrument in history. With the exception of the USA, every country in the world has signed it. We must take our international obligations seriously. Compliance is non-negotiable.

It is an exciting document. Even 28 years after its adoption by the United Nations, it still speaks powerfully. It is a charter of guaranteed entitlements that all children deserve. When faithfully applied and upheld, they will ensure our children flourish, prosper and thrive.

Central to the Children’s Convention is Article 12.1, which directs that:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

My role as the Children’s Commissioner is, amongst other things, to advocate for the interests of New Zealand’s 1.12 million children and young people, to ensure their rights are upheld and to help them have a direct impact on policy and practice by ensuring they have a say on issues that affect them.

In our work, two issues are top of the mind:

1. Adults too easily make assumptions on behalf of children. How do we know what children's interests and views are if we do not ask them? And having heard them, do we factor in their views and report back to them on what happens next?
2. How do we ensure they know and understand their rights and entitlements and that they are being upheld?

In advising and encouraging others to listen to children and young people's views, we also try to demonstrate best practice in our work at the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

When we monitor the care and protection of the youth justice system, one particular focus of our work, we first ask children and young people concerned about their experiences. When we visit children and young people in secure residences, the children take our staff on a tour of the residence. They tell them what they like and don't like, and what possible issues there might be.

When staff conduct in-depth interviews with children and young people, they use tools such as a set of cards, discussion starters to map how the children feel about different issues relating to their care. On these cards are printed statements such as "I feel safe" or "I understand the complaints system". Children and young people place the card on a rating scale. We also conduct written surveys in the larger residences.

Our intention is to understand what children and young people are experiencing and use their experience to inform our recommendations to Oranga Tamariki. We complete the loop by feeding back what we find from our monitoring to the children and young people themselves:

I am a library, quiet but filled with knowledge—it's dumb [that I'm not asked]. (Student in alternative education unit cited in *Education Matters to Me Report*, Office of the Children's Commissioner and New Zealand School Trustees Association 2018)

More widely, the legislation I operate under as the Children's Commissioner states that I must develop a means of consulting with children and young people. It is important that this is completed in ways that are meaningful and relevant to them.

As a result, we have developed the "Mai World—Our Child and Youth Voices" project. Through it, we regularly connect with schools and community groups to engage directly with children and young people. We have other tools too. As well as child-led tours and surveys, we use activity-based engagement and focus groups, depending on the ages and stages of the children and young people involved, to ensure they feel safe and to hear their authentic views. We do this in a way that respects the integrity of what these children and young people choose to tell us. We place the focus on their lived experiences rather than the interpretations of adults. These processes provide constant reminders of why we all need to continually improve our practice with children and young people and hear and share their voices.

This is more than an obligation under legislation. It is an absolute duty to the children and young people I serve not only to engage with them directly but to actively encourage other parts of government, and indeed all of society, to seek out children's voices and act on what they tell us. It is a responsibility we can all share.

Children and young people are the experts on their own experiences. Hearing and incorporating their views delivers better and more robust decisions. It also confirms and develops their capacity to act independently, make their own choices and actively participate as New Zealand citizens. In particular, as tangata whenua, it is vital that tamariki and rangatahi Māori voices are heard at all levels of decision-making:

I was asked to do a haka for some visitors to school because the principal wanted to give a cultural experience ... that's like the only time he cares about Māori culture. (Secondary school student, Māori)

Hearing children's voices in education is essential. Few things affect children's lives more than their educational experiences. Attending school is the greatest commitment children make in their lives outside of their homes:

I'd make sure everyone had a friend to be with throughout the day because being alone makes you sad sometimes. (Secondary school student, NZ European)

The Office of the Children's Commissioner and the New Zealand School Trustees Association have recently asked children and young people about their experience of education. The quotes in this text are taken from that report series: *Education Matters to Me*. We hope they will serve as a good example of the richness children's voices can add—in this case to the proposed National Education and Learning Priorities.

Educators, policymakers and advocates often talk of the need to be “child-centred” in our approach to education. This has become something of a buzzword. But it is important that we understand the phrase fully and see children in the wider context of their families, whānau, hapū and iwi. It is imperative that we provide mechanisms for the people at the centre of our work to be heard directly:

You're trying to make a significant difference to the school, changing the socks is literally the last thing on the list of problems this school has. (Secondary school student, Māori/NZ European)

I introduce this book about student voice with real pleasure. It is heartening to see the diversity of voices represented here. I hope the themes explored will encourage practitioners and policymakers to be aware of the potential and challenge inherent in listening to the voices of those who too often are not heard, particularly those in marginalised and isolated environments. These groups are often labelled as “hard to reach”. I challenge that. I sometimes wonder whether being hard to reach is our problem, not theirs.

We must create more accessible ways for children and young people to share their voice on all aspects of their lives—in their home, at their school, within their whānau, hapu or iwi, with the local council and at a national level to central government:

Create other courses that can lead to apprenticeships. (Secondary school student, NZ European)

This book illustrates that the voices of children and young people are multifaceted, culturally important, diverse and challenging for both policy and practice. But if we embrace the challenge, the solutions these young people offer will not only transform our discourse, but also they will enhance our lives.

The beauty of voice is that we get to hear from these groups in their own words, in their own way and in their own time. Ultimately, it allows us to get closer to understanding different points of view:

Not have too many students in a classroom (Like joining two classes together) because then students can't get as much 1:1 from the teacher and harder to get to know everyone in it. (Secondary school student, NZ European)

Having the same teacher for longer. I have had 7 different teachers for one class this year. (Secondary school student, NZ European)

Engaging with children and young people directly, and providing a vehicle for their views to be heard and acted on, is an important way of demonstrating our commitment to putting children and young people at the heart of what we do:

I love free play time and getting outside so that I can actually breathe. (Primary school student, Kiwi/Canadian)

I would get more assistant teachers for children so more children that need help get it. (Primary school student, NZ European)

New Zealand law should provide comprehensive opportunities for highly participatory practices. We have a duty to uphold international obligations, domestic laws and policies and practice guidance for child and youth participation.

Unarguably, we have a poor history of including children's voices in policy decisions. Perhaps that comes from our colonising past or our Victorian heritage where children should be seen and not heard. Or perhaps it stems from the view that while they are "potential adults" they are still a work in progress. Their views are not yet sufficiently formed for us to listen to them.

There is good news however. I sense a sea change in attitudes to consulting with and listening to children, and this book is testimony to that. My hope is that it will serve as a useful guide, helping us navigate through some of the issues at stake as we listen for children and young people's voices, and indeed act as an inspiration in respect of the importance of collecting and responding to them.

Mehemea ka moemoeā ahau, ko ahau anake. Mehemea ka moemoeā tātou, ka taea e tātou.

If I am to dream, I dream alone. If we all dream together, then we shall achieve.

Wellington, New Zealand

Judge Andrew Becroft
Office of the Children's Commissioner

Reference

Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC). (2018) Education matters to me: Key insights. www.occ.org.nz.

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Chapter 1

Using Student Voice to Challenge Understandings of Educational Research, Policy and Practice



Roseanna Bourke and Judith Loveridge

Abstract In this chapter, we argue for the need to move beyond the rhetoric of student voice. A focus on the acting on of advice and working with students is our “next steps” agenda for involving children and young people in educational research, educational policy and educational practice. We demonstrate that in order to take student voice seriously, the system (policy and practice) that children learn in must radically change *through* listening and acting on their views, and position student voice as political and educational imperatives. From the perspective of research and practice, this chapter outlines the promises and possibilities of including student voice in change agendas. We also caution against diluting voice, marginalising some voices, and unintentionally replicating current practice through drawing on the voice of students who typically thrive within the educational system. For equitable outcomes for all learners, listening to those identified as dis-engaged, or “othering” must be part of the radical agenda, including enacting radical collegiality between teachers and learners. This requires a reconceptualisation of the broader phenomenon of what it means “to learn” for all children. Student voice is our educational call to wake up, listen and act.

1 Introduction

The very popularity of student voice at the current time generates a “bandwagon effect” and, consequently, a tokenistic and possibly short-lived interest on the part of schools. In each case, the transformative potential of student voice is lost. Such a context obviously poses particular challenges to establishing what many commentators on student voice aspire to in the school system—dialogic models of student voice based in a concern for shared decision making and social inclusion. (Wisby 2011, p. 32)

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This book is about equity for all learners to enable “dialogic models of student voice based in a concern for shared decision making” (Wisby 2011) and is about social and educational inclusion. We explore this through “student voice,” which we use broadly to refer to how we facilitate, listen to, act on and influence policy and practices in classrooms and schools through the experiences, views and accounts of young people; a simple idea but complex in practice, especially in an era of accountability and standardisation in schools (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015a).

Student voice research sets out to systematically involve students in the pursuit of a richer understanding of educational experiences, policy and practice through the eyes and ears of young people. It has become increasingly sophisticated in its intent and nature. Gone are the days of the endearing student quote to illustrate adults’ views on an issue. Increasingly students are encouraged to take their own starting position in determining the questions that need to be asked, and assume responsibility to collaborate with their peers and teachers. Bron and Veugelers (2014) explain that children “often assume more responsibility and autonomy outside school than allowed within” (p. 129), and enabling them within school to have voice and responsibility is important. However, we also need to act on these ideas and in the process, change the way *we* (practitioners, researchers, policy makers) think about our own work. Fielding (2011) calls for this to occur through “radical collegiality”; his vision is to “encourage those working in the contexts of publicly funded education to reclaim and re-narrate a radical history of democratic education within the public sector” (p. 5).

2 Why Radical Collegiality?

Early on in the development of student voice, Fielding (1999) advocated for the teacher–student relationship to become one of radical collegiality. He argued that it is important to represent the experiences of students through their voice(s) and to break the status quo; in other words, “transformation requires a rupture of the ordinary” (Fielding 2004, p. 296). In the spirit of the position portrayed by Fielding, the chapters in this book set out to focus on the experiences of young people and collectively explore how our educational policies, practices and research endeavours enable educators to help young people position themselves to tell their stories. These students have a voice; it is the educators’ and researchers’ role to empower them to use it. Such stories may create discomfort and require radical change by the adult establishment.

The importance of listening to learners, to children and young people is an educational, social and political imperative: (1) it is a child’s right to be heard and listened to, and to have their views influence their lives; (2) it is important to help children know themselves through their multiple voices, as a sense of identity is critical to their well-being and to their learning; and (3) it is simply an effective practice and policy tool to “get things right” for young people.

The voices and experiences of children and young people are integral to our understanding of both the ends and means of education. In recent decades, greater attention has rightly been given across policy, practice and research discourses to the need to involve children more meaningfully and actively in decisions about their participation in both formal and informal educational settings. In the same period, a heightened emphasis on improving educational outcomes for the most disadvantaged young people has required policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to find ways to measure tangible changes in educational outcomes over relatively short periods of time. The laudable desire to influence system-wide educational achievement from outside educational settings sometimes sits in uneasy tension with the equally laudable desire to promote greater learner agency and autonomy within educational settings. Each of these two desirable ends positions children in subtly different ways. In turn, this creates significant ethical challenges for educational researchers in terms of why and how they seek to involve children in educational research and, consequently, what they do in order to seek the child's agreement and maintain the child's trust.

3 Issues and Debates in an Evolving Field

After an initial wave of uncritical enthusiasm for student voice research, the last 20 years have seen more sustained critique and debate about the extent to which it is possible or even desirable to capture student voice(s). As more research and evaluation have involved children and young people, there has been recognition that their involvement is philosophically, politically and methodologically more complex than first appears.

Contemporary student voice work has increasingly been conceptualised and conducted within the discursive framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC 1989; ratified by New Zealand in 1993). It has been influenced by rights such as those expressed in Articles 12 and 13. These emphasise the rights of the child to express her or his opinion and have these opinions taken into account. However, early student voice work, critiqued for being too structured and regulated by the adults' agenda, was also seen as tokenistic. In response, a greater emphasis on children's agency and autonomy was foregrounded with adults minimising their roles in the research context to achieve the generation of "authentic" or "pure" student voice. Subsequently, this position was also critiqued for being artificial and for "too sharp and too exclusive a focus on the standpoints of young people" (Fielding 2007, p. 430). A call was made for an approach to student voice that recognises the relational interdependence of adults and young people (Mannion 2007).

Lewis (2010) critiqued the dominance of a focus on voice. With reference to the discursive influence of UNCROC, she contended that in a climate in which the promotion of child voice has become something of a moral crusade it can be difficult for the limitations of voice work to be discussed. She questioned the extent

to which researchers are able to recognise, note, respond to, interpret and report a child's silence in a context that is so focussed on a child's voice. She advocated for research to be explicit and transparent about the way that children's voices *and* silences are responded to and reported in research. More recently, other scholars have extended the exploration of children's silences, arguing that silences should not be solely regarded as a methodological challenge or simply an ethical issue to be managed, but also as data to be learned from (Mazzei 2003; Munk and Agergaard 2018). In treating silences as data, their meaning and purpose are foregrounded. To more fully explore children's voices by engaging with their silences requires a radical rethinking of researchers' practices. In the light of the complexity surrounding children's silences, Spyrou (2016) argues such rethinking must "retain a sense of methodological humility and an enhanced sense of critical reflexivity so as to attend to children's silences with care and respect" (p. 19).

Arnot and Reay (2007) highlighted another of the main critiques of the concept of student voice in that "most contemporary voice research recognises the power of research relationships and methods in framing particular voices, eliciting some and not others. Therefore, most researchers accept that there is not one authentic voice of a single social category" (p. 313). Fielding (2007) reinforced this argument when he cautioned against the singularity and presumed homogeneity of voice; a multitude of diverse student voices is necessary rather than a "collective" understanding of school experiences (Cook-Sather 2007; Fielding 2007). In Silva's (2001) study, she pointed out the differences in students within one high school in the States. As a student, and African American male in her study explained, the students within the school experience very different backgrounds, with some of privilege and others experiencing financial difficulty and associated life options: As he stated:

We got squeaky wheels and flat tires...Some smooth white walls rollin' their way right to college, gettin' oil all the way. And then the rest of us...flat tires! Bumpin' on down the road, making all sorts of crude noises. Probably fall off real soon anyway. Ain't worth the grease. (p. 95)

This issue of the need for a plurality of voices remains in contemporary critiques. Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015b) claim that students who participate in research, and therefore have their voices documented and heard, are often those who have some advantage within the system (i.e. they are the ones who put their hands up to be selected; they are typically those who thrive in the system; and those who are confident and articulate) and therefore are not representative of those who may need to voice their views. They argue that student voice work results in a "dividing practice," where confident, articulate students are divided from those who "don't fit the dominant discourse and academic aspirations of their school" (p. 22). If we ensure dis-engaged students, marginalised students, and diverse cultural representations are afforded voice and power, how might this change the status quo? Even when diverse voices are sought and represented we need to question whether we are diluting voice. For example, children identified as requiring additional support, identified with special educational needs, or "othered" in some way have their voice diluted simply because the number of voices in determining their

educational pathway (specialists, increased parental voice, teacher-aides) dilute the child's voice (McKay 2014).

Another concern that has been increasingly reflected in the literature is that even if students do voice their opinions, no action follows. In a study involving 11-year-old children, these young people expressed dissatisfaction at teachers not listening or valuing their knowledge (Sargeant and Gillett-Swan 2015), yet these children can be considered reliable reports of their own experiences. As reported by Sargeant and Gillett-Swan, a student in their study stated that “the one thing that I'd like adults to know is that us children can have our own opinions and we can do things on our own but we also need a lot of help so they should support us and not make us feel small” (p. 183). A study in Iceland showed similar findings when secondary school students noted that while it might be possible to suggest things through informal channels about the social life of the school, if it was about pedagogic practices “you hit a wall” (Bjarnadóttir and Geirsdóttir 2018, p. 7). Formal evaluations that sought student opinion about pedagogic practices were seen as tokenistic as “You know. Nothing changes” (p. 8).

4 What Does this Mean for Children and Young People?

Over 10 years ago, Rudduck and Fielding (2006) identified the importance of consulting students on matters that *interest them*, not necessarily the teacher or policy imperative. As they state:

Students will soon tire of invitations (a) to express a view on matters they do not think are important, (b) that are framed in a language they find restrictive, alienating or patronizing, and (c) that seldom result in actions or dialogue that affects the quality of their lives. (p. 227)

Even if students do choose to participate in educational conversations, Fielding (2004) raised a caution that the students' views can be misrepresented. For example, he identified three risks: accommodation, accumulation and appropriation. This means that those with well-intentioned student voice projects may incur a misrepresentation of students or create potential harm for students: (1) accommodation—interpreting and describing students in ways that support the status quo; (2) accumulation—using student voice, even intentionally to further control or placate students; or (3) appropriation—using student voice research as a method to reaffirm superiority and authority of those in a power position.

Involving children as co-researchers is one way that has been invoked to address issues of misrepresentation of students' views. Young people have the ability to explore and analyse data that have relevance to them and their everyday lives. Children's Reference Advisor Groups are a form of involving students in working with researchers (e.g. Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Although lack of knowledge and research competency are identified at times as a barrier to children's involvement in research as co-investigators, “adult research participants are assumed to

have competence unless they show otherwise, whereas researchers start with an assumption of incompetence with children” (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015, p. 163).

Bradbury-Jones and Taylor considered the challenges of children acting as co-researchers and argue for the move from participatory research to research by children. Given the UNCROC convention acknowledging children as rights-holders, this implication for research is clear. The strengths of involving young people and their peers (i.e. peer-led research) include peers possibly getting a more authentic response than adults undertaking the research, peers translating their own understandings of questions and issues, and peers sharing more with those they trust (friends) than with researchers (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015). While issues around confidentiality and impartiality are raised, these are not insurmountable given the benefits gained, and children can be taught and learn ethically responsible behaviour in research with a researcher supervisor.

5 Ways of Creating Space for Student Voice: The Researcher and Practitioner Role

Creating the space to listen to the learner has been identified in a number of ways. Fielding (2001) identified partnership through student voice across a trajectory beginning with the basic position of using students as a data source, and then moving through to students as active respondents, students as co-enquirers, students as knowledge creators, students as joint authors and intergenerational learning as lived democracy. Using nine clusters of questions (Table 1), Fielding (2001) identifies what is required if students are participatory members of research and practice. Through his work on *Students as Researchers* project, Fielding identified the following as a guide to ensure student voice was intentional, participatory, inclusive and agentic.

Increasingly, a consumer model of education is positioning students as “clients” of the education system, and they are more likely to speak up and out on matters that affect them directly. Refer, for example, to the recent student-led initiative on #menext where students, grief stricken over the senseless killings of their peers at school, became outraged with the United States over loose gun law regulations and zealously funded government sectors by the powerful gun lobby National Rifle Association, argued policy makers were not protecting their lives in school contexts. This is student voice at its most explosive, where something important to them is actioned and mobilised. This moves forward the argument that student freedom of speech and opinion is treated with some benevolence by teachers where it is identified as being “given” to students rather than a right (Fielding 2004).

At a practice level, teachers, educational psychologists and specialists in education are listening to learners more frequently, and finding that their [the adults’] challenge is to engage more intentionally to create the change. For teachers,

Table 1 Including student voice (Fielding 2001, p. 134)

Speaking	<i>Who</i> is allowed to speak?
	<i>To whom</i> are they allowed to speak?
	<i>What</i> are they allowed to speak about?
	<i>What language</i> is encouraged/allowed?
Listening	<i>Who</i> is listening?
	<i>Why</i> are they listening?
	<i>How</i> are they listening?
Skills	Are the skills of dialogue <i>encouraged and supported</i> through training or other appropriate means?
	Are those skills understood, developed and practised within the <i>context of democratic values and dispositions</i> ?
	Are those skills <i>transformed</i> by those values and dispositions?
Attitudes and dispositions	How do those involved <i>regard each other</i> ?
	To what degree are the <i>principle of equal value and the dispositions of care</i> felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?
Systems	<i>How often</i> do dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur?
	<i>Who decides</i> ?
	How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or <i>relate to other organisational arrangements</i> (particularly those involving adults)?
Organisational culture	Do the <i>cultural norms and values</i> of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement?
	Do the <i>practices, traditions and routine daily encounters</i> demonstrate values supportive of student voice?
Spaces and the making of meaning	<i>Where</i> are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place?
	<i>Who controls</i> them?
	What <i>values</i> shape their being and their use?
Action	What <i>action</i> is taken?
	<i>Who feels responsible</i> ?
	<i>What happens</i> if aspirations and good intentions are not realised?
The future	Do we need <i>new structures</i> ?
	Do we need <i>new ways of relating to each other</i> ?

however, ironically this creates an added dimension that is often radical and troubling in the classroom. There is a sense of “innovation fatigue”; students themselves will tire of being asked about things that are not relevant or meaningful for them. There is therefore a need to include “student voice” work within initial teacher education programmes and for teachers to be able to access professional learning and development in this area.

Accessing student voice is just a starting point, because as pointed out by a number of researchers over time, student voice is considered powerful only when the perspective is consistent with adults' views or enable adults to create the change that does not significantly affect what they do. As Fielding (2010) pointed out, student voice becomes problematic when views and calls for action make adults uncomfortable. He states that "If the kinds of partnership with children and young people could become emancipatory rather than merely part of the slick and persuasive incorporation of neo-liberalism, then we need to pay serious attention to radical traditions of thought and practice" (p. 70).

Teacher workload and accountability imperatives, often with larger class sizes, experience their own dilemmas with regard listening to voices of management, governance, teaching peers and students. Although the central tenet of student-centred pedagogical practice is the involvement and participation in learner choice, activity and personalising learning, the reality is that for many teachers "survival mode" reverts them back into a pedagogical approach that they have more control over and that becomes more teacher initiated (Sargeant and Gillett-Swan 2015), or where there is an impoverished view of learning as a transmission (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015a).

6 The Path Ahead

This book contributes to the ongoing international dialogue around student voice research, policy and practice and aims to serve as a stimulus to meaningful deliberation on the myriad, and particularly ethical, tensions of involving young people in research. Wyness (2013) suggests that in the context of student voice work "the extent to which participatory initiatives make a material difference to children's lives" (p. 439) should be an important criterion for assessing children's participation. The research and practice of student voice, student partnership and participation, and affording students greater involvement in their own learning requires consideration of Lundy's (2007) framework that argues that voice is not enough, and like others in the field (e.g. Fielding 2004; Rudduck and Fielding 2006), action and change are required.

Therefore, when reading through this book, we invite the reader to critically engage with the chapters by thinking about Lundy's (2007) four elements of student voice (space, voice, audience and influence) and how these are identified and actioned across the examples you read:

Space: Children must be given the opportunity to express a view

Voice: Children must be facilitated to express their views

Audience: The view must be listened to

Influence: The view must be acted on, as appropriate.

Although increasingly space and voice are apparent in the “student voice” work with young people, the challenge for real democratic change is seen in the ability to action the audience and influence levels (e.g. Bourke and MacDonald 2018). This book encourages those working with the student voice and student partnership agenda in research and practice to consider the issues raised in this book, to open up the opportunity for children to express their views, to be facilitated to do so, and more critically to have these views listened to and acted on.

This urgency for children to be included in educational agendas is now reflected at governmental level. For example, as shown during the negotiations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Declaration, where the government of the Netherlands advocated for the need for the SDGs to be comprehensible and inspiring to children, this report suggested a role for young people in the formulation of the Goals. In response, an e-consultation occurred with children and youth (UNICEF 2015). As noted in the UNICEF report, children and young people recognised that the Declaration was very important to them and were disappointed that their role in the SDGs was not recognised in the Declaration. They expressed their commitment to wanting to be identified as positive change agents and argued that, given they were the generation to inherit the legacy of the Declaration, it was important that they were not only consulted about the Declaration but they have an active role in implementing and monitoring it. Importantly, they argued that if the Declaration showed a role for children and young people it would be inspiring for them when reading it.

In contrast, the following example highlights what happens when students *are* listened to in the consultation process. A recent report from the New Zealand Office of the Children’s Commissioner, *Education matters to me: Key insights* (2018) highlights young people’s voice in education. This report reflects on a three-way collaboration between children and young people, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and the New Zealand School Trustees’ Association to ensure that the voices of children and young people contribute to the development of the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities. Their findings indicated six key insights, identified from children and young people:

1. Understand me in my whole world
2. People at school are racist towards me
3. Relationships mean everything to me
4. Teach me the way I learn best
5. I need to be comfortable before I learn
6. It is my life—let me have a say. <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/>.

In both the cases described above, there is evidence that researchers and policy analysts created the space for young people, heard and documented their voice(s) and provided the audience for these young people. It is yet to be seen if there is influence in practice, that is, will these young voices make a difference to policy and practice?

This book contributes to the ongoing mahi (work) with children and focuses entirely on diverse student voice(s) in its multiple guises, and reactions to these. Readers are presented with various lenses that encourage them to explore the participation of young people and their representation of cultures, gender, ethnicities, values and beliefs. These lenses highlight student voice as a space or a tool constituted by discourses from heterogeneous fields leading to tensions and challenges.

7 Overview of the Book

The chapters across this book report on research that shows the diverse interdependent and intergenerational nature of young persons' voice(s). The chapters highlight the fluid nature of working with young people and their ideas, at times accentuating matters of power, identity, marginalisation and the "silenced" voice. The chapters push the boundaries for arguing that young people's rights to have a voice extends to all aspects of the educational experiences. The power of student voice can bring about fundamental change in a school's ethos and climate.

As authors in this book argue, neither adults nor children operate as isolated and independent beings. Hence, researchers need to think about how their interdependent and intergenerational relationships with children are practically manifested in particular social contexts and situations, and how ethical practice should be undertaken in these contexts, rather than rely on preconceived normative ideas about how ethical conduct should occur. This places a demand on researchers to be continually reflexive.

In Chap. 2, Alison Cook-Sather traces the evolution of student voice in educational research as it has emerged and morphed through various phases into a plethora of different approaches. Diversity of students' "presence, participation and power" is examined. At both the school level and tertiary education level, student voice(s) and participation as a transformational approach to education is presented. Cautioning against the use of "consumerism," Cook-Sather adeptly introduces ways to ensure participation on students' terms addresses the political imperatives often seen in power relationships between teacher and learner. As Cook-Sather argues, "how we put into practice the premises of students' rights and power necessarily varies across the context." Voices are both hidden and unheard, and these issues are explored within this chapter. Cook-Sather identifies the complexity of both defining and enacting student voice, and the following chapters present case studies of how this is enacted in practice.

In Chap. 3, O'Neill examines the ethics of children's agency in educational research and suggests three discursive positionings about children's involvement in research: the child as not yet a person, the child as a person and the child as an agent. O'Neill asks the question that if we consider research ethics from the child's perspective, "what might we 'hear'?" Student voice methodologies in educational research and educational reform work assume children are competent social agents

and have a right to democratic participation in research about them and about school processes. However, institutional research ethic procedures have historically assumed children are not competent and do not, in law, have full autonomy. These competing views of children and their rights create tensions and ethical dilemmas for those engaging with children in research and reform work. However, O'Neill offers advice for researchers in education that involve or affect children. These include:

1. Avoid “adulthood,” “paternalism,” “essentialism” and “ethnocentrism”;
2. Conceptualise research within the dynamic social and cultural worlds of the child;
3. Engage in research *with* children as competent social actors;
4. Facilitate the child’s right to participate in making reasoned decisions;
5. Match assent processes to the context of the research;
6. Nurture ongoing relationships of trust; and
7. Be reflexive about the ethics of the research as it unfolds.

In Chap. 4, Joanna Kidman explores the tensions and challenges involved in the participation of Māori youth in a project in which they created photographic representations of their social, cultural and tribal environments within Māori communities. Kidman provides insight into the way research processes were adapted to encompass the cultural protocols and processes of the participants’ communities. Processes and issues such as the recruitment and consent of participants, the use of visual artefacts, and the ownership of data were negotiated at community hui (meetings) and in meaningful venues (including marae and community centres). The ways that wider political processes, such as Treaty of Waitangi settlements, impacted upon research processes are also examined. Kidman’s chapter is particularly poignant in that “questions emerged about how members of tribal communities and researchers, respectively, think very differently about matters of voice, partnership and inclusiveness in relation to Māori young people.” For Kidman, an important question is around *how* the voices of young Māori voices are represented, and as she asks “to what end?” Kidman draws attention to the within group differences that characterise conducting research with young Māori, arguing that “life experience, social class, geographical location and the nature and degree of cultural identification with Māori tribal selfhoods” all need to be considered. Furthermore, she notes the way that qualitative research that focuses solely on common themes can flatten participant voice and obscure outlying or discordant responses.

Paula Flynn’s research in Chap. 5 reveals how student voice research in practice enabled students who had previously been marginalised to assume leadership roles. Working with her 20 student participants at high school level in the Republic of Ireland, Flynn explores the “silences” of some young people, but recognises that breakthroughs in enabling all voices to be heard and acted on can foreground voice, empowerment and transformation as inter-related and powerful mechanisms for change. The young people Flynn worked with had been identified with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and although the majority of these students

initially noted having “difficult relationships with all or most of their teachers at the beginning of the study,” these relationships changed over the course of the research, and that “having a better relationship with even one of two teachers made a significant difference to their confidence and sense of comfort at school.” Ultimately, Flynn’s chapter raises the point that an inclusive school is where a culture of listening is evident.

Hynds, Faircloth, Green, and Jacob (Chap. 6) draw on the voices of Māori D/deaf youth and explores the threats to the identities of these young people who traverse three worlds: *te ao Māori* (the Māori world), the Deaf world, and the hearing world of Aotearoa. As Hynds et al. demonstrate, the young people experience great pride in their cultural identities, being both Māori and Deaf. Through their research and work with the young people, five messages are identified, including recognition of past work that contributes to our understanding today, and of those that influence their lives. In other words, the communities within which these young people live, shape, support and influence them, and their voice(s) are a strong part of sharing this knowledge of their own lives as Māori D/deaf youth.

Listening to the voices of Māori students over a 20-year period is addressed in Chap. 7, and by the end of the chapter, the reader will no doubt ask: Can I help students to open the doors of their dreams? Mere Berryman and Elizabeth Eley present voices of Māori students explaining their experiences over several government initiatives in education in Aotearoa New Zealand. As these authors identify young people “continue to highlight the need to overturn the underlying racism that persistently disadvantages” certain groups of students. What one takes from this chapter is that although students’ views on equity and experiences, and on inequitable educational experiences, are not new, more latterly there is room for hope. Hope that our education system can use these learners’ experiences as part of transformative effect. More pressingly, they also argue that acknowledging and understanding success for Māori learners required them to be “emotionally and spiritually strong.”

Angela Ward’s Chap. 8 is a timely reminder of the potential of student voice to contribute to democratic inclusivity. This chapter powerfully makes the argument that there should be opportunities for all students to reflect on and share their experiences with those who will listen and respond to what they have heard. Ward draws on narrative inquiry to facilitate a process for students with disabilities to share their experiences in and out of school and to analyse their feelings and the decisions they have made. A comprehensive account of the process is illustrated with extracts from one narrative showing how the process of the narrative inquiry enabled the young person to reflect on her experiences and think differently about them and her future life.

The potential for student voice to provoke researchers to think differently and be “translated by it” (Cook-Sather 2007, p. 829) is exemplified by Roseanna Bourke and Judith Loveridge in Chap. 9. They present the findings of research where the initial focus of their research was redirected by the young people to something that was more pertinent to them. The researchers initially set out to examine if a newly mandated national assessment system was impacting on students’ understandings of

assessment. The students showed little awareness of the assessment system or how it represented their learning. However, it became apparent that they were interested in talking about their learning, and in particular the point of learning. The five diverse broad themes identified in the students' responses about the point of learning directed the researchers' attention "out of the school gates" to the networks of relationships they have with adults and children, and to the multi-modal aspects of their learning. Bourke and Loveridge emphasise the need to conceptualise and conduct student voice research in a way that facilitates the expression of diverse student voices and for researchers to be responsive to the interests of students, not just their own.

As previously noted, an enduring issue in student voice research has been that while student voice is actively sought, it might not be listened to or acted upon. In Chap. 10 Bourke and Loveridge report on research where they worked with teachers in presenting the findings from their research with students about the point of learning. They examined how teachers respond to the students' views, and the influences on their practice. Teachers used their own frames of reference to interpret the students' views and these tended to be oriented towards the officially mandated national curriculum and its key competencies or what they were trying to achieve with their own students. Teachers who had been recently involved in a situation where they actively listened to student voice tended to be more open to the views of the students and responded in terms of what they had heard their own students saying. Bourke and Loveridge argue that it is important for teachers to think reflexively about the ways in which they listen to student voice, and how what they hear may be mediated by their own understandings. In Chap. 10, we suggest that for student voice to be an authentic tool for change it is "first a tool of reflection for teachers."

The final two chapters are responses to the critique that student voice work has uncritically assumed simplistic oppositional notions of power between adults and students and has been under theorised (Taylor and Robinson 2009).

In Chap. 11, Wood, Taylor and Atkinson examine ideas about power as they bring together the fields of student voice initiatives and citizenship participation work in schooling contexts. After reviewing a range of models to evaluate the nature of youth participation programmes, they critically examine simplistic and problematic views of power in student voice work. They then provide an analysis of a student voice within a social studies curriculum project across five schools in which students took "personal social action." Their findings reveal the way the locus of power shifted between adults and young people in dynamic ways; power sharing between teachers, students and other relevant adults was a mediated and negotiated process. They argue that given that student voice work involves the negotiation of power within the regulated space of the school, there needs to be critical training/education to enable those involved to understand the pervasive (and productive) effects of power and knowledge.

In Chap. 12, Emily Nelson focuses on the productive nature of power as she examines the way teachers deployed their positional authority in three different student voice pedagogical projects that were of interest to the students. Nelson

draws on Foucault's relational view of power as a way to move beyond the repressive binary view of power that has dominated much student voice work, and to foreground the way that power relations between teachers and students were nuanced and shifting. Nelson's work identifies three imperatives for enacting student/teacher pedagogical decision making: the creation of new student voice identities, expanding the pedagogical decision making agenda that students could participate in, and appropriating existing educational discourses to frame possibilities for student voice action. Nelson also draws attention to a number of factors within the broader context in which teachers practise and students learn, such as the broader performative accountability culture, which makes student/teacher pedagogical partnerships both "transformational and problematic."

8 Conclusion

This book brings together research from educators interested in the voice of children and young people, the rights of the child, and forging new ways for thinking about the challenges we face in authentically including children and young people in educational policy, research and practice that directly influence and matter to them. While the potential for student voice to be transformative is real, it creates challenges for practitioners and policy makers alike, given neither student voice nor policy makers are inherently representative of one voice, one culture or coherent values. Collectively, the diverse chapters within this book seek to question "ordinary" or taken-for-granted assumptions about young people's roles and experiences within their schools and local communities and in so doing contribute to transforming young lives. The challenge for researchers and educators is to reconsider how young people are involved in research and learning agendas. Realising the promise of radical collegiality to create fundamental and positive change in the lives of these learners is in our hands.

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Chapter 2

Tracing the Evolution of Student Voice in Educational Research



Alison Cook-Sather

Abstract As educational research that embraces “student voice” has proliferated, the terms and practices associated with this work have multiplied to address the particular philosophical, methodological and ethical issues involved. This discussion summarises the key developments in the evolution of student voice in educational research from early efforts in the 1990s to elicit student perspectives regarding their learning in primary and secondary schools, through to more current approaches to working with students as partners in or as leaders of educational research projects in primary through tertiary educational contexts. The chapter touches upon definitions and contexts of “student voice”; the relationship among voice, rights and power; research methods that have evolved to integrate student voice and participation; the diversification of voices included in student voice research; and changes in (re)presentation of students in educational research.

1 Introduction

As educational research that embraces “student voice” has proliferated, the terms and practices associated with such work have multiplied to address the particular philosophical, methodological and ethical challenges involved in research that seeks to include students as those positioned to “identify and analyze issues related to their schools and their learning that they see as significant” (Fielding and Bragg 2003, p. 4) and to speak and act alongside credentialed educators as critics and creators of educational practice. In this chapter, I trace the evolution of student voice in educational research in relation to primary through tertiary education. While there are certainly differences across context and level, and between students participating in educational research and students undertaking research in

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educational institutions, I summarise the key developments that characterise the evolution of student voice work as a movement within educational research.

I begin with a discussion of the expanding terminology and conditions for student voice in educational research over time and across contexts. I move then to discuss the underlying premises of student voice work as they intersect with shifting national and local priorities, identify methodological approaches to integrating student voice into educational research and highlight the ethical complexities involved in such work. I then offer examples of student voice in research that represent its expansion, discuss the diversification regarding whose voices are elicited and attended to and highlight key changes in (re)presentation of educational research that features and foregrounds student voices.

Given that this discussion addresses all these dimensions of student voice in educational research, I cannot go into detail about any one of them, nor can I mention all relevant research. My goal is to highlight the key developments with the hope that readers will consult the texts referenced for detailed discussions of each dimension.

2 Expanding Terminology and Conditions for Student Voice in Educational Research

The terminology “pupil voice” (in the United Kingdom and Australia) and “student voice” (in the United States and Canada) emerged from what Fielding (2001) called “new wave” student voice work during the 1990s and early 2000s. Through this work in primary and secondary school contexts, students were consulted regarding their learning experiences and invited to contribute to school reform efforts (Fielding 2001; Levin 2000; Rudduck and Flutter 2004; SooHoo 1993). Both terminology and practices have expanded significantly since then, growing in different ways depending on context and conditions.

From the outset, the term “student voice” aimed to signal not only the literal sound of students’ words as they began to inform educational planning, research and reform but also the collective contribution of diverse students’ presence, participation and power in those processes (Cook-Sather 2002, 2006). Among the terms that have proliferated to describe this work are “student participation,” “youth-adult partnership,” “youth activism,” and others at the primary and secondary levels (Mitra 2011) and student–staff/student–faculty partnerships and students as partners at the tertiary level (Cook-Sather et al. 2014; Healey et al. 2014; Matthews 2017b). These terms have emerged with the goals both of defining more literally and explicitly the kind of work that students do in relation to educational research and reform and naming the expanding range of such work.

The conditions under which these terms and practices emerged vary across context depending on whether or not there exist governmental mandates, support or a shared vision for student voice in educational research and practice. England, for instance, was formerly a leader in promoting and practising student voice work (Alexander 2013; DfES 2004; OFSTED 2000) but has been forced by shifting

governmental emphases to move away from such promotion, although a range of government initiatives has emerged in the United Kingdom more broadly to regulate consultation of children regarding policies that affect them directly (Elwood 2013). The Ministry of Education in Ontario, Canada, invites student voices to inform educational practice through the Minister's Student Advisory Council, Student Forums and SpeakUp Projects, all of which structure and support students' analyses of their educational experiences and action to reform educational practices (see <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/>). Like Canada, New Zealand's Ministry of Education articulates a clear commitment to involving students actively in assessment at multiple levels (<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz>).

In contrast, when there are no governmental mandates, as is the case in the United States, individuals or organisations take it upon themselves to honour student voices and partner with students to develop and revise educational practices. Individual efforts at the primary and secondary levels in the United States often focus on school reform initiatives and how students can contribute to the research that informs those efforts (e.g. Rubin and Silva 2003; Yonezawa and Jones 2007). Such "bottom-up initiatives tend to have a level of authenticity that leads to strong student-voice outcomes" but struggle with sustainability due to lack of institutional support (Mitra et al. 2014, p. 301). An exception is the "Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together" (YATST) organisation in Vermont, now under the umbrella of UP for Learning (<http://www.upforlearning.org/initiatives/youth-and-adults-transforming-schools-together>), through which secondary students and teachers are trained to work together to analyse and revise educational approaches (see Beattie 2012; Beattie et al. 2015; Biddle 2017; Biddle and Mitra 2015).

At the tertiary level, the complexities of naming and conducting educational research that embraces student voice take a different form. Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015) argue that student voice at the tertiary level is often framed as student feedback and "located in the realm of 'quality assurance' of teaching and learning or 'the student experience'" (p. 93). Exemplifying this approach is Garwe's (2015) study of a survey of issues affecting teaching and learning quality in eight public and five private universities in Zimbabwe. While it is essential to attend to students' perspectives on their learning, such efforts run the risk of playing into the consumer mentality unless they are framed in partnership terms (see Gibson et al. 2017).

Programmes such as Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges and the Wabash-Provost Scholars programme at North Carolina A&T State University in the USA actively work against the students-as-consumer model by inviting students to partner with educators and/or take the lead in research projects focused on classroom and institutional, educational practices (see case studies in Cook-Sather et al. 2014; de Bie et al. forthcoming). In Canada, McMaster University's "student scholars" programme not only invites students' perspectives on course/curriculum design or pedagogical research and offers students meaningful roles through which they "contribute intellectual property to the project," it also gives students "some autonomy and voice in decision-making processes" (Marquis et al. 2016, p. 5). The Student Fellow Scheme at the University

of Winchester in the UK enables students to work with staff on research and resource development to enhance the educational experience (Lowe et al. 2017). Programmes such as these and others, including efforts across national higher education systems (see Matthews 2017a for an Australian example), strive to create the conditions for student voice and student-faculty partnership. Some of this work is self-described as “voice” and “student voice” work, and some of it uses the language of student-faculty partnership or students as partners.

Inviting students to be participants, agents and partners in research on educational practice challenges deep-seated social and cultural assumptions about the capacity of young people to discern, analyse and contribute to effective approaches to teaching and learning. As such invitations proliferate, questions arise regarding the terminology we use to name these practices and the conditions under which the practices unfold (Cook-Sather et al. in preparation). Many of these questions revolve around issues of students’ rights and power.

3 Students’ Rights and Power

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 was the most explicit statement of children’s rights to have informed student voice work. The rights framework gives legal and/or ethical weight to student voice, but the operation of power is infinitely more complex and negotiated in an ongoing way within the relationships created by student voice work.

Scholars of student voice have consistently asserted voice as a right. Writing in England, MacBeath et al. (2003) argued: “Young people have a right to be heard” (p. 2). Writing in Chile, Prieto (2001) argued that underlying her research was a strong belief “in the right and necessity of students speaking for themselves” (p. 88). In Canada, Thiessen (1997) suggested that acting on behalf of students’ perspectives is an approach embraced by “defenders of [students’] right to be individually and collectively heard—to have their voices respected, their preferences considered, their critiques engaged, and their choices matter” (p. 191). Writing in the USA, Cook-Sather (2006) focused on “rights” among other issues in an analysis across student voice initiatives.

While the rights frame allows, in theory, for “potentially disruptive dialogue since students are always involved in important discussions” (Thomson and Gunter 2006, p. 845), in the context of research conducted on behalf of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Lundy (2007) critiqued the concept of “pupil voice” from a children’s rights perspective, highlighting some of the barriers to the meaningful and effective implementation of children’s rights. Consistent with Lundy’s (2007) critique, Thomson and Gunter (2006) have argued that “there is a marked tendency for senior policy makers to bring “pupil voice” into the policy conversation as a means of achieving school improvement and higher standards of attainment, rather than as a matter of the UN convention, citizenship and rights” (p. 840).

If a rights framework is not combined with genuine respect for all parties involved and intentional structures to support collective action by adults and young people, which includes student empowerment, then the result can be empty rhetoric—claims not acted on in practice. Writing in New Zealand, Nelson (2015a) has argued that “the ‘students as researchers’ movement” represents the strongest research practice in what she calls an “active participation orientation to authenticity in student voice” (p. 3). To respect students and enact authenticity in student voice work is to “take seriously” what students tell us about their experiences “of being a learner in school,” specifically, “what gets in the way of their learning and what helps them to learn” (Rudduck and Flutter 2004, p. 2; see also Rudduck and McIntyre 2007). Bourke and Loveridge (2016) highlight how challenging it is to keep the focus of educational research on respecting what young people think is most important, as opposed to allowing adult priorities to draw the focus elsewhere.

Inextricably linked with questions of rights are questions of power. The complex social relations inherent in student voice work at the primary and secondary levels necessitate addressing the power dynamics such work surfaces (Taylor and Robinson 2009). It is likewise essential to address both the potential and the limits of dialogue across difference at this level of schooling, especially cultural differences within educational contexts (Jones 1999), and rather than speaking about and for others, to work with students as collaborators and co-researchers (Fielding 2004a). Embracing this approach, Colatos and Morrell (2003) worked with youth as critical researchers in the context of diverse urban schools in the United States with the goal of increasing the consciousness of young people and helping them assert greater control over their own paths through school and life.

Questions of rights and power at the tertiary level manifest differently. Typically, discussions of students’ rights in higher education focus on access, speech, participation, process and the like (see the theme of the annual conference of the American Association of University Professors: “The Rights and Freedoms of Students”). Student voice in educational research at the tertiary level extends those to students’ right to identify research issues, conduct research on those issues and author or co-author analyses of them. As Hutchings et al. (2011) suggest, students can be “co-inquirers, collaborators, and partners in formulating questions, generating and analysing data, making sense of findings, and lobbying for change” (pp. 39–40). Seale et al. (2015) argue that we must wrestle with issues of power in relation to ownership and expertise in educational research if we are to enact “the vision of student engagement and the ideals of strong participation and expression of student voice” (p. 550, see also Cook-Sather 2018). Negotiating power relations in student voice research or research on—and through—student–faculty pedagogical partnership is a recurrent theme in the literature on student–faculty partnership in higher education (Cook-Sather et al. 2014; Matthews et al. forthcoming; Mihans et al. 2008).

How we put into practice the premises of students’ rights and power necessarily varies across context. The assertions and examples included here offer glimpses that characterise efforts to date and provide the impetus for the acceleration of the student voice movement.

4 Developing Approaches for Integrating Student Voice into Educational Research

Student voice work shifts the frame from research *on* to research *with* students (Cook-Sather 2006; Fielding 2004a; Fine et al. 2007; Groundwater-Smith et al. 2014; Mitra 2007). Such a shift means students are no longer objects of study but rather subjects, primary actors or what Delamont (1976) called “protagonists” (see also Thiessen 2007). Movement from the first to the fourth mode of Fielding’s (2004b) typology also captures this shift: (1) students as data source, (2) students as active respondents, (3) students as co-researchers and (4) students as researchers. Shifting from research *on* to research *with* students does not entirely dissolve power dynamics, but research *with* students calls upon both experienced researchers and students new to research to conceptualise themselves, to act and to interact differently from what many are used to in more hierarchical and distanced research relationships (Cook-Sather 2012). With this shift, approaches in early childhood research have become more inclusive and participatory, and approaches to research with older students have expanded to include a revision of roles, structures and processes to support students developing the capacities they need to be research collaborators and leaders.

There are particular methodological and epistemological challenges to student voice research with very young children because of their age and position (Hall and Rudkin 2011; Pascal and Bertram 2009). Among the approaches scholars have employed are participatory and visual methods (Clark 2011; Rizvi 2011), specifically, the existential-phenomenological method (Kyronlampi-Kylmanen and Maatta 2012), which aims to capture children’s subjective human experience through child-friendly interviews, and the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss 2001; Harcourt and Mazzoni 2012), through which children’s photography, mapping and conversations are used to capture children’s perspectives (see Groundwater-Smith et al. 2014 for a thorough discussion of these and other methods). While there is an increasing use of visual methods, Wall (2017) cautions that “there is a need to be critical of the nature of the tool, the way it is read (by different individuals and age groups) and the way that different media can influence the nature of the response given” (p. 327; see also Roa 2017).

In work with primary and secondary students, students as researchers (Fielding and Bragg 2003) and youth-led participatory action research (Cammarota and Fine 2008) address both the political challenges and inherent power imbalances of conducting research with young people. These approaches can, in some cases, be politically pointed. For instance, Fine et al. (2007) describe how youth participants in one of their action research projects participated in a “series of research camps, each held for two days at a time in community and/or university settings.” The explicit aim of this effort was to deconstruct “who can do research, what constitutes research and who benefits” through immersing youth in methods training and social

justice theory (pp. 819–820). While any student voice work in primary and secondary contexts can be charged, Biddle and Mitra (2015) argue that “cultivating successful youth-adult partnership or student voice practices can be especially challenging at the middle grade level in which many adults still harbor doubts about youth readiness for voice and decision-making responsibilities” (p. 2).

To prepare young people to take on the role of researcher, scholars have developed forums and approaches that equip students and initiate them into the responsibilities of gathering and analysing data. The philosophy behind this approach is consistent with the rights’ framework and affords students both respect and structures for becoming partners in research. As Fielding and Bragg (2003) have explained:

[Students as Researchers] promotes “partnerships” in which students work alongside teachers to mobilise their knowledge of school and become “change agents” of its culture and norms. It seeks to develop amongst students and teachers a sense of shared responsibility for the quality and conditions of teaching and learning, both within particular classrooms and more generally within the school as a learning community. (p. 4)

Drawing on Alderson’s (2000) work, Fielding and Bragg (2003) provide an outline for, questions to guide, and advice regarding the stages of students-as-researchers projects (see pages 27–35 for greater detail):

- involving students (which students to include? are they invited or do they volunteer?);
- choosing topics to research (who decides? where is the real chance of change?);
- establishing staff roles (how much will they lead and how much follow students’ lead?);
- matching inquiry strategies to the topic (what are appropriate ways to find answers to the research questions posed?);
- setting a time scale and distributing tasks among those involved;
- analysing and writing up data (keeping records, identifying patterns, drawing conclusions, etc.);
- sharing the findings (format? audience? purpose?);
- celebrating it;
- responding to it.

Thomson and Gunter (2006) share the following research framework with students:

- What we need to know about is ...
- We might be able to do something about ...
- What does this really mean ...?
- Why is it like this...?
- This is a concern because ... (p. 849)

As Groundwater-Smith et al. (2014) remind us regarding appropriate methodological fit, an important strategy in choosing methods is to consult with young

people who have engaged or will engage with the methods: “Without such consultation, there is the risk that methods—however novel or well-intended—promote tokenistic, rather than genuine, participation” (p. 132).

Working with students as researchers in tertiary contexts requires some of the same approaches as in secondary contexts, through which students learn the tools and norms of conducting research. In the realm of educational research as well as in the growing arenas of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and faculty development (Bovill and Felten 2016), university-based educators argue for acknowledging the plurality of students’ experiences and perspectives (Werder and Otis 2010) and placing students alongside instructors and academic researchers in explorations of teaching and learning (Cook-Sather et al. 2014; Cousin 2012). The Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Research Internship Scheme at The University of Western Australia, for instance, invites undergraduate students to research challenges in teaching and learning of identified priority for the University (Partridge and Sandover 2010). Similarly, through the North Carolina A&T State University Wabash-Provost Scholars Programme (2011), undergraduate students are trained to conduct focus-group sessions with their peers, obtain and analyse qualitative and quantitative data, develop written summary reports and lead scholarly presentations on their work and experiences. Such approaches are proliferating as students take an increasingly active role as researchers, adding not only their voices but their interpretative frames to scholarly practice.

In addition, venues for student voice to inform reports of research on educational practices at the tertiary level have proliferated. The number of sessions at professional conferences in which students are co-presenting as researchers has increased significantly in recent years, with students included in collaborative writing groups co-authoring with faculty and staff across a range of SoTL topics (Healey and Matthews 2017). Web-based forums focused on integrating student voices into SoTL are also proliferating.¹ Furthermore, publications such as *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, *International Journal for Students as Partners*, *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, and *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* create forums for research conducted and authored by students, ensuring that their voices speak alongside those of their faculty colleagues. Students, faculty and staff are even co-editing journals together through partnership that involves students in the research realm of knowledge dissemination (and gatekeeping) (Cliffe et al. 2017).

Questions of the terminology and conditions of student voice in educational research, students’ rights and power, and what research methods might best accommodate student voice and participation all prompt ethical considerations.

¹See, for example, “Why Integrate Student Voices into SoTL?” <http://blogs.elon.edu/issotl13/student-voices-in-sotl/why-integrate-student-voices-in-sotl/>.

5 Ethical Considerations Regarding Student Voice in Educational Research

Issues of power, inclusion, representation and critical awareness that permeate student voice in educational research make this work fraught with ethical considerations. Morrow and Richards' (1996) overview of ethical concerns related to social research with children explored the extent to which children should be regarded as similar to, or different from, adults in social research. In this same spirit, Groundwater-Smith (2007) explored the dilemmas of consulting students and ethical concerns associated with such consultation, including students' right to say "no," questions of which students are consulted, and what the opportunity costs of this work might be. Equally important is attention to processes for ethical approval of research in university settings in relation to action research, which blurs the distinction between researcher and researched, complicates anonymity, and problematises ownership of the findings (Locke et al. 2013). Likewise, attention to consent, specifically the dilemmas of negotiating and maintaining children's informed consent and the related question of informed dissent during the research process (Bourke and Loveridge 2014), is key to ethical practice in research.

Understood as a form of collaborative action research, student voice in educational research poses challenges for both school practitioners and those working in university contexts. Collaborative action research embraces frameworks guided by the view that young people are "social actors and experts on their own lives" (Cowie and Khoo 2017, p. 234). As Nelson (2015b) argues, collaborative action research supports teachers in engaging with their students as decision-making partners in the classroom and also affords them opportunities to learn from students about effective pedagogy. Bourke et al. (2017) summarise the basic consideration of ethics in research, particularly with young people: "Ethics of research is about maintaining open-ended processes and attitudes so as to develop an understanding of the particular cultural, socioeconomic, familial and community contexts in which the research is being conducted" (p. 269).

Issues of trust, respect and justice permeate ethical consideration in student voice research (Morgan 2009), and because approaches such as Youth Participatory Action Research can be risky for students, researchers need to balance consideration of "the need and value of questioning issues of justice and fairness with the potential implications of raising controversial issues" (Mitra and McCormick 2017, p. 249). In their report of their study of communities in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa, Kiragu et al. (2012) addressed the ethical challenges and tensions that emerged in relation to the interactive research methodologies used. In the context of cross-cultural studies, such as those in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it is particularly important to recognize "the ethical complexities of involving children in research in the contexts of their families, schools, and communities" (Bourke et al. 2017, p. 259; see also Sinha 2017) and to engage in "an ethic of responsiveness" through which researchers "adopt culturally informed methods to

facilitate sharing and ensure culturally appropriate interpretation of data” (O’Neill et al. 2017, p. 292).

In higher education contexts, explorations are emerging of ethical implications of engaging students as partners in students-as-partners and SoTL work. Bryson and colleagues (2015) have argued that students-as-partners practices are ethical when “all are granted equality of opportunity to participate and all voices, opinions and contributions are listened to and acknowledged with mutual respect and appreciation” (p. 5). Taylor (2015) offers a guide to ethics and student engagement through partnership, Healey et al. (2013) address the challenge of practising SoTL in an ethical manner, and Matthews (2017b) discusses ethical implications around notions of power and argues that we need more research and theorisations on ethics in students-as-partners literature and practices.

As this brief review of key ethical considerations suggests, this work warrants careful attention to questions of consent and confidentiality as well as to whom to consult and how.

6 Expanding Student Voice in Educational Research

Geographic expansion is a clear indicator of proliferation. While the earliest efforts to involve students in educational research took place in the United Kingdom and, to a lesser degree, in Canada (e.g. Levin 2000) and the USA (e.g. Oldfather 1995), in recent years efforts in other countries have emerged. Thiessen and Cook-Sather (2007) published a collection of chapters featuring studies of students’ perspectives on their experiences of school in Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, England, Ghana, Ireland, Pakistan and the United States, and Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) collected chapters from authors working on five different continents who explored the relationships between student voice and action research, citizenship, democratic education and students-as-researchers.

Focusing on very young children in the United States, Hall and Rudkin (2011) explored the importance of adults’ responsibility to hear the voices of children from ages six weeks to six years and to develop strategies for educators for including children’s perspectives in everyday decisions. Kyronlampi-Kylmanen and Maatta (2012) used the existential-phenomenological method to describe five- to seven-year-old Finnish children’s experiences of day care as those experiences appear to the children themselves. And Harcourt and Mazzoni (2012) studied children’s views of quality in two early childhood classrooms in Verona, Italy.

Such efforts at the primary and secondary levels in a growing number of countries have proliferated as well. A few examples include: one study in New Zealand through which teachers asked students to identify how they make sense of learning in the classroom and how teachers can support such learning (Kane and Maw 2005) and another that drew on interviews with students to analyse the power

of student voice (Quinn and Owen 2016); interviews with 12- to 14-year-old students from secondary schools in different parts of Greece (Mitsoni 2006); an action research project in the Netherlands conducted by teams of teachers, students and museum educators (Smit 2013); projects that include students' participation in research for sustainable school improvement in Sweden (Bergmark and Kostenius 2009); and studies that employ interactive research methodologies to access the perspectives of young people on health and moral education in schools within the contexts of largely impoverished communities in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya and South Africa (Kiragu et al. 2012).

Higher education has lagged behind early childhood, primary and secondary contexts in formal integration of student voice in educational research, but in recent years such efforts have expanded. Looking across contexts, Healey and Jenkins (2009) have argued for the importance of undergraduates' engagement in research and inquiry and for a fundamental conceptual shift from the notion of students as a passive audience for the research output of individual academics, to the idea of students as active stakeholders in a research community. As Cook-Sather et al. (2014) document, projects in the United Kingdom and the United States built around a commitment to work with students as partners can take the form of individual faculty efforts or larger, institutional programmes, all of which amplify student voices and expand student roles in educational research. There has been some growth in individual research projects in other countries, such as a study of student voices in research in the United Arab Emirates (Aboudan 2011) and research in Australia conducted in partnership on institutional partnership projects across 11 universities (Matthews et al. 2018).

In contexts in which conditions are conducive to student voice work, institutions create structures and support for students to become researchers of institutional priorities. Student-led efforts, such as the Students as Change Agents programme at the University of Exeter, create opportunities for students to apply and develop their research expertise in the context of their subject, take responsibility for engaging with research-led, evidence-informed change and promote reflection and review at a departmental and institutional level (Dunne and Zandstra 2011). In contexts where student voice and partnership in higher education are more recently developing, university-based faculty and students are increasingly conducting research collaboratively, such as the work being done in Italy (e.g. Frison and Melacarne 2017) and in teacher education (Enright et al. 2017) and teaching and learning (Peseta et al. 2016) in Australia.

A significant development over the last five years is not only the inclusion of student voices in published analyses of educational practices but also the positioning of students as first authors in many of these publications. For instance, students have identified issues based on their educational experience and led efforts to research them in ways that directly influenced curriculum policy within the institution (Dvorakvora and Matthews 2017), while a systematic literature review article of student-staff partnerships was first authored by a student (Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017). Furthermore, key conceptual frames have been

proposed and developed by students, such as students' experiences of resistances and resiliencies in partnership (Ntem and Cook-Sather 2018) and epistemic in/justice as a frame for promoting greater equity and inclusion in higher education (de Bie et al. forthcoming).

These projects take seriously the contributions students make to understanding problems in educational settings and practices and the insights they provide that can inform changes in policy and practice. This aspect of the development of student voice in educational research, then, reveals an expansion of contexts in which student voice informs research—from largely primary and secondary within particular countries to early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary across more countries and in SoTL and students-as-partners work as well as in educational research—and also a shift from only adult- or institution-driven projects to projects that have student researchers as the co-leaders or leaders in both the inquiry and the authorship.

7 Diversifying Student Voices in Educational Research

As student voice in educational research has developed, questions have arisen about which voices are elicited and attended to. Since early attention was turned on student voices, scholars, practitioners and social critics have worried about who is asked and who offers their perspectives (Arnot et al. 2004; Bernstein 2000; Kozol 1991) and how to listen to voices we don't want to hear (Bragg 2001). Bernstein (2000) used the phrase “the acoustic of the school” to draw attention to what is audible—what sound is produced and perceived—in the space of a school. In his words: “Whose voice is heard? Who is speaking? Who is hailed by this voice? For whom is it familiar?” (p. xxi).

A particular challenge in educational research, as in reform, is the tendency to exclude under-represented students from the research project or process. In his study of elementary school age African-American students' perspectives on culturally responsive teaching, for instance, Howard (2001) pointed out that “little of the research on culturally responsive teaching practices has examined students' perceptions and interpretations of these pedagogical practices” (p. 131). Bishop and Berryman (2006) endeavoured to address this gap in Aotearoa/New Zealand by publishing a book that features Māori students' voices articulating their experiences, critiques, and hopes for their secondary schools. Such research often finds that student perspectives affirm theoretical principles—an affirmation that is not only about corroboration but also about ensuring that theory and experience align. Understanding the challenges that marginalised young people face requires not only listening to the students' voices but also actively engaging them in investigations of and interventions into social problems that affect their lives (Rodríguez and Brown 2009). Results of a systematic review that included 49 studies published in peer-refereed journals between 1990 and 2010 indicate that “student voice research is rapidly opening up spaces and capacities for racial and ethnic historically

marginalized youth to play key roles in school change and hybrid learning spaces” (Gonzalez et al. 2017, p. 451).

Nind et al. (2012) suggest that, while interest in the voices of children and young people has grown alongside concern for their rights and participation, for those excluded from mainstream education or with a label of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, student voice takes on particular relevance. Yet the voices of these young people, particularly girls, are often hidden and unheard both in education and in educational research. An evaluation of a students-as-researchers project in Brisbane, Australia, found that the use of participatory action research offers a means by which marginalised students, teachers and university researchers can work collaboratively towards positive outcomes for the participants and their schools (Bland and Atweh 2007). Ferguson et al. (2011) conducted semi-structured interviews with students with and without disabilities in an inclusive charter school in a western state in the United States to gather student perspectives on their participation in their classrooms and their perceptions of the classroom climate in order to begin a dialogue with their teachers that would lead to more participation in decision-making.

At the post-secondary level, there have been increasing calls for including under-represented students in classroom-based research (Seale 2010), in research on teaching and learning within faculty development (Cook-Sather and Agu 2013), and within SoTL (Felten et al. 2013). These studies argue for such inclusion for reasons of equity, for the particular insights marginalised students can offer, and for the ways that students positioned outside the mainstream can make all educational practices more informed and effective (Cook-Sather 2018; de Bie et al. forthcoming).

8 Attending to the Complexity of Representation

Although it is important to keep in mind the partial nature of any representation as well as perception (McKenzie 2014), representations of what is generated through the research process have seen a shift towards greater inclusion of student voices, both as “expert witnesses” (Rudduck 1999) and as co-authors. Rather than writing *about* students, as used to be the case in virtually all educational research, many more recent publications have student voices fill the pages of published studies not to “prove” or support researcher claims but rather to create space for students to make claims of their own. Groundwater-Smith et al. (2014) highlight the “ethical and political nature of decisions concerning children and young people’s participation in publication and dissemination” (p. 160) and recommend careful consideration of: Who may speak and to whom?; alternative formats to traditional paper publications, such as “Speak-outs” and performance/theatre, arts exhibitions; online or hard copy reports in the form of youth brochures, magazines, comics or posters; and the consequences of dissemination and publication, both positive and negative (p. 160; see also Fine et al. 2004).

Through the proliferation of articles, chapters, books and other media co-produced by experienced and youth/student researchers at the tertiary level (e.g. Bell et al. 2017; Cook-Sather and Abbot 2016; Cook-Sather and Luz 2014; Felten et al. 2013; Fine et al. 2007; Marquis et al. 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017; Werder and Otis 2010) and co-facilitation in workshops (Acai et al. 2017; Marquis et al. 2017), we see a move towards more genuine partnership, with students alongside experienced researchers. Echoing the movement across the categories of Fielding's (2004b) typology, in their review of how the concept of student voice has been represented in *Educational Action Research* from the 1990s to 2015, Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2015) note "a shift from earlier conceptualisations of students as a 'data source' to a more active involvement as co-researchers and joint constructors of knowledge, progressing toward more active student-teacher partnerships" (p. 159).

These shifts are an embodiment of, not just call for, partnership in that research—an approach that represents greater complexity of perspective represented and of authorship. As mentioned throughout this discussion, the outcomes of such efforts are both positive and complicated, particularly in relation to ongoing struggles with power, inclusion, representation, and critical awareness that participants experience.

9 Conclusion

The evolution of student voice within educational research has key lessons to teach us. As my brief discussion of several dimensions of this development suggests, both terminology and conditions shift and inform in complex ways how we define and enact student voice. As critics regularly remind us, students' rights and power cannot be assured, and sometimes the best we can do is make explicit the power dynamics in any given situation. The research methods mentioned in this discussion, which provide structures within which students can actively participate and partner in educational research, enable student collaboration but require as well sensitivity to the particular complexities of the contexts in which they are used and vigilance regarding ethical issues. As we continue to expand the range of voices elicited and choose modes of presentation that are inclusive, complexities of representation will remain a challenge, provoking us to engage in ongoing negotiation, with careful attention to rights, power and responsibility every step of the way as we advance our collective effort to progress and proliferate student voice across contexts and continents in ways that take seriously diverse students' presence, participation and power in educational research.

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Chapter 3

Voice and the Ethics of Children's Agency in Educational Research



John O'Neill

Abstract In both educational research and educational reform work, “student voice” methodologies assume that children are competent social agents. For historical and cultural reasons, institutional research ethics procedures commonly assume that children are not. This chapter discusses the ethics of children’s agency in educational research, drawing on watershed discourses in the biomedical and social science research literatures. Three recent historico-ethical discourses are summarised: the child as not yet a person, the child as person and the child as agent. It is argued that in the first of these, the child’s voice is often inferred, in the second, it is respected and acknowledged, but only in the third does “student voice” educational research hold the possibility of becoming genuinely child-centric. The chapter discusses the need for empathetic consideration of research ethics from the position of the child and concludes with practical suggestions for increasing children’s agency and voice in educational research.

1 Introduction

Recent decades have seen a burgeoning of “student voice” work in Anglosphere educational research and school reform efforts (e.g. Cook-Sather 2006, 2014; Fielding 2004; Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015; Rudduck 2006; Schiller and Einarsdottir 2009; Taylor and Robinson 2009). According to Cook-Sather:

This way of thinking is premised on the following convictions: that young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling; that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education (Cook-Sather 2006, p. 359).

Similarly, Taylor and Robinson (2009) define student voice as “a normative project [that] has its basis in an ethical and moral practice which aims to give

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students the right of democratic participation in school processes” (p. 161). However, enacting a normative commitment to ensure that students have both voice and agency (i.e. the capacities to participate in and shape their world constructively) is not straightforward in practice. Fielding, for example, identifies three problems from the general and student-specific voice literatures in educational research: “speaking about others”; “speaking for others” and “getting heard” (Taylor and Robinson 2009, pp. 296–301). Moreover, Raffety (2015) documents the very real challenges of “minimising social distance” between adults and children in research.

In terms of the ethics of student voice educational research, there are two further complications. First, in my more than thirty years’ experience as a teacher and teacher educator, most schools grant students limited voice, even today; and second, in my experience as researcher and chair of two institutional research ethics committees, most committees grant children limited agency, even today. Such positioning of children echoes Morrow and Richards’ (1996) observation that discussions of the ethics of social research with children in the 1990s were framed by “descriptive perceptions” (p. 96) of children as vulnerable and incompetent. Both complications have the potential to seriously inhibit the further development of student voice research in schools. Finally, we need to recognise that while it is a primary purpose of much student voice work, not all educational research is intended to be of immediate or direct benefit to child participants; therefore, we also need to consider other ethical justifications for children’s participation in such research.

In this chapter, I will draw on historical examples of how other discipline groups have negotiated the various ethical dilemmas involved in determining children’s participation in research. Three discursive positionings may be discerned. First, until the 1970s, the positioning of “the child as not yet a person”; second from the 1980s, the positioning of “the child as a person”; and third, the more recent positioning of “the child as agent” in social research, including conceptions of child agency in the form of “student–teacher partnerships” (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler 2016), children making decisions about what is to be researched (Morgan and Sengedorj 2015) or children as “co–or primary researchers” (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015).

The first two of these have been significantly shaped by the principles of biomedical ethics (i.e. Beauchamp and Childress 1983); the third, by contemporary theories of childhood (e.g. Qvortrup et al. 2009). It is in the latter where, arguably, one sees the most sophisticated representations of “voice,” that is, voice as a quality of childhood being, rather than as an ontological tool.

The first part of the chapter briefly discusses why we should reconsider taken-for-granted limitations on children’s voice and agency in educational research. The chapter then summarises the principal arguments in each of the three discursive positionings in order to explain how the view that children should have both voice and agency in research has developed. The final section draws on these broader debates and arguments from other discipline areas to include suggestions for encouraging a child-centric approach to educational research on the grounds that an agentic view of children’s research participation may in turn facilitate more authentic “student voice” methodologies.

2 Why Should Children Have Voice and Agency in Research?

Two of the principal reasons why adults conduct empirical research in education are to understand the phenomenon of education better and to improve educational provision and experience for those involved. In order for us to understand the phenomenon of children's education better, children are necessarily involved as "participants" in our research. Irrespective of data collection method (e.g. observation, survey questionnaire, interview, measurement) and despite the recent emergence of "child-friendly" approaches (e.g. Harcourt and Mazzoni 2012), only children can provide or permit the collection of the requisite data on their own educational knowledge and experiences. In the context of this chapter, children's research participation may therefore be regarded as an imperative. Moreover, when voice is understood broadly, as a form of active participation or social agency in educational settings, then it may be argued that children must exercise voice in meaningful ways if educational research is to be both possible and useful.

There is general acceptance in research ethics texts of a basic normative principle that participation in research of any kind ought to be on the basis of the person's voluntary and informed consent (i.e. children's voices should be heard). This principle, historically and today, presents a particular conundrum where children are concerned. This is because there is also general acceptance in research ethics texts of another basic principle, which is that because children in law do not have full autonomy (i.e. agency), they consequently cannot give consent to participate in research by themselves. Children, it is asserted, may "assent" but not "consent." Therefore, it is argued that adults must make a decision about consent on their behalf (i.e. children's voices must be "interpreted").

However, some adults who participate in education and in educational research may be judged to have fewer fully developed abstract reasoning capacities than other adults. Yet, they make decisions about research participation, which are judged to be not in their interests or those of others. Many other adults would disagree with these decisions, yet legally and ethically these adults are deemed to be competent to make their own decision to participate in research by virtue of the fact that they are autonomous persons with attendant legal and moral rights. This raises the question of the moral basis on which children with similarly developed reasoning and decision-making capacities to some autonomous adults are not permitted to also make their own decisions about research participation, whether or not the decision is one with which their parents or other adults would agree.

In the context of what Fielding (2004) has called "the 'new wave' of student voice activity" (p. 198) in schooling, controlling children's access to research opportunities, with "adults mediating children's worlds, and in the process muting children's voices" (Wyness 2012, p. 429), seems increasingly paradoxical. To what extent is a position that is based on categorical definitions of childhood, also an ethical argument based on children's rights, freedoms, responsibilities, obligations

or interests as research participants, or, indeed, as competent social agents (e.g. Dockett and Perry 2011)?

Definitions of child (e.g. United Nations 1989) and childhood (Ariès 1962) may vary socially, culturally and temporally. Nevertheless, contemporary educators and educational researchers commonly understand that: most children's capacity to think abstractly, reason, consider the interests of others, and understand the consequences of their personal decisions develops and matures over the course of their childhood; and children of the same age vary considerably in their decision-making capacities, dispositions and agency. On this basis, any particular child, irrespective of chronological age, may wish to, and be able to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision based on an understanding of their own and others' interests. Should the fact that the person is legally, categorically or institutionally (as in the case of schools and early childhood centres) deemed to be a child be regarded as sufficient justification to prevent them from making an informed decision about their own participation in research?

3 The Child as not yet a Person: Research on, not with Children

For most of the second half of the twentieth century discourses around the voice or agency of the child in social research were dominated by rival ethical positions that were articulated specifically to consider the ethics of children's participation in non-therapeutic health research, that is, research which is of no direct benefit to them. Most ethical arguments about consent in research are premised on the view of a person as a rational, reasoning individual. Accordingly, a child was for decades argued by many lawyers, ethicists and researchers to be "not yet a person" because they have less than fully developed reasoning capacities. Consequently, they are given limited legal and social autonomy, and parents or other proxies are permitted to make decisions on children's behalf just as they would on behalf of members of other "vulnerable" groups of people in society with "diminished" reasoning and decision-making capacities. The desire to protect participants who are judged to be vulnerable (including children) from potential harm led the US Congress to establish a National Commission (Jonsen 2006). The Commission's report, *Research Involving Children* (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioural Research [NC] 1977) identified "at least five different positions on the involvement of children in research" (p. 94).¹

¹Notably, the various positions were all written by men. Several were commissioned specially by the National Commission. The National Commission's report, Chap. 8 (pp. 91–118), undertook an exemplary critical analysis of the strengths and limitations of all five ethical positions. Space limitations preclude discussion of these here.

The NC report was a watershed event in two key respects. First its consequential effects have dominated the positioning of children by adults in biomedical, behavioural *and* social science research to this day. Second, while distinct ethical positions are identified and their strengths and weaknesses analysed in detail in the NC report, none of them fully recognises the child as a competent social agent. Given the persistent trace of the “child as not yet a person” discourse in contemporary research ethics codes, regulations and practices, it is worth briefly summarising the five main positions as reported by the National Commission.

3.1 Research that Does not Directly Benefit the Child Is Always Unethical

On this view, the child is incapable of giving fully informed consent or consciously acting in an altruistic or charitable manner. In therapeutic research,² parental or proxy consent is permissible only because the child is the “end” or purpose of the treatment. Conversely in non-therapeutic research, consent from a parent or other proxy means that the child is used “merely as means to others’ ends” (NC 1973, p. 96). In non-therapeutic research, only the child may give consent to participate yet the child, as child, is incapable of doing so; therefore, non-therapeutic research with children is inherently unethical.

3.2 Children Have a Moral Obligation to Participate in Minimal-Risk Research

This argument is based on the view that all humans share mutual obligations and that “the parent is the vehicle for choosing what the child should rightly choose” (NC 1977, p. 101). Participation in research is a morally right act on the grounds that: it helps others at little or no cost to oneself; and sharing the burden of research participation contributes to social justice. Parental or proxy consent is “morally valid... because it is based on a reasonable presumption of the child’s obligations” (p. 100). This argument is based on “presumed duty” (should) not “presumed consent” (would).

²For the purposes of the present discussion, “therapeutic” research may be regarded as the broad equivalent of “intervention” research in education, intended to directly benefit the participating group of children; and “non-therapeutic” research as the equivalent of educational research that is intended to benefit children indirectly and generally.

3.3 Reasonable People Would not Object to Participation in Research

According to this position, it is argued that instead of “imputing obligations to children” (NC 1977, p. 105), judgements should be based on “what the child could not reasonably object to” (p. 105). Proxy decision-making is supported provided that the decision is made consistent with the child’s own “preferences and interests” where these are known, or the proxy must provide an argument that once their capacity to reason had been developed “the reasonable child would approve, in retrospect, an invitation to be involved in research” (p. 106). The possibility is acknowledged that children may sometimes be capable of, and therefore have the right to make their own reasoned decisions. Even when this is not the case, their views should be “listened to and their preferences taken into account by those who decide on their behalf” (p. 106).

3.4 Children Benefit Morally or Educationally Through Research Participation

This argument is based on the idea that provided the research poses no or minimal risk of harm, “children old enough to be educated can be aided by their participation in research, but not at earlier ages” (NC 1977, p. 109). Normative arguments are to be rejected on the grounds that adults do not know what a particular child should want or should do; and “even if there are certain things that a child ought to want to do for others, no one has the right to determine how, when and in what manner such obligations should be fulfilled” (p. 110). Instead, one should consider what the needs of the child are in order to develop the capacity to make morally informed decisions. In particular, parents have a duty to encourage their children to “take advantage of opportunities for moral growth” (p. 110) including research participation. The parents’ roles are to decide whether participation “would be a beneficial learning experience for their child” (p. 111) and to establish whether or not their child is willing. In this way, the child in the process of becoming a person has the right to assent/dissent (e.g. Bourke and Loveridge 2014), irrespective of whether or not the research constitutes an opportunity for personal moral growth.

Child participation in non-therapeutic research would exclude infants who are incapable of self-awareness and therefore have neither moral obligations to others, nor the possibility of themselves benefitting morally from participation. The report notes that, on the one hand, this argument justifies children’s participation in research on the grounds that “psychological and moral benefits may be derived” (p. 112). On the other hand, it requires the reasonable prospect of children being instructed for the research to be justifiable.

3.5 All Children May Benefit from the Research Participation of Some Children

This argument is based on the utilitarian position that judgements about the moral value of research should include a consideration of its potential benefits to children generally as well as to the research participants themselves. For example, infants may be regarded as non-autonomous, therefore “there is only an obligation to protect them from harm” (NC 1977, p. 114). Parental or other proxy involvement serves “to safeguard the child’s best interest by preserving his or her physiological and psychological integrity” (p. 114). Alternatively, a beneficence calculus may be used to justify an adult’s agreement to a very young child’s participation in research solely on the grounds that the knowledge gained would produce substantial overall social benefits, would pose minimal risk of harm to the child “and could be obtained no other way” (p. 116).

In many senses, these five positions are antithetical to the basic axiology of student voice research, according to which children are viewed as autonomous persons who are competent to make reasoned and rational decisions not only about participation in research that may benefit them personally, but about which aspects of children’s lives generally should be the object of research. It is important to recognise that in terms of biomedical ethics, the discourse around children’s consent has moved on considerably, to include today’s positioning of the child both as person and as social agent (e.g. Alderson 2007; Cave and Stavrinides 2013; Flicker and Guta 2007). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assert that, with the exception of the first position, many educational researchers today continue to rely explicitly or implicitly on the other four positions to justify children’s participation in educational research that are of no direct benefit to them. While public good benefits may be regarded by adults as adequate justification, it seems reasonable to ask whether an exclusively adult-centred articulation of matters that concern children as research participants is ethically sufficient. Should we also consider research ethics from the position of the child? And, if we were to do so, what might we “hear”?

4 The Child as Person: Research with, not on Children

In this part of the chapter, the emergence of the “child as person” discourse in social research is discussed. As will be argued, while this discourse seeks to give greater recognition to the participation and voice of the child, in key respects it falls short of recognising the child as social agent in research.

Introducing a special issue of the journal *Children & Society* on the ethics of research with children in 1996, Ruth Sinclair, then Director of Research at the National Children’s Bureau in England, observed that “the last decade has brought significant changes to the way in which children are perceived in our society” (1996, p. 87). Among these changes were legislative acts to protect and promote:

the welfare of children in society; adoption by government of a global convention on children's rights; a growing appreciation within public policy discourses of children as active social agents and "emergent citizens competent to form their own opinions" (p. 87); and increasing awareness in some scholarly communities of the need for research to therefore understand how children experience the world, on their terms and in their words. As a result, Sinclair argued, "social researchers are now more likely to be engaged in research *with* children rather than simply research *on* children" (p. 87).

In the USA in the 1970s, the National Commission's report had "accepted, in principle, the legitimacy of proxy consent for non-therapeutic research involving children, provided that the research involved nothing more than minimal risk to the child" (Jonsen 2006, p. S14). In its subsequent seminal statement on ethical principles and their interpretation (known as *The Belmont Report*), the Commission (NC 1977) acknowledged that respect for children, and other groups of persons that "one might consider as incompetent" (p. 13) meant that they should be given "the opportunity to choose to the extent they are able, whether or not to participate in research" (p. 13). However, this freedom to choose was constrained. Because of the claimed incompetence of children per se:

Respect for persons also requires seeking the permission of other parties in order to protect the subjects from harm. Such persons are thus respected both by acknowledging their own wishes and by the use of third parties to protect them from harm. (p. 13)

Broadly speaking, this requirement for third party consent on behalf of the child remains firmly embedded today in most statutes, regulations and codes concerning research ethics, irrespective of the competence of the individual child. Famously in the UK, it was the "Gillick competence" House of Lords Decision [(1986) AC 112, (1986) 1 FLR 229 (1985) UKHL 7] that established that children's maturity, understanding and intelligence, and not just their age, should be taken into account in determining their competence to make informed decisions involving their own medical treatment. More generally, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (United Nations 1989) introduced an expectation on governments to *respect* children as persons and to provide for their *voices* "to be heard within their respective societies" (Bell 2008; Cocks 2006, p. 252). The decades since the 1970s have also witnessed the establishment of new social science disciplinary fields such as the sociology of childhood (Cocks 2006) and more broadly the new social studies of childhood (Skelton 2008). Within these, it is accepted that children have the potential to exercise considerable *autonomy* to make reasoned and rational decisions in their own interests within their everyday social worlds. Separately and together, these moral decision-making criteria (autonomy, respect, voice) appear regularly in contemporary ethical discourses around children's participation in research that is of no direct personal benefit to them, yet as the five positions articulated in the National Commission report, these considerations were largely absent in the equivalent discourses of the 1970s.

Worsfold (1974) explains this absence as a combination of factors including: firstly, a long historical tradition of paternalism towards children in western

philosophy and society, justified by “the need to protect children from themselves and others” (p. 142); secondly, the logical difficulties in clearly establishing that children belong to a larger class of beings entitled to enjoy rights; and thirdly, the failure to articulate the specific and “necessary features of children’s rights” in both theoretical and practical terms (p. 149).

Worsfold argues for an approach based on Rawls’ theory of justice because, while it retains elements of paternalism, it focuses on the right to fair treatment of all (p. 143). This, says Worsfold, asserts “an obligation on the part of adults to acknowledge the just claims of children” (p. 143) to be treated according to the same procedural principles of justice as the rest of society. On such a view, “children are presumed to be able to exercise their own rights unless all of society agrees that someone else should make decisions for them” (p. 143). This seems to mark a major shift from the position that children are incapable of making autonomous decisions unless they demonstrate otherwise, to one where children are capable of making autonomous decisions unless adults can demonstrate otherwise.

Moreover, Worsfold’s characteristics of children’s rights are threefold: firstly, they must be “practicable” (p. 149), that is theoretically and practically possible: “these rights must make sense within the framework of some reasonable conception of society” (p. 149); secondly, they must be “universal” for all children (p. 149) by which he means recognition that all children have the same capacity for rights and “no individual, whatever his or her age, should be *without* the rights accorded others in society” (p. 150). All children should be accorded the same rights (a moral issue), as distinct from how these rights are “routinely exercised by children themselves” (p. 150) (a practical issue). Thirdly, children’s rights must be of “paramount importance” (p. 150), by which Worsfold means that consideration of the claim to fair, just treatment “must override all other considerations in society’s conduct toward children” (p. 150). For example, in some situations (including research), parents or other adults may wish to give consideration to the child’s happiness or satisfaction, or to the good of all children. On Worsfold’s account such considerations would be subordinate to the “paramount importance” of the individual child’s claim to fair treatment.

Equally significant, according to Worsfold, Rawls’ model of justice would involve children in participating in agreeing to the terms of “the principles necessary for the just society” (p. 153). While children’s capacity to participate meaningfully increases as their reasoning competencies (skills and understanding) develop (p. 153), relative lack of competence provides no justification for excluding children from participating:

In the Rawlsian view, however, it is more reasonable to assume that children are competent to perform this initial task, at least in part, than risk the logical alternative to it; that they shall be denied the possibility of pursuing their own just ends. Rawls wants to take account of our intuitive sense that even quite young children often *do* know what they want, and are capable of weighing alternatives and of acting on the decisions they make. (Worsfold 1974, pp. 153–154)

In effect, this assumption and this wish inform social science ethics discourse in much childhood research today. So, if the aim is greater justice, fairer treatment and more consistent acknowledgement of children's rights in research, contemporary developments in the sociology of childhood and new studies of childhood across diverse disciplines would appear to have much to offer education researchers in terms of theory, methodology and ethics, whether or not the focus of their research is "childhood."

Cocks (2006), for example, explains that in childhood theory, children are not compared negatively with adults in terms of their understandings of, or interactions with the world. In this sense they are neither infantilised (in need of protection) nor pathologised (incapable of self-reasoning). Similarly, Skelton (2008) observes that in this "new" research paradigm, childhood is understood as "a social rather than a natural phenomenon" (p. 28). Children lead complex, multifaceted lives, which "are dynamic across time and space" (p. 27). Construed in this way, children are acknowledged as competent "social actors and agents" not "passive beneficiaries, silent objects of concern who are dependent on adult control and care" (p. 26).

In these multiple social structures of childhood, researchers conceive of children as agentic. Researchers are therefore concerned with how children consciously make sense of, and negotiate the world through their ordinary everyday experiences. In order to be able to access and represent children's self-aware and conscious reasoning experiences of their lifeworld, researchers must therefore adopt a methodological stance of actively listening to children alongside an ethic of respecting what they say about their lives in diverse settings. Cocks draws on the work of Lee (1998) who argues that once we have identified that idiosyncratic childhood ontologies (children's ways of seeing and experiencing the world) exist, then in order to be able to accommodate these within our overall world view, we are forced as adults to challenge our existing theories about how social order is created, what agency is and therefore how we understand the processes of research ethics. Voice in this regard is about facilitating children's sense-making, not mere reportage.

For Cocks, understanding and respecting the world as experienced by the child in this way requires researchers to eschew comparisons of an allegedly incomplete or immature world of the dependent child with an idealised adult world in which adults are regarded normatively as independent, complete and mature. On this view, the supposed problem of children's inability to provide fully informed consent occurs only because it is assumed that individual adults are themselves fully autonomous, fully self-reasoning and fully self-aware. Children are positioned against this idealised view of competent, agentic adults as inherently deficient. Cocks, following Lee, argues for a view of the world in which all persons are regarded as socially interdependent, in which agency itself is therefore indeterminate, and because of which people's reasoning and self-awareness are therefore context dependent. In such circumstances children, as people, negotiating their various childhoods are no less complete than adults because "people do not operate independently in isolation of society but rather they engage in social interactions interdependently" (Cocks 2006, p. 257). Or, as Lee puts it, "agency is portrayed as

the emergent property of networks of dependency rather than the possession of individuals" (1998, p. 458).

Researchers thus have an ethical obligation to be alert to the particular ways in which children's social interdependence with them is manifested in any social setting where research is planned or undertaken and to develop practical researcher relations with children on the basis of this, rather than any preconceptions about ethical conduct the researcher may bring to the particular project. Moreover, Cocks (2006) argues that this obligation is both relational and ongoing. Researchers who negotiate children's "voluntary accord" (p. 257) to participate should, as a consequence, recognise that:

Seeking assent requires the researcher to remain constantly vigilant to the responses of the child at all times: it is not something gained at the beginning of the research then put aside. It requires time and constant effort on the part of researchers, who need to attune themselves to the child's unique communication in order to know when to remove themselves. (Cocks 2006, pp. 257–258)

In a very real sense, the injunction for the researcher to continually be reflexive in this way places greater emphasis on them to demonstrate their competence to participate within the world of childhood than it does the competence of the child to participate in the researcher's world of adulthood.

Nevertheless, however, desirable a relational, reflexive ethics approach to research with children may seem, it cannot be divorced from the procedural ethics protocols within which most researchers are required to operate today. These may exist in tension or even be morally problematic for researchers committed to working with children as competent social agents. Arguably, this tension is heightened in formal institutional settings (including education) where researchers must first request access to children from adults who are expected, or who expect themselves, to exercise a role of one kind or another as child proxies. Despite any broader scholarly, legislative and social policy advances in children's rights that may have been made since the 1970s, Skelton bluntly captures the underlying dilemma that still exists for researchers:

What if the child really wants to participate but the parent says no? Legally we would probably have to side with the parental decision but ethically we would probably want to go with the child's choice. (Skelton 2008, p. 27)

5 The Child as Agent: Research by Children?

Established education research ethics procedural norms still require third party consent for most research involving children most of the time. The historical origins and moral justifications for the use of proxy consent in decisions about children's participation have rested on three highly questionable assumptions: unlike adults, children are incapable of making fully reasoned decisions in their own interests and therefore cannot consent to participate in research; respect for children as immature

persons requires adults to approve the circumstances in which children are given the opportunity to indicate whether or not they wish to participate; and only researchers have sufficient knowledge to decide which aspects of children's knowledge and experience are worthy of research.

In contrast, greater recognition of childhood as a state of social and cultural being (Bourke et al. 2017; Dubinsky 2017), children's autonomy within their social and cultural worlds (Okoli 2014; O'Neill et al. 2017), and the need for research and social policy to be informed by more sophisticated understandings of the complex "intersectionalities" of both childhood and child autonomy (Rodó-de-Zórate 2017) have been reflected in the ethical claim that in a just society, all members, including children, have equivalent rights.³ We might reasonably observe that the rights of children surely include those concerning research participation (i.e. voice and agency), because such rights fundamentally concern respect for persons and their freedom to make decisions that reflect their own interests and preferences (Lundy et al. 2011). The challenge, then, is for educational researchers to be able to find ways to enable children to embody and enact these freedoms in meaningful, respectful and affirming ways (Abebe and Bessell 2014; Bradbury-Jones and Taylor 2015; Raffety 2015; Willumsen et al. 2014; Wood 2016; Mitra and McCormick 2017).

Since the 1970s, social science research has contributed much to our understanding of the ways in which children routinely pursue their interests and preferences while they negotiate the complexities of their everyday childhood worlds. Education is an integral feature of children's social worlds. Consequently, education researchers have much to learn from the watershed debates in other discipline areas about the ethics of children's participation in educational research. The major lessons from these broader social debates for us as researchers of children's education knowledge and experiences may usefully be summarised as a set of concise exhortations for researchers to consider specific ways to frame and conduct educational research that involve or affect children.

1. Avoid "adulthood," "paternalism," "essentialism" and "ethnocentrism";
2. Conceptualise research within the dynamic social and cultural worlds of the child;
3. Engage in research *with* children as competent social actors;
4. Facilitate the child's right to participate in making reasoned decisions;
5. Match assent processes to the context of the research;
6. Nurture ongoing relationships of trust; and
7. Be reflexive about the ethics of the research as it unfolds.

³Alderson (2012) argues against an unqualified rights-based view of the ethics of children's participation and for the oversight of social science research by ethics committees: "Having been involved in medical and social research ethics for over 30 years, I have observed how social researchers have clung on to complacent faith in their beneficence for years after most healthcare researchers have acknowledged that research can harm, wrong and mislead people and requires independent review" (p. 234).

Given the arguments from the late twentieth century biomedical and social science literatures around children's interests and agency that have been summarised in this chapter, these exhortations to education researchers today could reasonably be claimed to be axiomatic. Yet, despite their self-evident nature, they also constitute profound ethical and methodological challenges. As education researchers, we now know with a fair degree of certainty that children are both able to identify those aspects of childhood which they are most interested in knowing more about, and to make their own reasoned decisions on whether or not to participate in research. This knowledge undermines the very foundation of much educational research today: the idea that it is researchers who should decide what is worthwhile investigating, and how, and that children should accede to researchers' agenda because they know best.

It may seem far-fetched to assert that researchers' rights to pursue their own research interests might in future be constrained by children, yet it does at the very least imply that researchers have a moral duty to involve children to a much greater degree than before in framing and taking meaningful decisions about a particular research project, and ensuring that they are able to do so. This calls for much greater acuity on the part of researchers and the skill to negotiate three contiguous research discourses:

... the **protectionist discourse** that seeks to avoid harm whilst prioritising general good, and which seeks consent from adult gatekeepers and, occasionally, assent from children, in order to construct knowledge about children; **the participatory** that seeks to empower by including the voice of the marginalised, and which works to "find ways to fully engage children as consenting subjects, knowledgeable about their own life worlds; and **the post-structural** that places under scrutiny various understandings and relationships of power and asks: "For whose benefit is the research? What positions are excluded, and what new possibilities might be available?" (Loveridge and Cornforth 2014, p. 468)

Being willing to scrutinise the understandings of power and relationships at play in research involving children leads inevitably and inexorably to the position that undertaking "voice" research with young people ought, for adults at least, to be a profoundly unsettling experience.

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Chapter 4

Representing Youth Voices in Indigenous Community Research



Joanna Kidman

Abstract Advocates of participatory research with young people frequently use the language of democracy, emancipation and inclusiveness to argue their case. In New Zealand, various agencies have allocated funding for research reports and resource kits aimed at eliciting and understanding more clearly students’ “voices” as a means of increasing young people’s educational and civic participation. While there is widespread agreement that the inclusion of young people’s voices in educational research is to be desired, the practice is often poorly understood and highly contested. This chapter explores some of the tensions that arose during a study involving groups of Māori youth who created photographic representations of their social, cultural and tribal environments. During the course of the research, questions emerged about how members of tribal communities and researchers, respectively, think very differently about matters of voice, partnership and inclusiveness in relation to Māori young people. Ultimately, the research processes were adapted to encompass the priorities and protocols of the participants’ communities.

1 Introduction

Advocates of participatory research with young people frequently use the language of democracy, emancipation and inclusiveness to argue their case. In New Zealand, various agencies such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth Development and Ako Aotearoa have allocated funding for research reports and resource kits aimed at eliciting and understanding more clearly students’ “voices,” particularly as a means of increasing young people’s educational and civic participation. While there is widespread agreement that the inclusion of young people’s voices in educational research is to be desired, the practice is often poorly understood and highly contested. Some commentators argue that the inclusion of student voice can serve progressive ends while others contend that it can be either

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neutralised or manipulated to support neoliberal agendas (Whitty and Wisby 2007). Some maintain that these apparently participatory approaches are all too often tokenistic (Fox 2013), or that inflated knowledge claims embedded in particular voice discourses reify the experiences of some groups at the expense of others. Concerns have also been raised about the dangers of presenting the voices and experiences of a small number of individuals within a group as being representative of an entire group (Cook-Sather 2006). In the light of these debates, some commentators have argued that the notion of developing research partnerships with young people in research contexts is a more transformative approach to the problems of education than simply eliciting their voices (Thomson and Gunter 2006). However, both these conceptual frameworks, at times, reflect and reinforce views about youth and childhood that are particularly problematic when conducting community-based education research with young Māori.

This chapter explores some of the tensions that arose during a study involving groups of Māori youth who created photographic representations of their social, cultural and community environments. The study differs from much education research in New Zealand in that it is not tied to the agendas of the schoolyard or the classroom, but instead draws on data gathered within Māori communities. The aim of the research was to elicit visual data that mapped the contemporary social, cultural and political landscapes of young Māori and their experiences of growing up Māori in twenty-first century New Zealand. In this respect, it follows the work of Shirley Brice-Heath (2004) who argues:

The history of groups taught under the rubric of “multicultural [or bicultural] education” must not present all the struggles as those of the past, with no concurrent attention to recent and contemporary regional, economic and social stresses and strains carrying strong influence on institutions such as families, communities, community organizations... and occupations. (p. 160)

During the course of this research, questions emerged about how members of tribal communities and researchers, respectively, think very differently about matters of voice, partnership and inclusiveness in relation to Māori young people. As it turned out, this was a particularly sensitive issue in communities that were involved in Treaty of Waitangi¹ claims at the time the study took place. Preparation and management of these claims takes up a great deal of time in Māori communities and often involves tense negotiations about who will tell the stories of the past, how they will be represented in the claims process, and what significance the voices of members of Māori communities have in forging new reconciled relationships with

¹The Treaty of Waitangi, signed by Crown representatives and many Māori tribes in 1840, is considered to be the founding document of modern New Zealand. It provided a set of principles intended to guide the relationship between Māori and the Crown. Over time, the Crown violated the terms of the Treaty and its promises to Māori. By 1975, Māori anger about the extensive loss of tribal lands and sovereignty threatened to spill into wider civil disorder. In response, the Waitangi Tribunal was established as a permanent commission of inquiry charged with investigating contemporary breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1985, its brief was extended to historical injustices against Māori going back to 1840.

the state. Importantly, as Treaty claims are put together, tribal representatives gather and pass on to community members and Crown agents an enormous amount of empirical evidence about tribal histories. Alongside this data gathering process, community hui (meetings) and wānanga (forums) are held and young Māori community members are often directly involved in these initiatives. Thus, these tribal processes are presented here as important sites of learning for young Māori within those communities.

Ultimately, the research processes we developed in this study were adapted to encompass the priorities and protocols of the participants' communities. For example, before the researchers (who were themselves Māori) were granted permission to approach prospective participants, community discussions were opened up to members of the participating communities to discuss the research process and how we would manage and represent the stories told to us by the participants. During these forums, concerns were raised by some of the attendees about the protocols of who could and should have the authority to represent the priorities and cultural landscapes of each community and the families within them. This required a lengthy period of relationship building and also involved significant community input into the research processes, protocols and priorities that were applied in the field. The voices of young Māori that subsequently emerged were a powerful reminder of the need to incorporate community partnerships and relationships into research methodologies involving Māori youth, particularly if criticisms of student voice approaches are taken into account.

2 The Dilemmas of Voice Research

Cook-Sather (2006) notes that student voice and participation have been increasingly sought and validated by educational researchers, policy makers and educators since the early 1990s. She argues that the desire to involve young people in collaborative decision making processes, mutually agreed research protocols, and school reform is part of a broader movement of rethinking the role of youth and childhood that directly challenges inequalities in the way children are positioned within power relations. Indeed, the active inclusion of young people's perspectives, ideas and opinions is seen by many researchers as a means of breaking free of a particular culture of silence that has permeated some aspects of educational research in the past. These ideas about youth voice have been framed as being part of an emancipatory political project, which McLeod (2011) argues is sometimes linked to strategies for "promoting empowerment, inclusion and equity" (p. 179) for underrepresented, silenced or marginalised groups of young people. Certainly the work of educators like Jonathon Kozol (1967) and Paulo Freire (1986) has been influential in highlighting the forms of domination that come into play when members of marginalised groups do not have a voice in naming the facets of their

own oppression or experience. Fielding (2001) also aligns this shift towards student voice with changes in pedagogical practice (formative assessment, for example) that have opened up new possibilities for dialogue between students and teachers.

3 Voice Research in New Zealand

The inclusion of young people in the data gathering phases of qualitative educational research in New Zealand was also relatively limited prior to the early 1990s. There were a few small-scale studies that incorporated young people's perspectives as research participants but there was very little that drew directly on the life experiences of young Māori, or indeed young Pacific peoples, although researchers like Alison Jones (1989) and Adrienne Alton-Lee (Alton-Lee et al. 1987) provided some notable and important exceptions. In the main, however, Māori youth were talked about by the adults around them, often in rather despairing terms, in relation to educational underachievement or unequal social outcomes (Berryman et al. 2017). They were also the subject of much discussion and debate in the expanding domain of Māori education research but seldom did policy makers and researchers speak directly and in person to young Māori themselves, particularly within community contexts. Indeed, in much qualitative educational research, they were simply not present at all other than as a focus of adult discussion and anxiety. Diane Reay (2007) has talked about how, in British urban neighbourhoods where middle-class families live alongside working class communities, it is often the case that dominant middle-class imaginaries, shaped in the main by government and media, come to represent and define the working class spaces, peoples and lives of their neighbours. A similar case can be made in New Zealand where an assortment of middle-class adult voices drawn from professional contexts (for example, teachers and education policy makers) frequently act as a proxy for all youth voices, including those of Māori.

Capturing young people's voices in youth research and community education research is often a fraught process. This is, in part, as Thomson and Gunter (2006) argue, because young people's voices are neither neutral nor authentic insofar as they are produced by and within dominant discourses. Researchers sometimes forget that young people's voices are as classed, raced and gendered (Whitty and Wisby 2007) as those of adults. Conducting research with young Māori is therefore characterised by significant within-group differences relating to life experience, social class, geographical location and the nature and degree of cultural identification with Māori tribal selfhoods. Part of the role of the qualitative researcher, however, is to look for underlying patterns and trends amongst participants that generate understandings about defining characteristics or aid in the forecast of future behaviours. Or, as Berg (2007) suggests, “[q]uality refers to the what, how, when and where of a thing—its essence and ambience. Qualitative research thus refers to meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things.” (p. 3). But capturing voice, like capturing Berg's notion of

essence, has its problems. For example, in the analysis phases of a study, the pursuit of patterns, essences or commonly agreed meanings may produce persuasive research themes but it may also have the effect of flattening participant voice. This can happen when the focus of attention is on highlighting the instances when data sets appear to agree, and there is an apparent level of consistency or accord amongst participants, rather than the more unwieldy outlier moments when discordant or un-patterned responses predominate.

With this in mind, one of the questions that arises when analysing data about young people in Māori communities is *how* their voices are represented and to what end? Michael Fielding's (2004) caution is pertinent here; he asks, "[h]ow confident are we that our research does not redescribe and reconfigure students in ways that bind them more securely into the fabric of the status quo?" (p. 302). This comment is particularly germane in the context of Māori community education research. The focus of much sociology of education research in Europe and the United Kingdom lies with the analysis of social class relations. In New Zealand, however, socio-economic and social class analyses in education policy and research have tended to take a backseat to studies that conceive of social organisation primarily in terms of ethnicised cultural relations. While there are several notable exceptions (see the work of Thrupp and Mika 2011; and Nairn et al. 2012, for example), there has been a growing silence in education policy and research circles since the economic reforms of the 1990s about how socio-economic realities intersect and shape the kinds of ethnic or cultural choices that young Māori are able to make and enact in the political economy of the school, the classroom or the playground. We can see these constraints in action in education policy and research where Māori children and young people are framed almost exclusively in terms of their cultural identities in ways that suggest that these ethnicised representations of selfhood are somehow disconnected from the wider economic and social forces that surround them and their communities.

The effect of this disconnection between the notion of culture (as it is framed by government and the media) and the many troubling silences surrounding discussion and debate about social and economic stratification in New Zealand society is a particularly kiwi way of framing social relations, and it is one that has given rise to a series of no go areas in education research and policy. Insofar as social class is concerned, for example, there is still a widespread notion that New Zealand is an egalitarian and classless society with roots in a relatively benevolent colonial past. Thrupp (2007) argues that the notion of egalitarianism is an important touchstone in the New Zealand imagination and has an especially powerful hold on middle-class Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent) beliefs about New Zealand as a fair and just society free from social stratification and ranking systems that create inequality.

Alongside these silences about economic relations and their impact on young people's lives, there is an accompanying belief in some education research and policy contexts that the problem of racism has been solved in New Zealand with the introduction of culturally responsive pedagogies in classrooms and schools and an increased emphasis on positive portrayals of cultural diversity and indigeneity.

Indeed, many institutions have equity and diversity strategies in place as part of their compliance framework with government and much time and effort is put into producing equity targets and goals. Troyna (1994) suggests that these institutional responses underpin a deracialised discourse of education that both reifies culture and buys into what he refers to as “comforting myths” (p. 326) that the problem of racism is either resolved or in the process of being disestablished through institutional endeavours to formally recognise and celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity.

In education and government circles, the pervasive imagery of New Zealand as an egalitarian, classless society characterised by harmonious cultural and ethnic relations is, however, very powerful and leaves us without a ready framework for discussion or analysis that presents an opposing view despite much supporting statistical evidence in the areas of education, housing, health and employment. In addition, the steady focus on formal schooling in education research often displaces research about the outside-of-school environments of Māori young people. In doing so, it reinforces a view of education that Brice-Heath (2004) argues, classifies others together, “stripped of their variations and individual differences and uniformly pictured as victimised and dependent on the White majority to come to their aid or provide models for the future” (p. 160).

If there are tensions around the representation of young people in educational research, how then might researchers engage with young Māori within the informal learning contexts of family or tribal communities? And, how can analyses be structured in a way that does not fetishise, exoticise, essentialise or re-racialise them, or bind them more firmly to the status quo? Smith (1999) has highlighted the importance of asking these kinds of questions in relation to studies that involve Māori participants. She argues that research needs to make a “positive difference” (p. 191) for the researched. This positive difference may not necessarily be realised as an “immediate or direct benefit” (Smith 1999, p. 191) but projects need to be designed in negotiation with participating groups from the outset because, as she reminds us, “historically, indigenous peoples have not seen the positive benefits of research” (p. 191). It is certainly the case that representatives of Māori communities are often well aware of the benefits that accrue to educational researchers who build careers on research conducted within and around Māori children and representations of their schooling, tribal and cultural communities. They are equally aware of the “glittering prizes” awarded to researchers for these endeavours, such as academic promotions, international conferences, enhanced professional reputations and increased academic capital—none of which are usually extended to participant groups. In the light of this, questions about the value and benefit of research to participant groups are important and need to be asked (Hart et al. 2017).

The following sections of this chapter outline some of the tensions and challenges encountered in the course of a study involving young Māori and their communities. The purpose of the study was to explore young people’s understandings of their social, cultural and community environments. Part of the research process involved initiating a series of community gatherings for local adults and young people to discuss participation and the management of the project. At the

outset of the project, members of participating communities raised questions about the value of the research and the way that the participants' voices would be represented and this is discussed below.

4 Methodology

As has been described elsewhere (Kidman 2012), the study included 24 young people aged between 14 and 16 years who had ancestral, or other family links to the tribal regions in which they lived. Four communities located in the North and South Islands of New Zealand participated in the project, including residents of a rural coastal village, a small town in a river valley, a seaside community located within 30 kilometres of a large urban centre, and a township in an agricultural region. We sought Māori young people who were located in smaller regional centres rather than in more tribally diverse urban areas, although participants in two regions lived reasonably close to large cities and visited them regularly.

A team of Māori researchers collected data for this project and each team member had tribal affiliations or other cultural connections (such as family or marriage connections) with the particular community in which they worked. These connections were an important factor in establishing good relationships with members of the participating communities, many of whom would have otherwise been unwilling to admit outsiders. This was particularly the case because, despite the fact that the study had university ethics approval, members of participant communities were more concerned that tikanga (tribal custom) was respected and upheld by the researchers in the course of their work with young Māori. The tribal affiliations of the researchers were also a driving factor in the selection of participating communities, and how access to those communities was negotiated.

A visual methods approach was developed for this study, and participants were asked to produce photographic images that portrayed a range of interactions with their immediate social fields. We were less interested in constructing a documentary record of young people's lives, however, than we were in exploring the ways that Māori teenagers express their relationships with the people and places around them.

At the beginning of the project, participants in each of the four communities compiled lists of keywords that exemplified, for them, various aspects of their lives. The research team then facilitated negotiations between participants in each region about which keywords would be selected. The final list of keywords agreed upon by all the young people in each region was: Land, Belonging, Journeys, the Past, and Mana (prestige or authority). These keywords acted as thematic devices around which the participants constructed photographic narratives. The methods we used to elicit Māori voices were specifically designed with the intention of generating a collaborative research venture for young people which also included their families and wider communities. In this chapter, the processes through which we sought consent from the participating communities is the focus because it was through these processes, which involved a series of community hui (meetings), that some of

the most heated debates about the representation of Māori youth voices took place. The discussion below draws on field notes from these hui. A photograph taken by a participant as part of this study is also included in this chapter. An extended description of the study and the methodology can be found in Kidman (2012).

5 Community Hui

In keeping with Māori cultural protocols, we negotiated entry into the site communities by initiating a series of community gatherings that people with a direct interest in the well-being of young Māori were invited to attend. These hui were also an important part of the recruitment process for this study. The gatherings took place in a range of venues including marae, community centres and schools and were well attended by young people and their families as well as by kaumātua,² teachers, community workers and other community-based representatives (see Wood and Kidman 2013). These hui were initiated because we take the view that while young people's voices are, at times, individual utterances representing personal concerns, at other times they are expressions of meaning that are embedded within and shaped by the wider collective. We were particularly interested in this latter approach because it emphasises the community and family learning contexts of young Māori outside of school.

The participants' consent to be involved with the project was negotiated at these hui but it was also during the meetings that it became evident that community members considered that permission for the use of the images would be an ongoing process extending beyond the end of the data gathering process. It was also made clear that in cases where photographs depicting sites of tribal significance were produced, committee members wished to retain control over how the storage and dissemination of the images would be managed. For this reason, community and marae-based representatives assumed responsibility for decisions about the dissemination of the images in academic forums. Issues relating to the ownership of the photographs were also hotly debated, and in the end, it was agreed that intellectual ownership of photographs showing identifiable individuals that did not depict urupā, ancestral marae or wāhi tapu³ would be divided between the researchers and the young people themselves. I was given ongoing permission to use images that did not identify individuals or sites of tribal significance as I chose (Wood and Kidman 2013).

This was an important discussion because the right to represent young people's voices and in the case of this study, the visual artefacts they created, could not be assumed. Questions about the ownership of data in voice research in this context

²Kaumātua = tribal elder(s).

³Ururupā = burial grounds; marae = tribal meeting ground, an area that symbolises tribal identity and solidarity; wāhi tapu = an area of special spiritual, cultural or historical tribal significance.

needed to be asked and answered if consent was going to be given. It was during one of these hui that concerns were raised about how we would portray the communities involved with the study and whether or not the young people should bother to be involved at all. This was the subject of considerable debate as some of the attendees argued that although the members of the research team were Māori and had tribal or other family links to the site communities, we were also academic researchers with vested interests based on our university affiliations and disciplinary allegiances. In this respect, the arguments that were made against giving consent to participate in the study centred on concerns that despite research team members having emic knowledge of the site communities, we were also community outsiders who were coming into these environments with our own agendas and priorities.

In the cultural context of community hui, difficult questions are often asked and challenges are laid down and this creates a unique learning and socialisation environment for young Māori operating within these kinds of community contexts. Also, in any community forum, there may be prospective participants who are suspicious or mistrustful of the research process. In this case, the community hui created a public space whereby community members could lay down a face-to-face challenge and hear our response. They were also a place where we were able to listen to people's concerns, speak to them directly and subsequently and work towards articulating mutually agreed goals. However, there were also a number of underlying anxieties that were unique to these communities which influenced the discussions that took place. These anxieties also had an impact on the way that the notion of voice as it related to Māori in general and young Māori in particular was conceived by members of the site communities as discussed below.

6 Memory Regimes and the Voices of Young Māori

Concerns were expressed in one hui about the way that Māori voices, tribal histories and memory regimes have been either co-opted by outsiders over time or else expunged from the official record. We were asked if, as researchers, we would simply replicate this kind of marginalisation. It should be noted here that the study was carried out in communities that had a high degree of familiarity with the Treaty of Waitangi claims process and it was only when we met with these groups that it became apparent how important this was in terms of our reception in those areas. At the time the study took place, three participating communities were either preparing or managing Treaty claims and as a result, discussion and debates about the way that tribal communities are mandated and represented were regularly being held in people's homes, marae and tribal committees. In addition, the data collection phase

of the research took place against the backdrop of the Seabed and Foreshore⁴ protests during the summer and autumn of 2005 when Māori anger towards the Crown was at its peak (Kidman 2012).

The wider political context of Treaty settlements that surrounded these communities cannot be under-estimated. The Treaty claims process and other political events relating to Māori rights to customary title had a significant impact on the way that community members dealt with us notwithstanding the insider status that each member of the research team had, respectively, within these communities. We were aware of ongoing discussions in these areas about iwi engagement with the Treaty claims process, and the enormous impact this had on the everyday lives of many of the participants and their families, kaumātua and tribal communities but we were less prepared for the way these debates would influence attitudes towards ourselves as Māori researchers.

For example, during a hui that took place in an area where a Treaty claim was being mounted, heated and often very angry debates about tribal mandates in the claims process (namely who has the authority to speak and who is recognised as a speaker of tribal histories) were ongoing and some of this anger spilled into discussions about our study. At one hui, several attendees talked about the importance of being able to tell their own stories in their own way and in their own time and questioned the need for researchers to come in and do it for them. Other speakers responded that if the young people did not engage with our study, their voices might never be heard outside the local community context and their stories would not necessarily be told in ways that other people might learn from. It seemed that the group had reached an impasse but eventually one of the prospective participants, a 16-year-old female, argued that if she agreed to be part of the study, it would mean that what she had to say would be on record, that it would not be forgotten, and she would have the photographs to show for it. The meeting closed shortly afterwards with permission given for the study to proceed.

Placing one's story, or voice, on the official record has particular significance in Māori communities where historical injustices are under investigation by the Waitangi Tribunal. Richard Boast (2006) argues that the role of the Waitangi Tribunal is to "create an authoritative record which will continue to play an educative function and provide a public resource in years to come" (p. 5). For many Māori communities, placing their historical accounts and tribal memories on the official record as part of a formal reconciliation and settlement process has a profound impact. As Seuffert (2005) argues, these histories, which are included as part of Tribunal hearings or the Treaty settlement process, become part of the New Zealand nation's foundation stories. She notes that these testimonies are "particularly important as stories of inclusion and exclusion in these collective identities"

⁴The seabed and foreshore dispute between Māori peoples and the Crown centred on legislation passed into law in 2004 that gave ownership of the foreshore and seabed to the New Zealand government. Many Māori tribes, however, claim customary title to these areas. The legislation effectively extinguished Māori claims of customary rights.

(p. 489). This is recognised by the Waitangi Tribunal itself as being a critical factor in the reconciliation process:

A Tribunal hearing is a forum not only for arguments and stories, but also for emotions. It is well recognised that Tribunal hearings can provide an important catharsis for claimants, and this is a critical part of the Treaty claims resolution process. Time must be taken, where appropriate, to ensure that this aspect of the Tribunal's role is not undermined. (Waitangi Tribunal, n.d.)

The Tribunal process is not merely a cathartic outpouring of pain, however, nor an exercise in therapeutic justice. The stories that Māori and expert witnesses tell in the course of these proceedings serve a particular purpose that is both nation-building, educative and future-focussed insofar as they are geared towards reconciliation between Māori peoples and the Crown and young people are important actors in that process. It is also a way for Māori communities to place tribal memory on record. Many of these memories centre on deep-seated grievances that have carried across generations and continue to have direct economic, social and cultural consequences in the present. Boraine (2006) argues that reconciliation only becomes possible in societies divided by conflicting accounts of historical injustice when the past is acknowledged and a common memory is created and agreed upon by those who represented the unjust system, those who fought against it and those who live in the aftermath of conflict. Our field notes show that members of Māori communities who are involved with the Treaty claims process take these ideas very seriously and, because iwi members in three of the communities that we approached were directly engaged in Treaty claims at the time, issues relating to the right to tell one's own stories in one's own way were uppermost in many people's minds.

During the course of the study, the young people did tell stories about historical injustice and the ancestral past and they also told us about the engagement of young people in the contemporary Treaty claims process. For example, in some areas, students at Kura Kaupapa Māori schools attend Tribunal hearings and listen to the historical evidence. Some participants were also privy to discussions about the Treaty claims process that were going on at marae, in hapu or iwi hui, and at community gatherings and family occasions (Kidman 2012). Many of the participants were aware that these events were taking place around them and this gave them a sense of being part of a national history that was in the process of being made. For the most part, however, history is comprised of smaller narratives and the stories the young people told us were on a more everyday scale and covered a diverse range of topics. Nevertheless, within these small narratives, an awareness of wider power relations was often brought into play. For example, several participants talked about the way that time sometimes seems to drag at the end of the school day, and how decisions about the way young people are permitted to pass their time are generally made by other people. They talked about how the formal structures of school and the State brought people who often had very different priorities, like teachers and school principals, into their lives and that these people had the power to assert those priorities on behalf of young people and their families

Fig. 1 “School never ends!”
(Female participant, 14 years old)



and communities. In many respects, these little stories about everyday experiences spoke to broader understandings about the way that power relations are implicated in the structuring of the school day and indeed, the multi-faceted experiences of young people who grow up Māori in twenty-first century New Zealand. This stands in stark contrast to the way the participants were learning about the politics of history and the passage of time within their own tribal communities where stories about the past elicited raw and often unresolved emotions. One participant expressed something of this sense of disjunction in the image in Fig. 1.

7 Discussion

Arnot and Reay (2007) argue that one of the problems of eliciting hitherto silenced voices is that the focus on unequal power relations *between* social categories can obscure the inequalities *within* them. In response to recent criticisms of voice research, particularly those who challenge context-dependent standpoint theories, Arnot and Reay advocate the development of what they call a sociology of pedagogic voice. In line with this, they argue that young people’s experiences are not in themselves as important to research as developing an understanding of the forces that shape, limit, constrain and produce those experiences within a field of practice. They contend that voice research requires researchers to analyse the power relations that surround the production of voice, stating that “voice cannot change power relations, but that shifts in power relations can change ‘voices’” (p. 316ff).

Reflecting on these arguments in relation to the present study, it was clear that the tensions embedded in power relations between Māori communities and the Crown influenced the way that people represented themselves variously as members of tribal communities that had experienced economic, social and historical injustice over time. In this respect, their voices were shaped in many different ways

by what was going on around them in the social and political field. In practice, Māori communities are dynamic, many-faceted and highly diverse but this is frequently downplayed in education policy research, particularly when Māori young people are represented primarily as a single homogeneous cultural category within the context of the school or the classroom. This is also when within-group differences can be obscured. For this reason, community-based education research that recognises a wider range of roles and identities for young people can ultimately provide a useful lens on their priorities and understandings about the world they live in.

On the other hand, the political forces that shape between-group conflicts continue to be important in the New Zealand context. In the present study, the attitudes of members of Māori communities were shaped by external forces and the Treaty claims process exerted a powerful external influence on their lives. The impact of these kinds of political forces on local communities, however, is not well understood and is rarely acknowledged in school-focused education research. In addition, the stories that are created within Māori communities shape the way that young people engage with aspects of the wider society. Insofar as the Treaty claims process itself is concerned, the archive is still being created; many stories and historical accounts are in the process of being told. As such they exert a powerful influence, not only on the way that many Māori communities structure their interactions with researchers and other outsiders, but also on the stories that young people themselves are able to tell.

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Chapter 5

Marginalised Youth Speak Back Through Research: Empowerment and Transformation of Educational Experience



Paula Flynn

Abstract This paper discusses the outcomes and implications of a small-scale student voice research project conducted in the Republic of Ireland. Twenty student participants in mainstream education were consulted on their experience of school, all of whom had been identified as at risk of educational exclusion or with internalising or externalising behaviours associated with the classification of “social, emotional and behavioural difficulties” (SEBD). The findings demonstrated that having the opportunity to be heard was significant to all of the participants. However, for some of the participants who were silenced on important issues in other parts of their lives, the experience of this “voice” process had less impact. The study confirmed the potential relationship between “voice,” “empowerment” and “transformation” because the majority of the participants actively contributed to improving relationships with their teachers and peers, while promoting and participating in strategies and activities that impacted positively on their experience of school.

1 Introduction

Young people identified with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) represent some of the most marginalised students in school and are often the least empowered and listened to of their peers (Cefai and Cooper 2010). Little has been written about the inclusion of young people with SEBD in mainstream schools as a large number of studies focus on students with this identification in special schools. By listening to these students’ expert insights on their own experiences, teachers

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and researchers may be in a better position to provide appropriate pedagogically and socially aware learning experiences to young people identified with SEBD. This is important as they are often misunderstood within schools, and their behaviours represent a communicative function.

This chapter discusses the research process, findings and implications of an in-depth student voice study conducted with a sample group of 20 young people with SEBD in one mainstream post-primary school within the Republic of Ireland. The objective of this research project was to gain an insight into the students' experiences of school through the lenses of both their participation in this study and any interventions that were generated through the process. The following three questions guided the research:

- What are the students' views on their experience of school?
- Does their experience of engagement with student voice encourage the participants to become active agents in transformative action to benefit their educational environment?
- What is the impact of this student voice process on the wider school community?

It was essential to the research process to determine if the experience of being listened to for the student participants was one of empowerment and if that subsequently encouraged them to make changes that would benefit their educational environment.

2 Student Voice

Within the conceptual understanding of "voice" underpinning this research is the assumption of having a legitimate perspective and opinion, as well as an active role in decisions about educational policies and practice (Holdsworth 2000). Student voice work has been acknowledged in the literature as an opportunity to empower students to participate meaningfully and collaboratively in improving their experience of school (Fielding 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre 2007). Within the context of this study, the concepts of student voice and empowerment are similarly linked such that an authentic engagement with the former should pursue and enable an experience of the latter in order to support a positive experience of education.

There have been many studies that elicit the perceptions of students in mainstream education; however, very few have focused on students identified with SEBD (Davies 2005). This is in spite of evidence that the empowerment of students with SEBD can contribute to the resolution and prevention of some of the associated difficulties experienced by these students in school (Cefai and Cooper 2010).

3 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

SEBD encompasses a broad spectrum of difficulties including: anxiety disorders, depression, eating disorders, neurosis, childhood psychosis, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder. The scale of behaviours may present as internalising (shy, withdrawn and introverted), through to externalising (hyperactive, disruptive and in some cases, aggressive).

It has been argued that ignoring concerns related to extreme examples of challenging behaviour, disaffection and failure as experienced by some students identified with SEBD can lead to a higher cost to society in terms of reduced economic contribution in adult life and for some, of criminal activity and prison (Wearmouth 2004). Considering the potentially bleak prospects for young people with SEBD who may experience disaffection and minimal engagement with education, it is important to elicit the perspectives of these students on their experience of the learning environment with a view to identifying supports that are needed to help combat social exclusion (Davies 2005; Wearmouth 2004).

In the Republic of Ireland, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) is responsible for overseeing the allocation of resources to support students with special educational needs (SEN) in accordance with the *Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004*. Compliant with legislation, there are 14 categories of SEN which include Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Severe Emotional Disturbance (SED). Students with SEBD are designated as in need of support under the ED/SED categorisation, but prior to a change in policy from September 2017, they needed to be in receipt of psychological or psychiatric attention to qualify for this support. This distinction clearly focused on the categories of ED and SED from the perspective of a medical “within-child” deficit and also defined associated difficulties in terms of negative conduct and behaviour (Government of Ireland 2005). However, following a review on the allocation of supports for students identified with SEN (National Council for Special Education 2014), it was recommended that “educational need” should determine the allocation of additional teaching support to schools, irrespective of a formal diagnosis (DES 2016). This new model of resource allocation was introduced as policy on a national level at the beginning of the school year, 2017–2018.

4 Paradigmatic Stance and Ethical Considerations

The theoretical framework for this study is aligned to the transformative paradigm and as such, this research is positioned within an emancipatory framework of inclusion, voice and empowerment (Mertens 2010). The transformative paradigm is referred to as “critical theory et al.” by Guba and Lincoln (2005, p. 165) and “emancipatory” by Lather (1992, p. 120). Researchers who position themselves

within this paradigm believe their research must contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants and researcher, as well as the institutions in which individuals work or live (Mertens 2010). The theoretical understanding and vision of “inclusion” which influenced this study is one that is transformative, emancipatory, and empowering. A society and/or education system that aspires to be irrefutably inclusive should directly challenge marginalisation and marginalising behaviours, while affording opportunities for active citizenship and participation. This perspective and understanding of inclusion is about recognition and respect for difference, as well as actively engaging “voice” to promote a positive experience of empowerment. Consistent with the emancipatory/transformational paradigm, it was integral to this study that it would precipitate change and subsequently inform a discussion to influence policy. For this reason, it is “research as praxis” driven (Lather 1986, p.25) because the researcher intentionally assumed the role of an active participant in the process. This was in order to facilitate dialogue in the pursuit of “change” with the co-researcher participants but also to negotiate practical opportunities to support the realisation of transformation within the school environment. Praxis-oriented research is described as “the critical and empowering roots of a research paradigm openly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society” (Lather 1986, p. 258).

Ethical considerations related to working with the student participants for this study were paramount to the research approach. These issues are relevant when engaging children and young people in most forms of research; however, they are particularly significant when working with children who may have a higher degree of vulnerability because of additional needs.

To accommodate regular accessibility, principals of post-primary, mainstream co-educational schools across three adjacent Irish counties were contacted and invited to participate in this study. Four post-primary level schools expressed initial interest in the study, and subsequently explanatory meetings were held with staff in each school. The principal and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) of one of these schools indicated there were a large number of students who had been identified with SEBD who were at risk of educational and social exclusion enrolled at their educational setting. This school is an urban based, Catholic, co-educational, DEIS¹ post-primary school with a wide social and geographic catchment area, enrolling between 550 and 600 young people annually from families in the small town and the rural outskirts. The principal agreed that suggestions for change that might emerge through the research process from the students would be acknowledged and trialled where possible. This article focuses on the study situated in that school for which the pseudonym “Hedgehill” was chosen.

The principal and SENCO at Hedgehill selected students they believed might benefit from participating in the research because they had been identified with SEBD. The SENCO initiated contact by explanatory letter to parents/guardians of

¹Designated disadvantaged status by the Department of Education and Skills within the “Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools” (DEIS) Action Plan for Inclusion.

the students, inviting interest in participation. Following parental consent, preliminary individual meetings were held between the researcher and all of the student invitees to clarify the purpose of the research and answer any questions. Each student was asked to decide if they would like to become involved and if they did, to complete a consent form or compose their own. In total, 20 from an initial identification of 23 students agreed to participate and it was explained to each that they had the right to withdraw at any point without explanation.

During data collection, if students indicated they had distressing or sensitive issues to discuss, they were listened to carefully and sympathetically, without offering advice, but contact was facilitated with their consent to appropriate agencies and supports with the cooperation of the School Guidance Counsellor (SGC). In addition to these considerations and also in line with “Children First-National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children” (DHC 1999) students were advised that they could speak to the researcher in confidence, but if they indicated that they were in any kind of danger, I had a duty of care to report my concerns. Disclosure of sensitive issues was not incorporated in the data unless explicit permission was given by the participants to do so. Pseudonyms are used in this article to protect the anonymity of participants.

5 Research Design

A combination of narrative and ethnographic approaches was used to qualitatively explore the student participants’ experiences. The narrative approach is an opportunity to make visible and central, “those whose voices have been erased from the landscape, and for those who have been silenced it offers the platform for them to speak in their own words about their experiences” (Clark et al. 1998, p.67). The ethnographic approach enabled the researcher to become a familiar figure to participants by spending as much time as possible in the school with the students engaged in the research process (Hammersley 2006). This was important to generate and present a detailed and contextualised picture of the experience and expert voice of the participants. Establishing an interactive relationship with the participants encouraged activity for the purpose of promoting motivation, self-esteem, empowerment and transformation and for that reason, the approach was more closely akin to that of “critical ethnographer” (Mertens 2010).

As indicated in Table 1, this study spanned a period of three years across two phases. Phase one was the period of data collection with all of the student participants while phase two involved consulting a voluntary advisory group from the initial cohort on the analytic process of the data. In total, 20 students who had been identified with SEBD participated in this study. The participants comprised six females and 14 males between the ages of 12 and 18. Semi-structured one-to-one interviews and focus group meetings conducted in the school with the student participants were the primary research instruments used to collect data, which were supported by insights recorded in a fieldwork journal and contributions from school

personnel. The principal, SENCO, SGC and five teachers contributed observations to the research data at the beginning and end of the study. These contributions were used to elicit a response from the adults on the impact of the research process and changes instigated by the student participants on the culture of the school.

The students decided the level and pace of their contributions which impacted on the frequency of individual meetings and their participation in group activities. Data generated from this research were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Five of the participants volunteered to collaborate with the researcher in the second phase of the study which involved interpreting and analysing the data to avoid an “*adulteration*” or over-adult interpretation of same (Cruddas 2007; Flynn 2013).

6 The Process

This research project involved consulting the students on their experience of school and determining if their engagement with the student voice process might empower them to become active agents in transforming their educational environment (Fielding 2004). However, facilitating student voice does not as a consequence or in isolation generate a sense of empowerment on the part of participants. A significant element integral to this process was the sustained approach and commitment to “*authentic listening*” which could only be realised through acknowledgement and response to the views expressed and suggestions made by the students.

The pattern and length of the semi-structured interviews varied as determined by the individual participants. Depending on the experiences of the day or events leading up to that time, sometimes students were unresponsive and unwilling to talk, and on other occasions, anxious or happy to chat. The length of interviews conducted during the research process ranged from a minimum of five minutes to maximum of 34 min. Focus groups comprised of volunteers amongst the student participants were facilitated to expand on insights and ideas that emerged from individual interviews and to encourage group collaboration in suggesting student-led strategies and interventions to promote positive change in the students’ experiences of school.

After four months of intensive data collection, a number of emergent strategies were trialled within the school following a student-led group discussion with the school principal and a representative group of teachers:

- A Positive Aims Diary designed by the students, entitled My PAD, which incorporates contractual language in the “*voice*” of the young people to their teachers; asking them “*to observe them*” achieve their goals and “*notice*” when they are successful;
- A mentoring programme between senior and junior cycle students identified with SEBD;
- Team building workshops with their respective class groups co-ordinated and organised by the participant students;

Table 1 Summary of research design

Phase of study	Number of student participants	Timescale	Instruments used for data collection	No. interviews conducted with student participants	No. focus groups conducted with student participants
1 (2009/11)	20	2 years	Interviews and focus groups	218	7
2 (2011/12)	5	1 year	Interviews and focus groups	3	2

- “Chill Out” cards designed by the participants which permitted students to leave their classroom if they needed to calm down or felt very anxious (Flynn et al. 2012, pp. 256–257).

Before the end of phase one, all student participants were asked to contribute ideas and themes which were important to them from their experience of this engagement process and in response to questioning on their experience of school. This feedback, together with a compilation of data from transcripts and the reflective diary, was interpreted using a thematic analysis staged-approach to identify common themes and sub-themes across the data sets (Braun and Clarke 2006). A summary of the initial analysis of this study was submitted to a volunteer representative group from the participants in phase two of the study for their comments and clarification. Some changes were recommended by the participants, which were specifically related to emphases of importance within sub-themes. Consultation with the volunteer advisory group of participants was conducted through interviews and across two focus group sessions, with the final analysis approved by participants at the last meeting.

7 Findings and Discussion

The four major themes which surfaced as significant to the participants were: the importance of being heard (Rudduck and McIntyre 2007); perspectives of difference (Holt 2004; Minow 1990); relational care (Lynch and Baker 2005; Noddings 1992); and leadership (Fielding 2004; Shevlin and Flynn 2011).

For many of the participants, the opportunity to talk and encountering an “authentic response” influenced their levels of enthusiasm for, and participation in the research process. Some of the most significant authentic responses emanated from students identifying supports and obstacles to their enjoyment of, and engagement in school. As a result of highlighting important issues such as the quality of their relationships with teachers (Cefai and Cooper 2010) and their desire for respect, acknowledgment and to “be cared for and about” (Lynch and Baker 2005), the

focus of the research process was to encourage them to become active agents in orchestrating changes to bring about an improvement in their experience of school. This resulted in some of the strategies that were suggested and/or designed by participants and outlined above, being adopted.

There is a significant body of literature on the potential relationship between “voice,” “empowerment” and/or “transformation” (Fielding 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre 2007). Within this study, the potential of that relationship was also realised in the fact that most of the participants actively contributed to improving relationships with their teachers and peers, while promoting and participating in strategies and activities that impacted positively on their experience of school. However, for some of the young people who were “silenced” on important issues in other parts of their lives, the experience of this voice process had less impact. It proved difficult to convince a young person that their opinions matter and that their voice can make an important contribution to a study like this if there are contradictions in what is happening around them. For example, one boy (Quincy) chose to have limited participation within this research which was not helped by the fact that most of the other student participants in his year group were together in one class and following a different certificate programme to him. Despite his inclusion in the research grouping, he remained apart from the other participants and although invited to become involved in a mentoring opportunity that emerged through the student voice process, he declined the opportunity. Quincy shared with me his frustration at the experience of feeling like he was “trapped in prison” because he was constantly under scrutiny both in school and the residential care centre in which he was living during data collection (March 2010).

Another participant, Eucharia, had a similar experience of being silenced when her subject choices and study programme were decided upon by her mother against her wishes. Consequently, she had less contact with the other research participants. It is regrettable that within a study which set out to empower students who were marginalised, two of the participants continued to be isolated, not just within the larger environment of the school but also within the smaller group. The physical distance from the rest of the group was undoubtedly a factor; however, their feelings of frustration and powerlessness relative to other circumstances in their lives seemed to impact on their willingness to take part or increase involvement in the research process.

“Perspectives of difference” (Minow 1990) were revealed to submit evidence of links between attitudes of teachers and internalised perceptions of self on the part of the students. Marginalised groups expose the lenses of normality through which they are unconsciously subscribed as different, and reveal what is implicit to the hidden curriculum of the school (Holt 2004). Although teachers and students may not intentionally reinforce negative perceptions of difference or reproduce notions of ability and disability, these are often unintended consequences of everyday practices associated with fulfilling the purposes of schools. Similar to Lynch and Lodge’s research (2002), this study demonstrates that when young people with different abilities or emotional/behavioural difficulties are measured through lenses of “normality,” they can internalise negative attitudes of themselves, revealing their

sense of inferiority relative to their peers and in their relationships with teachers. Participants acknowledged that an awareness of negative perceptions towards them can influence their behaviour and self-esteem: “ya just know they think you’re no good, so why disappoint them” (Harry, 20 March 2009); other students contributed similar comments, e.g:

“I’m stupid”; “everyone here expects me to be shite”; “I’m rubbish at school, I’m going to fail”; “Maybe I am a very bad person underneath?” “Could you imagine me as a good example? It’ll never happen”; “I think a lot of teachers would prefer if I just left” (Flynn 2013, p. 208).

Three of the students with ADHD were very conscious of the negative perceptions of this condition and two of them blamed ADHD for characteristics in themselves that they did not like. One of these boys, however, came to transform his attitude when he experienced more positive relationships with his teachers and also because he became friendly with a boy who had dyslexia. He came to the conclusion that they were both just “a bit different” and it really wasn’t “a big deal” (Alex, 10 May 2010). However, the other boy personified ADHD to express his and others’ perceptions of it:

When pushed to explain what he meant by “people like me” he said “I don’t just accept everything I’m told, sometimes I question things, that doesn’t go down well. Add to that I have ADHD, teachers really hate that” (Peter, 30 March 2009). As he said this he made a cross with his two index fingers and started hissing; “Ooh ADHD, you vile creature” (Flynn 2013 p. 170).

Consistent with the students’ views of how their teachers perceived them, some of the teachers’ language confirmed negative perspectives when talking about their students (Garner 2009). Examples of comments made by teachers about specific participants include: “the likes of him”; “scum”; “waste of space”; “I’m sick of the sight of him”; “brats”; “thugs” (Flynn 2013, p.207). Although teachers are generally well disposed to the inclusion of students with special educational needs in their classrooms, attitudes may be different when they are confronted with “difficult difference” (Rogers 2012; Shevlin et al. 2013).

“Care” emerged as one of the most important themes identified by the student participants across the data corpus. The language of caring prevails through early transcripts as students alleged their teachers or the school did not care about them. They also praised and acknowledged those people in their lives who *did* care about them. The significance of the theme was evident in their relationships with teachers and the impact of those relations on levels of confidence and their sense of comfort and well-being (Lynch and Baker 2005; Noddings 1992). Engagement in dialogue, in conjunction with experiencing praise, success and acknowledgement substantially improved relations between students and teachers.

The importance of “attachment” and the need to “belong” in school and amongst their peers also emerged within the theme of “care.” This is similar to data from research conducted by Nind et al. (2012) in a special school for girls identified with

behavioural difficulties. The theme as it emerged from their study was the students' desire "to belong" and to have "some sort of attachment with people and places" (Nind et al. 2012, p.653). Likewise, most of the participants in Hedgehill enjoyed being part of the research group and the sense of identity and shared experience that this generated. One participant commented that "Being part of this group...is a bit like being in a club. I've never been part of anything before" (Cassie, 15 September 2010).

Commenting on *My PAD*, which was the positive aims diary designed by the students, the SGC, Mr. Ash, revealed that gradually, teachers realised that this strategy served to empower students to take responsibility for their behaviour and engagement because they were motivated by the fact that this intervention had been of their design. Teachers began to accept the strategy as symbolic of power-sharing rather than "power-over" in addition to being an opportunity for praise and acknowledgement. This became more obvious because it was not just students who had previously been perceived as "troublesome" who were presenting with *My PAD*, as he explained:

This perhaps was when the realisation began to dawn on many teachers that it was actually not about behaviour exclusively. This penny dropped when shy or quiet students who were hardly noticed wanted to be acknowledged quietly for what they had always done without a drum roll in the classroom (Mr. Ash, 2 June 2011).

The theme of leadership is crucially linked to the other themes in this discussion and analysis. Taking the opportunity to promote a culture of listening and caring is not possible without the support and vision of the school leader and significant personnel (Shevlin and Flynn 2011). The school principal is also responsible for fostering and encouraging learning for all students, including students who present with different learning abilities and needs. This is essential to the encouragement of a positive response to difference as well as recognising and encouraging all capabilities.

Within student voice work, it is important that students are not met with a tokenistic response because an experience of authentic listening has the potential to empower students to actively direct positive change in their school lives and to assume leadership roles in the process. Some of the unexpected outcomes of this study transpired from the leadership roles that were assumed by the student participants in response to a positive improvement in confidence levels. This emerged as a direct response to "being listened to" and having the opportunity to direct and design strategies to improve their own individual experience of school as well as that of their peers (Rudduck and McIntyre 2007). Two of the participants explained the impact on them: "Just cos someone thought what I was saying was important like, made me think like I mattered and maybe I can do things that'll mean something" (Geraldine, 7 May 2010); "I think it's about respect, except for some of me mates, I never felt anyone here ever respected me before this" (Mark, 7 May 2010). One of the most influential and enjoyable experiences as acknowledged by most of the participants was their regular engagement within the mentoring

partnerships. One participant who had taken on the role of a mentor to a boy two years younger described the experience:

Being a mentor was the biggest hugest change I could ever make in my life 'cos I never cared about anybody except myself but I couldn't believe that someone would trust me and I wanted to, you know, not let them down. It was great for me too. (Peter, 7 May 2010)

However, a “bottom-up approach” such as this is redundant without an appropriate “top-down” response. This leadership relationship is multidirectional with the inherent possibility to promote relational care and, as a paradigm of leadership, is both empowering and reflective of itself. As a consequence of school leaders leading to encourage empowerment, the students become empowered to lead, generating a multidirectional model of empowerment, caring, and leadership as a response to listening. The paradigm is premised on encouraging students through an engagement with voice to demonstrate their strengths and abilities and valuing them in the process. Respecting and acknowledging that students may know better how to help us help them, can promote a sense of ownership, responsibility and investment in positive behaviour and learning as evident from this study.

8 Implications

This section revisits the guiding research questions to interrogate the implications of what was learned from the study.

- **What are the students' views on their experience of school?**

The participants made it very clear that they wanted to be listened to and that this was an important lesson which should be learned from the study.

The majority of students indicated that they had difficult relationships with all or most of their teachers at the beginning of this study. When asked what needed to change in order to improve student–teacher relationships, many of the younger participants focussed on being acknowledged and praised for achievements, however, small. One of the most frequent complaints amongst the participants was that they were only noticed if they did something “wrong” or “got into trouble.” Towards the end of the study, a number of the students volunteered that having a better relationship with even one or two teachers made a significant difference to their confidence and sense of comfort in school.

An issue that was prioritised across the students, however, related to teacher attitudes towards them especially when they were being disciplined. The general consensus amongst most of the students was that they wanted to be respected but that negative attitudes towards them from their teachers contributed both to their negative opinions of themselves but also to frustration and episodes of challenging behaviour. Where relationships with teachers improved as a result of some of the emergent interventions and activities, the students conceded this also and shared that their overall experience of school had improved as a result.

Feeling “different” within their school environment impacted on the students’ perception of themselves and how they were perceived by others. The student participants were very conscious of negative perceptions of challenges associated with SEBD and some of them had internalised these perceptions which were evident in their negative self-descriptions. Students also indicated that negative feelings about their abilities sometimes manifested into disruptive and challenging behaviour because students were angry, upset or stressed at feeling different. Some of the participants also shared that they would rather get into trouble for “bad” behaviour than feel undermined because of ability in front of peers. However, four female participants shared their sense of poor self-image and esteem because they believed they were “invisible” to teachers. They pointed out that some of their male peers got considerably more attention if they were badly behaved but the girls’ struggles with confidence and ability were overlooked. Other contributions included the importance of experiencing a sense of belonging in school and the fact that school can be a very lonely place if you feel different.

Many of the students demonstrated considerable insight in identifying supports and obstacles to their engagement in school. Although a lot of the obstacles emanated from a sense of frustration due to what they perceived as negative attitudes towards them or challenges as a result of different styles of learning, feedback from students and participants indicated that the dialogic consultation and the experience of being heard improved confidence, attitude and engagement in school. The emergent interventions and strategies from that consultation support Rudduck and McIntyre’s (2007) assertion that when students’ insights and opinions are taken seriously, they can experience a sense of ownership in their experience of school.

- **Does their experience of engagement with student voice encourage the young participants to become active agents in transformative action to benefit their educational environment?**

Engagement with this student voice initiative was unique to each individual involved, as evident from the different pace at which students contributed and the levels of involvement and participation chosen by them. Having the opportunity to be heard was significant to all of the participants. However, as indicated, the experience of this voice process had less impact on young people who were silenced on important issues in other parts of their lives. Nonetheless, the confirmation of the potential relationship between voice, empowerment, and transformation was realised in the fact that most of the participants actively contributed to improving relationships with their teachers and peers, while promoting and participating in strategies and activities that impacted positively on their experience of school. Knowing that they were heard for some students was very powerful, as they had indicated at the beginning of the study that their opinions did not matter or that nobody ever listened to them. It is significant that as they met a response which assured them that their opinions did in fact matter, most of the students were empowered to actively engage in, suggest or design interventions that contributed to transforming the culture of their school.

- **What is the impact on the wider school community?**

The impact of the students' active agency when they rose to the challenge of precipitating positive transformation to their school environment was realised throughout the school community. Evidence of this is embodied in the teachers whose attitudes towards the students became more positive and the acknowledgement by key personnel of the participants' impact on teachers and the school. Providing feedback at the conclusion of the study, the principal of Hedgehill commented that, as a result of the student voice study, the ethos and culture of the school had been changed to one that prioritised "care" and "listening." She also pointed out that the most impressive outcome of the study "was witnessing the leadership potential among students I had personally identified as exclusion risks" (Flynn 2013, p.221).

The most significant verification of the impact the student participants accomplished in transforming their school community has been in the combined efforts between staff, in particular the SENCO and SGC, with students, to sustain important aspects of the student voice initiative and strategies that emerged during the study. Their stated objective has been to maintain and encourage positive and caring relations, especially because "care" had emerged as most significant to the participants throughout the data corpus. The manifestation of "multidirectional leadership" has been essential to the preservation of listening to students at the school. Follow-up visits to Hedgehill have confirmed the sustainability of the changed ethos of the school to a stronger culture of caring which has generated further changes and strategies to involve more of the school community, including parents.

9 Concluding Comments

This research, despite the evident limitation of being a small-scale study, has important implications in the pursuit of methodologies to support students who are experiencing challenges in their educational environment. The process within which this research study was conducted was critical to facilitating the authentic voice of the student participants.

The students who participated in this study were identified as presenting with internalising and externalising behaviours that were impinging on their social and/or educational development. Many of the students had been identified as marginalised, and as being potential exclusion risks by their school principal. Yet, students with labels that exemplify "difficult difference" were responsible for positively affecting changes in attitudes towards them and presenting a model for the development of relationality in care and leadership. This evidence suggests that a student voice approach to supporting young people is fundamental to the development of an inclusive learning environment for the benefit of *all* students. An education system that promotes inclusive principles should encourage a culture of listening. Schools

need to hear, not just the “articulate” voice (Bourdieu et al. 1977), but rather, the expert voices of all young people in their own schools in the pursuit of inclusive education.

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Chapter 6

Challenges of Student Voice Within a Context of Threatened Identities



Anne Hynds, Susan C. Faircloth, Clint Green and Helen Jacob

Abstract This chapter expands on an earlier publication in which we discussed the trickiness of a collaborative, community-based participatory research project in Aotearoa (New Zealand) that explored the unique identities and perspectives of a group of Ngāti Turi rangatahi (Māori D/deaf youth). This research was tricky because it involved a diverse group comprising Māori and non-Māori D/deaf and hearing researchers of different ages and genders, and because of the complex ethical issues involved in “outing” students through the use of an adapted approach to the photovoice methodology. In this chapter, we delve more deeply into this collaborative work and its implications for the establishment of radical collegiality with a group of historically marginalised students and their adult peers.

1 Introduction

We begin this chapter with a brief mihimihi (introduction), locating ourselves as two scholars who are not members of the Indigenous Māori D/deaf youth community of Aotearoa (New Zealand).

I (Anne Hynds) am a hearing woman born in the 1960s in Aotearoa, who is Pākehā (New Zealand European). I identify as Pākehā to acknowledge the status of tangata whenua (people of the land) and my own White, hearing privilege. Most of my work involves trying to understand “what counts” as culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy. It was many years ago that I trained as a Resource Teacher of the Deaf. Although I learned about hearing aids and audiograms, I did not learn

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about the damage well-meaning hearing people had inflicted on D/deaf people and their culture (Smiler and Mckee 2007). This came much later.

I (Susan Faircloth) am an American Indian woman from the United States. Most of my work has focused on the education of American Indian and Alaskan Native students with special educational needs. Several years ago, I had the honour of participating in an evaluation of a professional development programme for school leaders across New Zealand. It was through this work that I met my co-author, Anne, and was encouraged by her to expand my work to Indigenous youth who are D/deaf in Aotearoa New Zealand. Initially, I was a bit reluctant to engage in this work as I was not from New Zealand, I had not engaged in research with D/deaf individuals, and I was not Māori. However, I was excited by the opportunity to engage in collaborative research with a population of students that has for far too long been voiceless within both the education and research communities.

Ko Kurahaupo te waka, Ko Matatera te maunga, Ko Whangaehu te awa, Ko Paenga te tupuna, Ko Nga Wairiki te Iwi, Ko Ngati Paenga te Hapu, Ko Kimihia te Maramatanga te whare tupuna, Ko Desmond toku papa, Ko Doreen toku mama, Ko Clint Green ahau. I (Clint Green) am a hearing impaired male who has Māori lineage, but was raised as a hearing Pākehā. I was born in Ahuriri Aotearoa in the early 1950s. I began my career in Deaf Education in the late 70s with a world view somewhat different to the mainstream Aotearoa of the time, as a result of my relationship with Noel, my Deaf brother-in-law. I became a fierce early advocate of the recognition of Deafness from a cultural perspective, but sadly there was no mention of Māori throughout my training, and certainly no evidence of its recognition when I began teaching.

Ko Maataatua te waka, Ko Mauao te maunga, Ko Wairoa te awa, Ko Ngai Te Rangi te iwi, Ko Ngati Tapu te hapu, Ko Helen Jacob ahau. I (Helen Jacob) am a New Zealand Māori woman who is hearing. I was born and bred in Mount Maunganui in the 70s. My journey in Deaf Education began in 1993 when working as an Education Associate supporting a profoundly Deaf student. This inspired me to complete a Bachelor of Education degree, which then enabled me to teach in mainstream education for 11 years in a school with 80% Māori. During this time, I had the privilege of teaching two students with hearing loss which motivated me to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education for Deaf and Hearing Impaired students. I am now employed as a Resource Teacher of the Deaf where I also lead our education community in the Ministry of Education's Māori strategy—Ka Hikitia.

As is appropriate within narrative inquiry (Bathmaker 2010), we present a co-constructed and incomplete account of researching identity with a group of young Māori D/deaf people. This text has been developed and shaped by various participants, including the young people involved, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters, community members and ourselves as invited outsiders. We recognise that there are multiple interpretations of this text and potential for debate and dialogue, not just on what is voiced but rather on the more silent and inexact aspects of this work (Mazzei 2007). As readers, we invite you to bring your own interpretations to this text.

The purpose of this research was to explore the identities of a small group of Ngāti Turi rangatahi served by the Kelston Deaf Education Centre in Auckland, New Zealand. In referring to these youth, we use D/deaf “to indicate, and be inclusive of, different understandings of D/deaf people” (Valentine and Skelton 2003, p. 302) who may identify as members of a linguistic and cultural group (uppercase D) or who define themselves in terms of medical models of disability (lower case d).

In conducting this research, we utilised a kaupapa Māori research approach, which Bishop (1999, p. 1) argues, “positions researchers in such a way as to operationalise self-determination (agentic positioning and behaviour) for research participants,” combined with a modified version of the photovoice methodology (Wang and Burris 1997) to enable these young people to take photographs and write accompanying narratives describing why they took these photographs and what the photographs represented. The final text was presented in a travelling photograph exhibition and for various audiences (Māori D/deaf and hearing and non-Māori D/deaf and hearing) in Deaf clubs, marae, homes and schools. In this current chapter, we revisit some of the trickiness of working with Ngāti Turi rangatahi and the implications for radical collegiality (Fielding 1999). Fielding describes this as a relationship in which there is a shared sense of purpose and vision, where students learn as much from teachers as teachers learn from students, and democratic ideals are not only espoused but enacted. We learned much from this group of Ngāti Turi rangatahi, their experiences and their aspirations. We also learned a great deal about the lack of a culturally sustaining schooling system and the existence of a policy environment that ignores and threatens their bounded identities, languages and cultures.

2 The Current Context

The current “threatened” status of both New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and te reo Māori raise important ethical and political considerations, particularly when involving Māori D/deaf students in the types of “radical” work that Fielding talks about. Aotearoa (New Zealand) has two official languages: te reo Māori and NZSL. However, English is the most commonly spoken language. Despite the status of te reo Māori and NZSL as official languages, both are identified as threatened and vulnerable (Mckee 2017; Walters 2018). Rachel Mckee (2017), noted researcher in NZSL and Deaf studies, has warned that sign languages are inevitably surrounded by spoken languages and oralist traditions. There is considerable pressure applied to deaf people to assimilate into the dominant culture and to use “spoken language,” which is considered more “prestigious and more useful” (p. 324). Citing Safar and Webster’s (2014) research on language vitality and endangerment, Mckee (2017) cautions that the current status of NZSL is “unsafe and vulnerable” (p. 353), because of the declining numbers of NZSL users. Citing census data, Mckee highlights a decline of 25% in NZSL users between 2001 and 2013. Although she

warns against the “dying language” argument (Mckee 2017, p. 343), she notes significant threats to the survival of NZSL (Mckee 2008, 2017). She cites: the predominance of mainstreaming, which separates D/deaf students from one another; the endorsement of cochlear implants, particularly for deaf babies and infants; and the advancement of medical research focused on eliminating inherited deafness (Mckee 2008). According to Mckee (2008), such practices privilege “the accomplishment of audition and speech and mainstream social identity” at the expense of a Deaf sociocultural and linguistic identity (p. 526).

In addition, recent national news headlines have reported that te reo Māori “is on life support.” This raises questions around “who is responsible” for its survival (Walters 2018, A8). The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation also describes te reo as being “vulnerable” (Walters 2018, A8). According to History Professor, Paul Moon, “If you’re serious about the language you have to do something that’s going to revive it” (Walters 2018, A8). This sentiment is echoed by Māori Development Minister Nanaia Mahuta who is quoted as saying, “If you really want to keep a language alive it has to be embraced in the family context, and anything else that happens out in society, through our school system, what government does, is in addition” (Walters 2018, A8). These comments are particularly important given New Zealand’s current educational policy which requires all schools to enable Māori students to “enjoy” and “achieve” educational success as Māori, which means they enjoy their educational journeys in a way “that recognises and celebrates their unique identity, language and culture” and gain the “skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to achieve success in te ao Māori [Māori world], and the wider world” (Ministry of Education 2013, p. 5). In doing so, the Ministry of Education expects teachers to teach in ways that engage and encourage all Māori learners to reach their potential whilst acknowledging their unique cultural identity and language needs. We argue that all Māori learners include those who are D/deaf.

3 Embracing an Ethic of Radical Collegiality to Promote Increased Voice and Agency Among D/deaf Māori Youth

In reflecting on our experience working with this group of Māori D/deaf students, we came to recognise that we were part of a kaupapa whānau (Bishop 2012; Metge 2008), a group of people who are not blood-related, but who come together with common interests to work on a particular problem or issue. Bishop (2012) explains that “entering” this space means “accepting” your part “in the ‘whānau’” [family]. This comes with certain responsibilities to the family. In our case, this meant using our collaborative research to advocate for the improvement of the educational system for D/deaf Māori youth. The visual nature of this research also allowed us to make more visible the plight of D/deaf Māori youth. This was particularly

challenging given the fact that more than half (56%) of all D/deaf learners in mainstream schools within the North Island of New Zealand (where this study took place) are Māori, yet very little is known about these students (Fitzgerald and Associates 2012).

To counter traditional deficit-based approaches to research, we were committed to learning more about the strength of identities of these youth, as well as their goals and aspirations, and the issues they perceived to be important related to community inclusion and participation. Specifically, we wanted to know more about how Ngāti Turi rangatahi develop their own forms of strength identities and the types of culturally sustaining contexts that contribute to their collective well-being and socio-cultural development. We recognised that identity is not always shaped by an individual's choice (Fielding 2004; Giroux 1997; McIntosh 2005), and that identity may be forced upon others by members of a dominant or culture-defining group (Tyler 1992). We wanted to know first-hand how these young people made sense of their own identities as deaf, Deaf and Māori, by providing them with a tool (i.e. photovoice) by which they could tell their own stories in ways that were authentic and meaningful, not only to the research community, but to the youth participants and their peers. According to Tyler, non-“culture-defining” groups (those outside of the dominant group) “have to negotiate their lives and identities within the context of a broader awareness of being defined as different from, and implicitly less than, the culture-defining group.” Unfortunately, they are “often powerless to change those terms” (p. 204).

Throughout the research process, we were reminded that the ways in which Māori D/deaf individuals identify and perceive themselves is often shaped by their socialisation into the D/deaf world, te ao Māori, and Pākehā dominated schooling oralist institutions (Smiler 2014; Smiler and Mckee 2007). In colonised countries, such as Aotearoa, D/deaf Indigenous peoples experience marginalisation in complex and intersecting ways. In many cases, deficit identities are forced on D/deaf youth through the medicalisation of deafness and the disability or impaired status associated with medical diagnosis (Mckee 2017; Obasi 2008; Smiler and Mckee 2007). In addition, young people can be pressured to conform to a dominant, cultural ideal within Deaf communities (Smiler and Mckee 2007; Valentine and Skelton 2003).

It has been argued that the isolation and marginalisation that Ngāti Turi rangatahi experience is considerable (Smiler and Mckee 2007). Firstly, deafness is often viewed as an impairment and something to be fixed, rather than as a cultural identity (Mckee 2017). Isolation can also be experienced in families because the majority of D/deaf children are born into hearing families and their parents/caregivers and siblings may not learn to sign or communicate adequately with them (Mckee 2017; Valentine and Skelton 2003). Secondly, access to te ao Māori is severely limited for many Ngāti Turi rangatahi due to the severe shortage of trained, trilingual interpreters and teachers fluent in te reo Māori, NZSL and English (Faircloth et al. 2016; Hynds et al. 2014). In addition, research within Aotearoa indicates that teachers and other professionals working with D/deaf children often have inflated opinions about their competency in NZSL, resulting in a wide range of

quality of interpreting services available (Mckee 2008). This exaggerated sense of signing ability is compounded by the lack of valid and reliable assessments of teacher and communicator fluency and competency in NZSL (Mckee 2008).

4 Voice and Agency

In working with these youth, we were reminded that youth identities are particularly fluid, complex and multifaceted (McIntosh 2005; Valentine and Skelton 2003), thus we were mindful that Ngāti Turi rangatahi could experience both empowerment and marginalisation within and across different, yet connected communities, including our collaborative research family. Mindful of the potential of our research to marginalise and isolate these youth, we worked to encourage and honour their individual and collective voice as powerful expressions of agency, aspiration and identity. We also recognised that voice is socially constructed through community involvement, linguistic repertoires and power relationships (Fielding 2004; McIntosh 2005; McLeod 2011; Obasi 2008). We also recognised that “Voice is not simply speech ... and can be a code word for representing difference” (McLeod 2011, p. 181). Throughout the research process, we also saw that physically turning one’s oral voice off and using sign language to express cultural identity can be viewed as a political act as much as a cultural language practice for D/deaf youth (Valentine and Skelton 2003). This had serious implications for the interpretation of youth voice, particularly for listeners like us who do not understand or share the language selections of those they choose to study (Fielding 2004). The use of photographs as the primary medium for telling their stories afforded the youth in this project an opportunity to exercise agency as they decided whether or not to describe their photographs using their oral voice, sign language, te reo or other forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. In the end, a collective decision was made to present the photographs along with narratives written in te reo and English and signed using NZSL.

5 The Research Process

The Ko wai au? (Who am I?) See my voice research project was co-constructed with a range of people. As is appropriate within photovoice methods, we worked to develop a respectful and inclusive process which would enable six Ngāti Turi rangatahi to research identity, culture and community. The research project was developed and shaped by the rangatahi involved as well as NZSL interpreters, Ngāti Turi community members, two Resource Teachers of the Deaf, as well as ourselves as invited outsiders. It was essential that the six young people had the fullest understanding of what was expected from them and this meant that we needed to find the most qualified and competent NZSL interpreters fluent in te reo me ona

tikanga and NZSL. Sutherland and Young (2014) argue that researchers co-constructing research projects with children and young people “must commit themselves to revealing the children’s truths in the children’s own terms and deaf children are no exception” (p. 366).

The research process was also informed by aspects of Indigenous research methodologies (Brayboy and Deyhle 2000; Metge 2008; Smith 2005), narrative inquiry (Bathmaker 2010; Frost 2009) and poststructural theory (Mazzei 2007). The process was exploratory and relied heavily on the approval of Māori D/deaf adults who worked as gatekeepers to the young people involved. Through the creation of a kaupapa whānau or research family (Durie 2003; Metge 2008), we worked with community elders to construct a methodology that this local Māori D/deaf community believed to be respectful and ethical. Important principles of tino rangātiratanga (self-determination and autonomy), whakawhanaungatanga (building respectful relationships), ako (reciprocal teaching and learning), mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge-bases) and Deaf culture guided the process.

Three young women and three young men aged between 16 and 19 were nominated and accepted as participants. These young people were identified as being proud to be both Māori and D/deaf, and this has heavily influenced the research project and findings. We used pōwhiri (formal greetings) on Rūaumoko marae (Māori D/deaf meeting house), noho marae (overnight stays) and hui (meetings) to talk with these young people, their whānau and community elders about the possibilities of the research. All of the young people decided to take part, although it took time and several hui to ensure the research process was respectful, ethically sound and responsive to the needs of this particular community.

A modified version of photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997) was the main method of data collection. Rangatahi were trained in the use of digital cameras by Nga Puhī photographer Adrian Heke. He taught them about the composition of photographs, the influence of lighting, and the importance of using photographs to tell particular stories. Once rangatahi felt comfortable with the digital cameras, we asked them to take photographs and construct accompanying narratives that they felt best represented their identities, goals and aspirations, and community connections. Five key probes developed by us were used to guide the process of data collection (photographing) and analysis. These were:

- Ko wai au? Who am I?
- What are my aspirations, goals, and dreams?
- What is important to me in terms of communication?
- Who is in my community? Who do I connect with?
- What do I want people to know about me and my identity?

At the completion of the research project, we asked rangatahi to analyse their chosen photographs and to identify the most important messages. In the research project, we adopted Frost’s (2009) stance, in that we were not trying to verify our findings but rather to engage in dialogue with these young people and others to promote further interpretations of the work. Citing Halliday (1973), Frost argues that narrative analysis “considers the content, form and context of narratives” whilst

“keeping the text as whole and unfragmented as possible” (p. 10). We were also sensitive to silence (what was not voiced) and an ambiguity associated with what was withheld. We felt a sense of being presented with some accounts and an absence of others (Mazzei 2007). As invited outsiders, we were permitted small glimpses into aspects of these young people’s lives and so in the retelling of this research, we share our thoughts about these. In doing this, we acknowledge our position “on tricky ground” as we also present our own interpretations as outsiders (Smith 2005).

6 Ethical Issues

Throughout the research process, we were mindful that our research should do no harm (Brayboy and Deyhle 2000; Smiler 2014; Smith 2005) and that the inclusion of student voice within collaborative research projects can be largely superficial (Fielding 2004). In constructing a visual research methodology that was considered culturally appropriate for Indigenous D/deaf youth, we realised that rangatahi participated on the periphery of our research as it was mainly adults who negotiated our access to, and participation of, the young people involved. The whole process took time (over two years) as community elders were concerned that previous research conducted with both Indigenous and D/deaf groups had been harmful by framing participants in deficit ways and serving the needs of dominant outsider groups (Smiler 2014).

We worked with elders and rangatahi to establish protocols for gaining permission to take photographic images of marae and community members. Ethics committees from both Victoria University of Wellington and North Carolina State University also reviewed and approved this research project. Families were approached to gain permission to use photographic images of whānau members who had passed on. Written consent was gained for all participants and we asked for additional whānau consent for everyone younger than 18. Thus, consent was gained for our youngest participant who was 16 when we first met her. As rangatahi and community members would be formally identified through their photographs and narratives, we agreed that consent to use all images and stories should only be for two years. Thus, we would need to go back to participants to ask for their further permission to use these data.

Over the first year of engagement, rangatahi took more ownership of the process, making decisions about the direction of the work. This was most clearly demonstrated as rangatahi decided where and when they would take photographs. This act of agency was precipitated by a request to visit their own marae. During the process of talking and discussing their first photographs, it was clear that many did not know their pepeha, a formal way of introducing oneself and connecting to one’s tribal ancestry. Collectively, the group decided that in order to know themselves as individuals they needed to visit, seek permission and if possible take photographs at their tribal marae. When the senior administrator was reluctant to allow these visits

the students specifically made a site visit to negotiate access. After some discussion and arranging suitable interpreters and kaumātua (elders) from the Māori Deaf community to accompany them, marae visits were finally undertaken. This formed an important and transformative outcome of the research process, which revealed to us the political agency of Māori D/deaf youth and the importance of these young people's access to te ao Māori.

Working through interpreters was also tricky, as they mediated our communication with our participants and community elders, thus helping to further shape this research project. As outsiders, we lacked the necessary signing skills and we worked mainly with one trilingual interpreter, who was fluent in NZSL, te reo Māori and English. She was chosen by our research whānau as a respected kuia (female elder) and advocate for Māori D/deaf. It is important to note that NZSL is a complex visual language which differs from oral-aural language and has its own grammatical structure (Mckee and Kennedy 2005). Sign language “involves the three-dimensional use of space in which hand shapes and the speed direction, and type of movements, combined with facial and bodily expressions, are used to convey meanings” (Valentine and Skelton 2003, p. 303). A challenge we experienced was to translate students' signed language into spoken and written English for our first public exhibition. This posed the risk of the interpreter either knowingly or unknowingly imposing their own thoughts and values on the final interpreted conversations. We acknowledge this risk as the use of interpreters has the potential to change the essence of the message (Hale 1997). Whilst some of our rangatahi chose to speak to us by using their voice (vocalising) outside of our research meetings, during most of our research hui they chose to turn their oral voice off and use NZSL, as was their right. Their decision to use NZSL reminded us that for them, the “turning off” of voice was a political act connected to the rights of young Māori D/deaf people.

A final outcome of the research process was the decision to hold a series of public exhibitions of rangatahi photographs and narratives. This was an important process as rangatahi decided which photographs and narratives would be shared with the public (D/deaf and hearing, Māori and non-Māori). The first public exhibition of this work was held at Te Unga Waka Marae in Auckland in December 2013.

7 Ko Wai Au? Who Am I? See My Voice

In the original version of this chapter (Hynds et al. 2014), we included photographs taken by the rangatahi along with the accompanying narratives¹ that they constructed. As explained in the previous section, these formed the basis for the

¹Participants chose to reveal aspects of their own lives and understood that they would be formally identified through photographic images and narratives.

travelling exhibition “Ko wai au? Who am I? See my voice.” This exhibition was shown in various locations. These included different marae and whare nui (meeting house), Deaf clubs, schools and people’s homes. Over time, as the exhibition developed a following, it was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and was displayed at the Ministry of Education National Office in Wellington as part of Māori Language week (2013). The young people were flown to Wellington and even got the chance to meet the Minister of Education. Following this event, the Ministry sought the rangatahi’s written permission to turn the exhibition into a short film whereby the young people themselves could use NZSL (with English subtitles) to make the exhibition more accessible to others. Resources were made which showcased the exhibition in te reo Māori as well. It all seemed very hopeful to us as outsiders that educational policy might change as a result of these young people’s work. However, we will come back to the lack of change in our discussion. At this point, we want to return to the main messages that rangatahi themselves wanted to emphasise. Due to the research protocols established between ourselves and these six young people, we are unable to include the photographs and narratives in this chapter. Instead, we have permission to share the young people’s final analysis of their combined work and our own reflections of their work, which we discussed with them at our final hui. In the section below, we begin by providing a brief description of the photographs selected for exhibition and included in subsequent presentations and publications.

Similar to his beloved grandmother Dame Whina Cooper, a respected Māori elder, Eric, served as a senior statesman or spokesperson for the group. His photographs reflected his deep connection to his Indigenous culture, as well as his respect for his elders and his quest for social justice for Ngāti Turi. Eric’s photographs included images of a marae that featured prominently in his daily life as a student at Unitec (Institute of Technology), as well as pictures of his whānau. In addition to being a budding photographer, Eric made it quite clear that he wanted to make a difference to the lives of Ngāti Turi young people and to ensure that meaningful access to the language and culture was shared on the marae and meeting houses. In order to do so, Eric argued for more qualified and highly trained trilingual (te reo, NZSL, and English) interpreters across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Deaf since the age of two, Kahurangi’s photographs reflected not only her name, which translates to blue in te reo, but also her cultures—both Deaf and Māori—and her beloved grandmother. One of the photographs Kahurangi took also featured the inside of one of the buildings at Kelston Deaf Education Centre, where Kahurangi attended school as a young child.

Tuhoi’s photographs reflected a very personal, and at times, quite difficult, journey to understand and come to terms with his life as a D/deaf Māori man. Experiencing isolation through a lack of communication with others was emphasised. The opportunity to explore his identity through photographs was powerful not only for Tuhoi, but for the group as well.

Although born hearing, Ngawaiata lost her hearing around the age of 4.5 months old. Having grown up oral, Ngawaiata was able to communicate orally with both her hearing and D/deaf community members; however, she still described

incidences in which she turned to her stuffed animal (featured in one of her photographs) for comfort and understanding. Ngawaiata's second photograph shows her grandmother, who raised her in the Coromandel area of New Zealand.

One of the most complicated photographs was taken by RJ, who at the time of this study was 17 years old and pregnant with her first child. RJ's photograph showcased her pregnant belly juxtaposed against one of the cottages at Kelston. As she reckoned with becoming a new mother, RJ expressed her dreams for her unborn child to one day become her ears and voice. Another photograph, taken at the day care she attended as a young child, was intended to represent RJ's goal to one day become an early childhood educator.

Perhaps one of the most reluctant participants at the beginning of this study, Dan took some of the most strikingly poignant photographs. The photograph selected for the *Ko wai au?* project featured a photograph of Dan taken by another of the participants. This photograph shows Dan standing tall, showcasing his *ta moko* (tattoo), which featured a stingray, a symbol of one who fights and is resilient.

After reviewing and discussing these photographs, we asked rangatahi to identify what they saw as the most important messages from across their selected stories. They identified five key messages as outlined below:

1. We are proud to be both Māori and Deaf.
2. We need more fluent trilingual interpreters and communicators (NZSL, te reo Māori, and English) so that we can travel confidently in te ao Māori (the Māori world), the Deaf world, and the hearing world of Aotearoa.
3. Te reo Māori and NZSL should be taught and learned in schools and communities as well as English, and NZSL should be accessible for all D/deaf children, but particularly to help young Māori D/deaf to reach their dreams and aspirations.
4. It is important for us to acknowledge the important work that has gone on before, particularly with our Māori Deaf role models—they have helped us become who we are now.
5. It is important for us to remember and acknowledge all of the people who have influenced our lives.

8 Our Own Interpretations

As we worked with rangatahi to construct their final exhibition, we saw several interrelated messages associated with youth identity. First and foremost, we recognised the *fluidity and diversity of youth identity that existed among the participants*. This was a reminder that although we, as researchers, might perceive them as fitting neatly into one or two categories, their identities changed over time (McKee 2017). Although children with significant hearing loss may not be exposed to and/or learn sign language when they are young, they often wish to later in life

once they are exposed to Deaf clubs and Deaf communities (Mckee 2008; Valentine and Skelton 2003).

Although we had initially been keen to work with youth who proudly identified as both Māori and D/deaf, we learned that rangatahi also used other terms to describe themselves, such as “oral,” “born hearing,” and “hearing impaired.” Whilst we grappled with such terms, rangatahi reminded us that the right to self-expression was fundamental and that young people can describe themselves in different ways that change over time.

The youth participants also reminded us of the interconnected nature of aspiration and agency (Hynds et al. 2014). In asserting their agency, they demonstrated a *strong political identity*, which was associated with their rights to sign and communicate in the language of their choice. This also emphasised their strong desire for social justice. This strength identity was related to rangatahi agency and aspiration and an acknowledgement of the *importance of access to strong adult role models* (Māori D/deaf and hearing), particularly Ngāti Turi adult role models, who were central to their own identities and aspirations, and who served as teachers, mentors and interpreters. The importance of intergenerational relationships, particularly the importance of kuia (female elders) and grandmothers, was also noted. This was particularly evident in some of the photographs the rangatahi took of their grandmothers, and in the firm, but nurturing cultural mentorship, the trilingual interpreter for this project, Stephanie Awheto, played.

Although the rangatahi had a strong sense of who they were as both d/Deaf and Māori, the threat of *denied identities* was always present, forged from participant experiences of a denial of their rights through isolation, lack of communication and access to NZSL, and difficulty participating across diverse communities. Problems of people not listening to Māori Deaf/deaf youth, and a lack of recognition of these young people’s unique communication needs across Māori and non-Māori schools and communities, emphasised the real threat of denied identities. This was particularly unsettling as all of the young people in this study had aspirations to participate fully in te ao Māori whilst being shut out through a lack of access to trained and fluent interpreters. They also had goals to gain qualifications and fulfil their dreams of becoming respected leaders, teachers, parents and skilled professionals. However, their stories suggested inadequate opportunities to learn in culturally responsive and sustaining educational contexts that would enable them to reach their goals.

During the research process, there were a number of incidents that intrigued and unsettled us, revealing an *ambiguity of identity*, emphasised by silences and gaps within this research process. Such incidents revealed a lack of genuine dialogue between us and rangatahi. We had many questions we wanted to ask but often remained silent as we knew some hearing Indigenous communities considered “multiple questions” from outsiders as a sign of disrespect (Brayboy and Deyhle 2000, p. 167). Over time, we have been concerned that nothing much has changed for these young people. This caused us to reflect: Who benefits from this research? Our engagement with these young people enabled us to become more conscious of “unsettling engagements” (Springwood and King 2001, p. 403) that challenged our initial assumptions of shared vision and transformative action.

9 Discussion and Conclusion

This research was born out of our desire to understand the strength identities and experiences of a small group of Ngāti Turi rangatahi within Aotearoa New Zealand. We acknowledge RJ, Kahurangi, Ngawaiata, Tuhoi, Dan, and Eric and the rest of the research whānau who made this work possible.

Rangatahi were clear in their analysis of important issues. They reminded us of the importance of Ngāti Turi rangatahi and their access to other Māori adult role models who contributed to their strength identities/political identities and their commitment to social justice work. These findings affirm Wyness' (2012) call for recognition of the importance of interdependent relations between adults, children and young people in the study of voice. However, whilst the importance of adult-youth relationships and access to the community was highlighted, there were also several gaps and silences associated with these. We learned that rangatahi had also felt disconnected and isolated within hearing dominated communities such as marae, schools, and their own whānau. This is reflected in other studies with D/deaf youth, whereby participants revealed a lack of connection with hearing family members (Mckee 2017), and particularly hearing fathers (Valentine and Skelton 2003). A lack of dialogue with rangatahi around their unique socio-linguistic rights and sociocultural needs troubled us, particularly within the existing education system. We agree with others that there is an urgent need to develop accountability and commitment across the education system to address these issues (Mckee and Manning 2015). Our involvement in this research left us wondering how Ngāti Turi youth access educational resources and services given the lack of access to interpreters and educational professionals fluent in NZSL and te reo Māori.

The lack of policy development around these issues is seriously troubling. A 2013 report, *A new era in the right to sign: He Houhanga Rongo te Tika ki te Reo Turi*, released by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, highlighted a number of issues related to the rights of D/deaf adults and young children. Findings emphasised the need for hearing families to be exposed to, and learn, NZSL as soon as possible after a child's diagnosis of hearing loss. However, Mckee and Manning (2015) investigated the findings of a 2013 Human Rights Commission inquiry and the inequalities for NZSL users. These authors argue that. "Educational linguistic rights are universally regarded as a core goal of sign language recognition; yet, the NZSL Act is silent on education" (Mckee and Manning 2015, p. 477). Results from the Human Rights 2013 report revealed that D/deaf people and NZSL users are often denied their right to education, as staff working with D/deaf people frequently receive minimal training in NZSL and D/deaf culture. Mckee and Manning highlight the low levels of professional competency in NZSL as well as the serious lack of relevant NZSL curriculum resources. This complacency within the education system poses a serious threat to the bonded identities of Ngāti Turi tamariki and rangatahi (Māori D/deaf children and young people). We are deeply concerned about the lack of Ministry of Education recognition regarding these young people's

human rights and the ongoing lack of policy development to ensure these young people experience culturally responsive and sustaining educational environments.

Since we undertook this research, five years later, it is clear that nothing has changed. Therefore, Fielding's (1999) call for radical collegiality is yet to be realised in this context. There is an urgent need to protect these young people's unique socio-linguistic rights and socio-cultural communities. We hope that others will join the fight for social justice and continue to explore these issues in partnership with Ngāti Turi youth and their communities.

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Chapter 7

Gathering and Listening to the Voices of Māori Youth: What Are the System Responses?



Mere Berryman and Elizabeth Eley

Abstract In this chapter, we seek to understand how the gathering of, and listening to the voices of Māori youth, over more than two decades, has influenced change within New Zealand’s education system. We present and interpret what these young Māori have told us in several national initiatives including the most recent report from Office of the Children’s Commissioner and New Zealand’s School’s Trustees Association (2018). The students themselves, consistent with other research, continue to highlight the need to overturn the underlying racism that persistently disadvantages clearly identifiable groups of students. National statistics suggest that, despite the intentions of policy-makers, we are continuing to alienate and short-change an increasing number of students. For many indigenous students, these statistics are part of a world trend. Although the voices of these students have continually highlighted the need for change, we contend that the pace of change has been far too slow. If we as educators continue to promote conditions where students feel they must fit in rather than truly belong, we will continue to undermine their well-being within education and we will risk failing to address the ensuing negative statistics. We conclude with a challenge and response from these same students.

1 Introduction: Nothing About Us Without Us

The slogan “nothing about us without us” has been with us for a long time. The term is translated from Latin *nihil de nobis, sine nobis* and was a political motto for Poland’s 1505 political reforms (see Davies 1984). In more recent times, this motto has become the catch cry for political activism—being the plea for those who live out the policies and practices of their day, or who receive no assurance that their voice and their experiences will be valued, respected or even listened to. One group who have every right to expect that their voices will be loud in the establishment and implementation of educational policy is those of our students. However, in

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New Zealand and around the world, there has been growing concern that, despite the number of times that students' opinions are requested, that surveys are conducted, that student councils are established and meet, the level of influence of students over national education policy remains very weak. For example, the voices of Māori students gathered in Bishop and Berryman (2006) had little direct influence on policy.

New Zealand has no excuse for this. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), adopted by the United Nation's General Assembly in 1989 (Committee on the Rights of the Child 2001), was ratified in New Zealand in 1993 (Ministry of Social Development 2015). As signatories to UNCROC, we have agreed with Article 12, which reads as follows:

1. Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Our own New Zealand legislation also requires this. The Vulnerable Children's Act, 2014 Part 1 No. 6 states that we need to be "increasing their [children and young people's] participation in decision making about them, and their contribution to society." The New Zealand government therefore has an obligation to listen to the voices of our young people and to act on these.

Across the New Zealand Education system, Māori students (New Zealand's indigenous population) continue to be underserved. Māori students are over-represented in all negative education statistics. As a nation, we must address this ongoing disparity in order to improve the outcomes for Māori students, all students and our society as a whole.

This chapter is presented in three parts. First, as told by young Māori people themselves, we present over 20 years of research into their educational experiences. Within this research, their experiences, perceptions and proposed solutions have been meticulously gathered, analysed and reported on. The information provided here presents the thematic analysis of this research, supported by some of their own statements. In Part 2, we outline the educational policy contexts that have been applied and implemented over the same period of time. In considering these contexts, we find little evidence of wide-scale change at a system level that responds to the issues raised and the solutions proposed, in particular by Māori youth and students. While there have been some positive impacts from the challenges presented by these young people, particularly by individual teachers and school leaders, the need for widespread school reform that grows out of the lived and told experiences of our young people continues. In Part 3, we propose some ways in which the system could, or even must, respond to the voices of these young people.

As with all authors in this book, we continue to pose the question: what does it take to ensure the voices of Māori youth truly count in education system decision-making and in informing the change that is needed? Gathering and reporting their voices is not enough—if we continue to ask students for their experiences and their opinions, but do not carefully attend to what they say, do not respect and value their thoughts, and fail to act on the solutions provided, we continue to do our young people a disservice. We owe this generation of young people an accelerated reform based on the concept of “nothing about us, without us, everything about us is with us.”

2 Background

2.1 *The New Zealand Context*

As a country, the prevailing rhetoric across New Zealand is that of equal opportunities for all. As a nation, we proudly celebrate historical figures that have contributed to our heritage where commitment to social justice is held in high regard. However, as Consedine and Consedine (2005) outline in *Healing our History: The challenge of the Treaty of Waitangi*, the reality falls far short of this rhetoric.

Māori are considered the indigenous people of New Zealand arriving in the land they named Aotearoa in about 700 AD. Their civilisation and culture were well established when the land was “discovered” by the British in the late 1700s. Re-named New Zealand, a deliberate colonisation of the country occurred and it was largely peaceful (in comparison to the British colonisation of other nations in the 17th and 18th centuries). Colonisation led to disastrous consequences for Māori (Bishop and Glynn 1999). A key event in the colonising of New Zealand was the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi by Māori tribal leaders and British Government representatives in 1840 (Tawhai and Gray-Sharp 2011).

The Treaty of Waitangi mandated a partnership relationship and established British governance in return for Māori tribal ownership and protection of their land interests and *taonga* (cultural treasures). However, the sovereignty guaranteed to Māori was increasingly ignored, resulting in dire consequences for Māori cultural, social and economic well-being, well into the 20th century. The promises remained largely unfulfilled until ongoing political lobbying and protest by *iwi* (tribal groups), seeking redress for breaches of the protections promised in the Treaty, finally saw the passing of the Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) and the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal. Both of these events have enabled Māori to begin to claim for breaches of the Treaty back to 1840 and have seen the Crown seek to clarify its position with respect to the application of the Treaty of Waitangi (see King 2003).

As Crown policy, this Treaty continues to shape the bi-cultural relationship between Māori and Pākehā (European descendants of the colonists) and influence

government policy in contemporary New Zealand society (Tawhai and Gray-Sharp 2011). It has particular influence on government policy, including education policy, given that from 1988, following the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Social Policy, government policies must promote the three broad principles of the Treaty of Waitangi: partnership, protection, and participation.

However, despite the Treaty and its promises, despite the prevailing rhetoric of social justice for all, and despite the political mandates to honour the primacy of a bicultural nation, there continues to be a large negative disparity of outcomes between Māori and non-Māori against almost every social indicator (Bishop et al. 2014). While this generation is seeing a political determination to honour the promises of the Treaty of Waitangi, it is taking much longer to undo the inter-generational harm that has occurred since colonisation (Tawhai and Gray-Sharp 2011).

2.2 *Impacts on the New Zealand Education System*

In general, Māori students do not do as well in our education system as other students. The Office of the Auditor General consistently reports that Māori students “do not remain in schooling as long as other students nor are they achieving as highly” (Office of the Auditor General 2012, 2013, 2015). In 2016, across all ethnicity groupings, Māori students were the lowest proportion of students remaining at school to age 17 (70.9%). This compares with a retention rate of 85.4% for European students (Ministry of Education 2018a). Māori are also over-represented in our national stand-down¹ and exclusion² figures. In 2016, the age-standardised stand-down rate for Māori (37.3 stand-downs per 1000) was 12.4 times as high as Pākehā (15.7 stand-downs per 1000). And, in the same year, the Ministry of Education reported that the age-standardised exclusion rate for Māori (3.0 exclusions per 1000) was 3.4 times as high as for Pākehā (0.9 exclusions per 1000) (Ministry of Education 2018b).

Despite many initiatives to raise Māori student achievement, English-medium schooling continues to return lower achievement rates for Māori than for non-Māori students (Udahemuka 2016). In 2016, 66% of Māori students left school with NCEA³ Level 2 or above compared to 84% of European students (Ministry of Education 2018c).

¹Formal removal of a student through a stand-down from school for a period of up to 5 school days.

²Where an enrolment of a student aged under 16 is terminated, with a requirement that the student enrolls elsewhere.

³National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is the official secondary school qualification in New Zealand.

Part 1: 20 Years of Gathering and Listening to Student Voice

Over the past twenty years, there have been a series of research and development initiatives that were gathering, analysing and reporting the experiences of Māori students in our schools. Much of this research highlighted the students' views on how the inequities and disadvantages of their schooling could be addressed. The findings of four of these research initiatives are presented below. Two of these were conducted in conjunction with Te Kotahitanga, with interviews being conducted in 2001 (see Bishop and Berryman 2006), and again between 2005 and 2009 (see Berryman et al. 2017). The voices of senior Māori students were gathered in Kia Eke Panuku in 2015 (see Poutama Pounamu 2017). We also reference the findings of the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the New Zealand School Trustees Association—*Education Matters to Me: Key Insights*—published in 2018.

Across these four significant research endeavours, Māori youth have provided remarkably consistent thoughts, experiences and perceptions over an extended period of almost two decades. Despite this, we are still, in 2018, hearing calls from the Ministry of Education to deal with the “unconscious bias” within our education system.⁴ Our education system would have benefited from heeding to the insights and solutions offered by these young people, and if policy-makers across the system plus leaders and teachers in schools had attended to these voices.

3 Student Voices Gathered in Te Kotahitanga

The Te Kotahitanga Research and Professional Development Project was funded by the Ministry of Education, beginning in 2001. Between 2000 and 2013, there were five iterative phases of Te Kotahitanga aimed at working with teachers and school leaders to improve the educational achievement of Māori students in English-medium classrooms (Alton-Lee 2015; Bishop et al. 2014).

3.1 Voices Gathered in 2001

In 2001, in conjunction with the genesis of Te Kotahitanga, a number of different groups were interviewed within five school communities. This project was conducted in collaborative ways and in accordance with kaupapa Māori research principles in order to address the research relationships in terms of issues of power. Through adherence to these principles, the researchers sought to promote the *mana rangatiratanga* (self-determination and agency) of all participants involved in the education of Māori students—including the students themselves.

⁴As reported in Radio New Zealand news items in May 2018. See, for example, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/news/te-manu-korihi/356413/ministry-urges-bold-step-for-maori-education>.

Schools volunteered to take part in the project with five schools selected across a number of variables including: decile groupings; school size; urban and rural; single sex and co-educational and with varying proportions of Māori students. Four groups of people were interviewed at each school. These included the principal, teachers, *whānau* (family) members and students who were identified by the schools as being *engaged in learning* and those *not engaged in learning*. The four sets of interviews form the basis of the “narratives of experience” that were produced using a “collaborative storying approach”; the meanings that the participants themselves give to their own experiences of education are the meanings that feature in the final narratives. The themes of these group discourses are summarised within Culture Speaks (see Bishop and Berryman 2006).

3.1.1 2001: What Did Our Students Say?

For Māori students, both those identified by their schools as *engaged* and those as *not engaged*, being Māori in secondary school was a negative experience (Bishop and Berryman 2006), with few students reporting positive experiences of being Māori in their classrooms. Over and over again, students spoke in depth about the deficit theorising they endured merely for being Māori:

Being Māori. Some teachers are racist. They say bad things about us.

We're thick. We smell. Our uniforms are paru [dirty]. They shame us in class. Put us down. Don't even try to say our names properly. Say things about our whānau.

They blame us for stealing when things go missing. Just 'cause we are Māori.

The major difference between students identified as *engaged* and those identified as *not engaged* played out in how they determined to respond to this pervasive and overpowering negative discourse being perpetuated by their teachers and non-Māori peers. Engaged Māori students talked about leaving their culture at home in order to succeed at school:

I guess I forget I'm a Māori like them when it's a Māori being bad ... I just ignore them and keep working. I don't think some people know I'm Māori.

Non-engaged students talked about actively resisting when they felt they had been wrongly treated but being powerless to do anything other than be removed from learning or remove themselves from the learning:

Our art teacher is real dongy, like dumb, and she doesn't teach us anything, so the whole class talks, but it is only the Māori that get kicked out. Yeah, we have been kicked out for the rest of the year. We just sit in these other senior art classes, and we do nothing.

Negative experiences came from a range of issues including the mispronunciation of their names:

When I started at this school I had a Māori name but none of the teachers could say it. So now I am Tania.

And not being able to wear *taonga* (cultural ornaments):

Yep, like carvings. You are not allowed to wear carvings around your neck if it was showing, now you are as long as you hide it away.

Yeah, like Miss D cut mine off from around my neck.

Yeah, mine got cut off too.

Students reported that Māori culture was not valued in their schools and the cultural toolkit (Bruner 1996) or prior knowledge and experiences that they brought to their learning was overlooked, marginalised or ignored. Rather than marginalise their prior knowledge and experiences, or try to impose a transmission model of learning, Māori youth wanted to bring their own funds of knowledge to their learning (Gay 2010; Sleeter 2011). However, this was seldom their experience:

We do a unit on respecting others' cultures. Some teachers who aren't Māori try to tell us what Māori do about things like a tangi (cultural rituals of mourning). It's crap! I'm a Māori. They should ask me about Māori things. I could tell them about why we do things in a certain way. I've got the goods on this, but they never ask me. I'm a dumb Māori I suppose. Yet they asked the Asian girl about her culture. They never ask us about ours.

The students believed that many teachers overtly, negatively stereotyped Māori students. They felt that teachers expected them to misbehave and were constantly looking for misbehaviour (and finding misbehaviour that would be ignored in other students) and, likewise, teachers ignored opportunities to recognise good behaviours.

Most disturbing from the 2001 interviews were the students' experiences of overt racism:

Well some people don't like Māori students much. It's pretty good here. There are only two teachers that make racist comments. One of these teachers told me when I was a Form 2 (Year 8) kid that he would sort out my black head when I came to high school so I better watch out.

Like Māori have that name. It's like prejudice and they don't know you as a person, but they just think that you probably steal and probably get abused at home, and all your family is the same and things like that.

In this study, these voices coined the term “teacher deficit theorising” in association with the development of the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile.

3.2 Voices Gathered in 2005–2009

Also, as part of Te Kotahitanga, and following the same research protocols as outlined above, groups of students from 12 different schools were interviewed between 2005 and 2009. These students provided another poignant message about the moments within their schooling that held promise, albeit set against a background of micro-aggressions (both overt and covert) that challenged their language, identity and culture.

In the same way as the 2001 students, the 2005–2009 students were clear about the teachers they could work with:

She wants to be like a good teacher. She doesn't want to be your friend or that sort of thing. She's like a friend, but not a friend.

He's firm and lenient and very, very positive, positive thinking, like if you do something wrong he's always there to back us up.

They were equally clear about those they chose not to work with. Often this was because they had failed to find a way to get along together:

We need a teacher that we get along with 'cause we don't learn anything if we don't get along with the teacher.

None of us get along with [Teacher 1] and she just sends us [out of class] and like lots of people go [out of class] every day and don't learn.

Students described positive relationships with teachers as those where they were not talked down to, where power was shared, and where teachers were committed to their students' success:

Mrs. D talks to us like we are the same level. And everyone really respects her because of it and like everyone knows she's the teacher and the boss but she also most of the time she doesn't make herself feel dominant over the rest of the class but at the same time she is still the teacher.

But other teachers talk like I am the teacher and you are the student

And they think they are better than us. "You [have to] listen to me, I don't [have to] listen to you"

Relational pedagogy is reinforced when teachers actively reject negative stereotyping and raise students' own expectations of their abilities to realise their own power in the learning space:

At the start of the year we were like "we're dumb, we're the dumb class, the dumb lot." She goes "no, no you're not dumb." She said from now on we're not allowed to say that word. We're bright, she reckons.

Yeah, she wants us to strive, to go to the next level.

To engage in learning, these groups of students told us that educators need to provide a pedagogy that is relational (Bishop and Berryman 2006; Sidorkin 2002) but from which they could also be self-determining (Young 2004):

You get to know her and she gets to know you and stuff like that and she'll talk to you and stuff and you feel comfortable around her 'cause she's not making you feel kind of awkward.

Like if there was something wrong she would like warn us and tell us that we're doing it wrong, but like our other teachers don't know our class as well and that's why, I don't think they tolerate our class much because they don't know us like how she knows us, but she's got to know everyone, like she knows everybody in our class, she knows everything.

Students consistently argued relationships as being essential and foundational to their engagement. Bishop et al. (2014) were later able to statistically verify their argument. Through all the interviews between 2001 and 2015, Māori youth articulated a collective call for successful engagement in education for them and their peers:

As Māori, you want everyone to be there with you to help you along the way, and to help them along the way. You don't just want to succeed for yourself, but you're taking everyone with you.

And, through these interviews, the recurring theme that to succeed in the school system you have to leave your Māori culture behind remained constant:

Being at a school that has a lot of Pākehā teachers, I'm not really putting them down, but it's something that you have to do, you kind of have to leave your Māoritanga (all aspects of being Māori) at the door, because they don't understand you as much ... it's hard to carry on with your Māoritanga in class.

While these students reiterated the value of the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile, opportunities for their experiences, insights and solutions to inform policy-making were not taken. Furthermore, given that funding for Te Kotahitanga ceased with Phase 5 (Alton-Lee 2015), Ka Hikitia needed to be refreshed in 2013 and the disparities between Māori and non-Māori have persisted (Office of the Auditor General, 2012, 2013, 2016), it appears that their underlying concerns continued to be unheeded.

3.3 *Voices Gathered in 2015*

Kia Eke Panuku: Building on Success was a school reform initiative, operating in 93 secondary schools across New Zealand, in which facilitators worked with school communities to understand and explore the Ka Hikitia vision of *Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as Māori*. Kia Eke Panuku made Ka Hikitia the *kaupapa* or central purpose with schools working to: *give life to Ka Hikitia and addressing the aspirations of Māori communities by supporting Māori students to pursue their potential* (Kia Eke Panuku 2015). However, Kia Eke Panuku staff found many school leaders and teachers who voiced a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about how to interpret, let alone implement strategies to address this central Ka Hikitia vision.

In order to understand students' own views on "Māori students enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori," we interviewed over 150 senior Māori students from 58 secondary schools. To gather these views, Kia Eke Panuku staff including the two authors, hosted a series of nine *hui* (meetings run following Māori cultural procedures) on *marae* (iwi cultural spaces) across New Zealand. Hui were

held at the completion of the senior school year with up to three successful senior Māori students (nominated by their school) accompanied by one adult from the school. Most frequently, the adults involved a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team but also included teachers, whānau and iwi members.⁵

Students were asked three questions that they had received prior to the day, thus allowing opportunities to think about and talk about the questions with other adults and peers. The questions, about their own successes at school and what *Māori students enjoying and achieving education success as Māori* meant for them, were posed by their accompanying adult. The tapes were transcribed, and a thematic analysis of the transcripts was undertaken employing a grounded theory approach.

3.3.1 2015: What Did Our Students Say?

Despite each hui being totally independent of the others, there was a remarkably high consistency of experiences across the nine hui with many common experiences and understandings shared about what success as Māori required of them and meant for them (Berryman et al. 2017). The following ten themes emerged, all of which could have informed the concurrent educational policy development:

- Being able to resist the negative stereotypes about being Māori
- Having Māori culture and values celebrated at school
- Being strong in your Māori cultural identity
- Understanding that success is part of who we are
- Developing and maintaining emotional and spiritual strength
- Being able to contribute to the success of others
- your own experiences and the experiences of others.

From these students, we can both derive a sense of hope for our education system and draw from their experiences to consider solutions for the transformative reform needed to change that system. The quotes below need to be considered within the context of which they were given—these students knew that their experience of success was not the experience of all Māori youth and they were deeply saddened by that knowledge. Their strongest message was that to be successful as Māori within the school system, they had to be able to resist and overcome other people's low expectations and negative stereotypes about them being Māori:

If you're a Māori, you're probably already put in those classes where they're not pushing you to succeed as much, so automatically you do not achieve well. That's the overall stereotype of Māori achievement. People aren't expecting as much of you.

When you're a Māori and you achieve, it's amazing because quite a lot of Māori get underestimated. For Māori to show people our capabilities, what we can do, it's quite an

⁵Fuller details on the nomination and confirmation process are provided on the Poutama Pounamu website: <https://poutamapounamu.org.nz/student-voice>.

amazing feeling. When other Māori see our achievements, they want to be just like us, so they push for it as well.

Many articulated this as an area where adults and non-Māori could and should be supporting them. Māori students clearly understood that their success required more than their own personal strengths, achievements, values, and connections:

She's helped me become a prefect, actually pushing me, saying, "The Māori students are always underestimated, I believe in you." Her belief in me really helped me this year.

You can approach most people - pretty much all the teachers at our school. And they're willing to drop everything and help you out. They're always willing to help anyone, even if you are Māori. If you're not Māori, it doesn't matter.

I've succeeded because I've had the help of others. Doing it on your own is just not easy, so having those others there, helping you, is essential.

Some Māori students directly attributed their success to the support they had received from a school environment where their own culture, and values were explicitly celebrated, modelled and thus made more acceptable:

We have teachers who have come from England and from other countries who have no te reo Māori (Māori language). They learn te reo Māori and try to understand it. I can help them. That's important for me because it shows that they have motivation, they have a passion to understand students at a deeper level. It shows me that they take into consideration my culture and who I am as a person, as a Mori person. It shows that they appreciate that as well.

There's a huge drive on excellence, but there's also a huge drive on keeping your culture, keeping your culture alive ... making it known to you and to everybody else that you are Māori and you're proud to be Māori. And yeah, I think that's an important thing you need to have whilst going through education, you need to have that bit of culture just to bring it all back home.

This was essential to being able to be strong as Māori, rather than believing they had to compromise their own cultural identity by trying *to pass* as someone else. Understanding that success was a part of who they were and what other Māori were, or could be, required their being emotionally and spiritually strong:

A lot of people think being Māori is trying to work against something. But if you're Māori, you're working with your whole culture. You have your ancestors, your family, they're all behind you. Being Māori is something that will support you, not something that you have to fight against.

These students understood that at times this had not been the case for them, nor was it the case for many of their peers, including those friends and whānau, some of whom a number shared, had resorted to suicide:

A lot of young Māori have this thing in them, this whakamā (shame). I'd like to break that shame.

Many of these students talked about being the first of their family to attain success, whether it was cultural success, in the arts, languages, academic and/or sporting

success and whether it was at a school, regional, national or international setting. Many students talked about their success across a number of these indicators and across the range of these settings:

I'm just breaking that cycle of people in my family not passing, not wanting to go to school. Breaking that cycle of being a Māori on the dole.

I mean, all three of us can stand on a stage and dance the hula and be confident with ourselves. And then stand in a pōwhiri (formal cultural rituals of encounter) and be confident there too. I know how to do Level 1 Algebra or write a creative writing piece that'll give me an Excellence. Those are successes that we are setting for ourselves today so that in 10 years' time, maybe even sooner, that'll be normal for Māori students when they're our age.

Some talked about not having seen themselves as successful until fairly recently. Across all of the groups, students clearly articulated that their personal success was fully intertwined with their contribution to the success of others. Being able to relate to others in a familial way meant that they understood and took strength from working together:

If one of us succeeds, it's all of our success; it's a reflection of all of us Māori because everyone has helped us to do well. All the whānau has helped us do well.

They understood that by working together, they would be more able to do things on their own in the future. They all talked about benefitting from being provided with timely and explicit guidance and direction which had helped them to build upon their own experiences and also the experiences of others;

People have helped me all the way through just recognising the potential that I never saw myself. If anyone had told me a year ago that I would almost have Level 3 with Excellence I wouldn't have believed them. These people have helped me to recognise what I actually am capable of achieving.

The students in 2015 were all successful students; many of the interviewed students had completed Year 13, their final year of schooling, and had already been accepted into the university programmes of their choice. In addition, they were all students in schools that were part of the Kia Eke Panuku programme, schools that had made a commitment to deliberately implementing cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy across the school. They knew they had benefitted from this. However, they also reported that, in many cases, this success had been fragile—there were many times when they could have slipped through the cracks. They knew they were successful students, but that many of their peers had not made it through the system. Success was not a guaranteed outcome for all these students, and certainly not for many of their peers. Their key message to policy-makers was that they had succeeded despite system barriers and blockages.

4 Student Voices Gathered by the Office of the Commissioner for Children and New Zealand School Trustees' Association

In January 2018 *Education matters to me: Key insights—A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* was published. This report presents the synthesis of findings from the interviews and surveys of 1678 children and young people gathered over October and November 2017. The report lists six key insights about how students experience schooling, and what could be improved in the education system to help make the experience of students more positive:

1. Understand me in my whole world
2. People at school are racist towards me
3. Relationships mean everything to me
4. Teach me the way I learn best
5. I need to be comfortable before I can learn
6. It's my life—let me have a say.

Importantly, these insights do not come from Māori alone as in the previous experiences; other voices are also present including the voices of recent immigrant students. They show that what is not working for Māori students is also not working for others.

In summary, young Māori people and others have been able to clearly articulate what they consider to be wrong with the education system and what would improve it. The tragedy is that they have not been heard over successive policy developments.

Part 2: 20 Years of Educational Policy Contexts

The students presented and brought their theorising and insights into their experiences in classes and in schools. This schooling was strongly influenced and directed by the educational policies and the policy contexts of the time. In this section, we present some of the policy contexts that were in place over the 20-year period that the student voices were being gathered.

Since the Western model of schooling was introduced into New Zealand, there have been many policy responses and initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Education to address the disparity of educational outcomes between Māori and non-Māori students. However, many (if not, most) of these responses have been located in a culturally subtractive approach to education policy (May et al. 2004). The purpose of schooling has been seen as assimilating Māori students into Western ways of thinking and succeeding, and the retention of the Māori language, culture and values regarded as a threat inhibiting the process of civilising or influencing over Māori (Barrington 2008). The Ministry of Education, itself, describes these responses as “well-intentioned but disadvantageous actions taken over time in order

to ‘address the problem’ of Māori under-achievement” (Ministry of Education 2015).

For example, New Zealand education responses to Māori students’ achievement and outcomes were strongly influenced by the Chapple Report (Chapple et al. 1997). This report was prepared for the Ministry of Education and concluded that the differences in achievement for Māori students compared with non-Māori students were because of their socio-economic status rather than ethnicity and “there was therefore nothing significant about ‘being Māori’ that affected education success” (Ministry of Education 2015). The Ministry state that these findings substantially affected the way we thought about education achievement of Māori and contributed to a prevalent “blaming” attitude and an abdication of responsibility by some in education: “It’s their background, what can we do?” (Ministry of Education 2015). However, the means of redressing the impact of this research and policy direction has not been clear. Schools have neither been challenged to address the underlying ideologies and possible racist attitudes towards Māori students, nor have they been provided with clear directions on how to do this, even when the messages have been so clear from the students who have been the victims of these beliefs.

A decade later, the conclusions of the Chapple Report were significantly challenged. Richard Harker (2007) undertook a further analysis of the data used by Chapple et al. and concluded that ethnicity is a significant factor in achievement over and above socio-economic status. Harker found that controlling for both socio-economic status and prior attainment reduces, but does not eliminate, significant differences between the four ethnic groups studied in the Progress at School and Smithfield projects. Harker suggested that the explanation lies between the interface of schools and student ethnicity.

Likewise, Hattie (2003), using disaggregated reading test results prepared as norms for the asTTle assessment programme, identified that achievement differences between Māori and non-Māori remained constant regardless of whether the students attended a high or low decile school. From these data, Hattie concluded that it is not socio-economic differences that have the greatest effect on Māori student achievement because these differences occurred at all levels of socio-economic status. Hattie concluded that the evidence pointed more to the major issue being the relationships between teachers and Māori students. The voices of Māori students and their teachers gathered in 2001 (Bishop and Berryman 2006) supported these conclusions. What did not occur with the analysis of these data and subsequent messaging was a widespread programme to address the impacts and effects of decades of negative positioning towards Māori reported by our students.

Subsequently, an analysis across the Best Evidence Syntheses (Alton-Lee 2003; Biddulph et al. 2003; Mitchell and Cubey 2003; Timperley et al. 2006) revealed that the education system performance has been persistently inequitable for Māori learners, citing the following contributors:

- low inclusion of Māori themes and topics in English-medium education
- fewer teacher–student interactions

- less positive feedback
- more negative comments targeted to Māori learners
- under-assessment of capability
- widespread targeting of Māori learners with ineffective or even counterproductive teaching strategies (such as the “learning styles” approach)
- failure to uphold mana Māori in education
- inadvertent teacher racism
- peer racism
- mispronounced names.

5 The Ka Hikitia Policy

In recent years, the Ministry of Education response has been provided through the *Ka Hikitia* policy. The Ministry of Education tells us that Ka Hikitia is “our strategy to rapidly change how the education system performs so that all Māori students gain the skills, qualifications and knowledge they need to enjoy and achieve education success as Māori” (Ministry of Education 2015). Ka Hikitia challenged educators with, “stepping up how the education system performs to ensure Māori students are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori” (Ministry of Education 2015).

The first Māori education strategy was launched in 1999 and had three main goals. They were as follows:

- to raise the quality of English-medium education for Māori
- to support the growth of high-quality kaupapa Māori education (education based on a Māori world view) and
- to support greater Māori involvement and authority in education.

In 2005, the Ministry of Education was able to report that Māori students were showing some improvements in educational performance, and the 1999 Māori education strategy was republished to reaffirm the Ministry of Education’s commitment to Māori education. This was followed in 2008 by the launch of *Ka Hikitia: Managing for Success 2008–2012*. The strategy was refreshed and relaunched as *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013–2017*.

The hopes are that, when the vision of Ka Hikitia is realised, all Māori students will:

- have their identity, language and culture valued and included in teaching and learning in ways that support them to engage and achieve success
- know their potential and feel supported to set goals and take action to achieve success
- experience teaching and learning that is relevant, engaging, rewarding and positive

- have gained the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to achieve success in te ao Māori, New Zealand and the wider world.

The effectiveness of the introduction of *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008–2012* was evaluated by the Office of the Auditor General (see Office of the Auditor-General 2012, 2013). The Auditor General was reasonably positive regarding the intent and potential of *Ka Hikitia—Managing for Success*. She said “overall, I found reason to be optimistic that Ka Hikitia will increasingly enable Māori students to succeed” (Office of the Auditor-General 2013, p. 7). The Auditor General concluded that Ka Hikitia holds the potential for making a difference for Māori because it “reflects the interests and priorities of Māori well, is based on sound educational research and reasoning, is widely valued throughout the education system, and has Māori backing” (Office of the Auditor-General 2013, p. 7). However, the Auditor General was critical of the launch and introduction of the policy. The report states:

The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) introduced Ka Hikitia slowly and unsteadily. Confused communication about who was intended to deliver Ka Hikitia, unclear roles and responsibilities in the Ministry, poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication with schools have meant that action to put Ka Hikitia into effect was not given the intended priority. As a result, the Ministry’s introduction of Ka Hikitia has not been as effective as it could have been. (Office of the Auditor-General 2013, p. 7)

The failure of this policy and its potential to bring the transformative change needed to improve the schooling experiences of Māori youth is damning. For over 20 years, students have been telling us that not only are none of the four goals of Ka Hikitia the lived experiences of their schooling, but that they have to live with underlying racism and negative stereotypes that erode the potential and possibilities of their education.

Even more troubling is that at the time of writing, we currently do not have a Māori Education strategy. The last iteration of Ka Hikitia finished in 2017. We have been advised there are plans for a further iteration of the Ka Hikitia strategy, although no details or information on this policy are available. As the Auditor General said, there was the potential within Ka Hikitia to bring about the system change needed to effect positive and transformative change for our students. However, the implementation with the accompanying “poor planning, poor programme and project management, and ineffective communication” (Office of the Auditor-General 2013, p. 7), the Auditor General identified has robbed the policy of its potential. To be in mid-2018 and to be uninformed on the policy and to have no sense of how the implementation of the new iteration will be is concerning.

There have been other policy responses that have had a negative impact on Māori students and their schooling experiences. In December 2017, the government announced that data gathering and subsequent reporting of student achievement against National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori would cease. Between 2010 and 2017, under government policy, schools were required to report twice a year on student achievement against national standards—identifying those that were above, at, below or well-below the standard. The purpose of the reporting

was to identify students who could benefit from targeted interventions. A consequence was the increased deficit theorising around students who were not at the standard or at risk of being not at the standard. The very public reporting that repeated over and over again that Māori students were less likely to reach the standard than non-Māori fed into the negative stereotypes that our students have reported over the years. National Standards have now been removed from the political landscape; however, the consequences of ten years of labelling students will live on. We have yet to hear of a concerted policy response to addressing these consequences.

There are similar consequences from the introduction of the Better Public Service targets. In 2012, the Government set “ten challenging results for the public sector to achieve over the next five years” (State Services Commission 2013). The fifth target was that 85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification in 2017. This target was also accompanied by relentless reporting of groups of students who were achieving the target, not achieving or at risk of not achieving. Again, the performance of Māori students was continuously negatively portrayed. And again, we have not seen any policy response that would address the consequences of perpetuating and reinforcing negative stereotypes. In the words of one of our students interviewed in 2015:

I'd like for a new stereotype to be that there are Māori students achieving, and that's just what they do.

Part 3: Potential System Responses to the Experiences, Insights and Solutions of Māori Youth

The vision of the Ka Hikitia policy is a vision worth pursuing. However, over the past 20 years, the voices of Māori students have given us consistent messages that we still fall well short of the Ka Hikitia vision. We need to take the first steps in making a difference for these students.

Our first step is that we need a clear acknowledgement that our education system has fallen short for Māori students over many generations. The acknowledgments to date by the Ministry of Education that previous policy initiatives have been detrimental and disadvantageous to Māori students are well buried within their website. Many teachers are unaware of the ongoing, long-term consequences of the impact of policy contexts on the well-being and outcomes of their students. In applying the (sometimes overt but often hidden) ideologies that have been party to the “well-intentioned but disadvantageous actions” (Ministry of Education 2015) that the Ministry describe on their website, clear guidance and policy now needs to direct how we will redress the inter-generational disadvantage. While the adults within the system may not be aware of the consequences of their actions, our students are very aware. We must both listen to and learn from our students, and actively redress the impacts of past policy settings.

On the other hand, there may well be adults in our system who are aware that they have students in their schools or in their classrooms whose behaviour,

mannerisms or responses they find difficult. These people may well have found ways to justify or to defend their own responses. For example, they may feel that they only have problems with a small number of students—they get on fine with the rest—or that everyone in the school finds these students difficult so their responses are appropriate, or that they have previously tried really hard with other members of the child's family or others like them and it did not work. The incidents described above may refer to only a small number of students in a school, but the negative experiences of even a single student are worthy of note and can have long-term intergenerational impacts. And, when scaled up across multiple schools, this can mean that a significant proportion of our student population may be affected. In order to address this, all adults in the education system need to be proactive. This includes reflecting on our own actions and responses and being open to change. It also means that all adults need to own the responsibility for the well-being of our Māori students and be willing to name the undercurrents of racism or negative stereotyping when we are exposed to this and challenge their perpetuation.

Clear direction and a clear vision for an equitable and positive future for Rangatahi Māori has been laid out in past iterations of the Ka Hikitia policy. We have (at this time) the promise of a further iteration. This time, we must heed the words of the Auditor General and ensure that this policy is prioritised in terms of public engagement and expectations for educators. The implementation of previous iterations has been characterised as happening too slowly and unsteadily to be effective. The vision of Ka Hikitia is very much in line with what our students tell us they want. We need effective and prioritised implementation of this important policy to underpin all educational decision making.

When referring to the Ka Hikitia policy, the Auditor General also said that “there were hopes that Ka Hikitia would lead to the sort of transformational change that education experts, and particularly Māori education experts, have been awaiting for decades” (Office of the Auditor-General 2013, p. 7). A policy that is not well implemented is not prioritised or fully resourced cannot underpin transformative change. And, if the related experiences of our students lead researchers to conclude that school was “overwhelmingly awful, year after year” (Bishop and Berryman 2006, p. 255), then we must do something different.

Transformative change cannot occur if we continue to believe that the culture of schools can continue as it always has. As Fullan (2003) says, to accomplish lasting reform “we need fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and of the teaching profession itself” (p. 3). Transformation “requires a rupture of the ordinary” (Fielding 2004, p. 296) which can only occur when those who experience the education system are treated not as passive recipients or as consumers but as respected and valued partners. Back in 1991, Fullan challenged us with the question, “What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered?” (p. 170). By continuing to ignore the repeated and consistent message from Māori students of the challenges they face within our current educational policy, we continue to perpetuate the inequities inherent within the status quo.

The Ka Hikitia policy does give us “signposts” that will show if we are on the right track to the transformational change that will improve outcomes for Māori

students. We will know that we are on the right track if we check against the Ka Hikitia vision that:

- all Māori students have their identity, language and culture valued and included in teaching and learning in ways that support them to engage and achieve success
- every student knows their potential and feels supported to set goals and take action to achieve success
- all students experience teaching and learning that is relevant, engaging, rewarding and positive
- students leave school having gained the skills, knowledge and qualifications they need to achieve success in te ao Māori, New Zealand and the wider world.

These goals are succinctly summed up in the words of a student in 2015: “Doors are opening, the doors to our dreams are opening. We are journeying to the wider world, to our dreams.”

5.1 A Note of Caution to Policy-Makers

Throughout this book, there has been in-depth examination of the potential of adding student voice into our ongoing conversations and decision-making for educational reform. We have also been alerted to the risks and dangers of misusing or misappropriating these voices. In this chapter, we have strongly called for policy-makers to attend to the messages from Māori youth. We know there are inherent risks in doing so. For example, there is a risk that the voices of Māori youth could be gathered and then used to “redescribe and reconfigure students in ways that bind them more securely into the fabric of the status quo” (see Fielding 2004, p. 302). In a later work, Fielding (2006, p. 302) provides a continuum of how student voice can be used in schools:

- Restricted formal consultation making current arrangements more *efficient*
- Ambient listening fostering *closer understanding* of those involved
- Wide-ranging formal and informal consultation to make current arrangements even more *effective*
- Wide-ranging formal and informal engagement *to enhance the development of wise persons.*

We would argue that the same can be said about the use of student voice in policy development or in wide-scale school reform. Unless we truly commit to the “development of wise persons” across both students and adults, we risk becoming more efficient and more effective in the practices of the status quo, and of developing closer understandings of our students without actually bringing the changes needed in order for them to succeed.

There is also the potential that we can take the experiences of a few students and treat these as if they speak for all (see Cook-Sather 2007), falling into a shorthand view of experiences by using “universalising narratives” (Maher 2001, p. 13) or presuming a “homogeneity of voice” (Fielding 2007, p. 302). In this chapter, we have emphasised the consistency of the messages from the students, told from the diversity of their experiences within the system. We would warn against any tendency to believe that the experiences of any small group of students can be generalised to represent the experiences of all; a “multitude of diverse student voices is necessary rather than a “collective” understanding of school experiences” (see Chap. 1).

Finally, we would draw the attention of policy-makers eager to draw on the experiences and insights of Māori youth to cautions provided by Seale et al. (2015). Drawing from research in higher education, Seale refers to the power differences between tertiary students and their lecturers within interactions, even within interactions using participatory research. They warn that there can be a gap between the rhetoric of true partnerships with students and the reality when the power differentials are not attended to. This can result in:

- adults deciding which student stories will be attended to, and which will be left out (see also Carey 2013)
- students being resistant to changes and preferring to stay with the status quo (see also Bovill et al. 2011)
- an uncritical acceptance of student views, irrespective of the nature of these views (see also Bovill et al. 2011)
- an undervaluing of other voices within the system. (see also Bain 2010).

These challenges are present in any dynamic where there is unequal power between the participants in a partnership. How much more so does this occur when the power is held by the unseen and anonymous hand of the state?

6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have taken a slice of time in New Zealand contemporary history—the past 20 years or so. We have discussed some of the educational policy settings over this time beginning with the impact of the Chapple Report (published in 1997), then focusing on the iterations of the Ka Hikitia policy. We also outlined the stories told by Rangatahi Māori students within our schools over this parallel time period. These stories, gathered on four occasions since 2001, provided us with a window into the reality of students’ school life which consistently fell short of the promises within the policies that guided this schooling. In 2001 and 2005–2009, our students told of terrible school experiences. Non-engaged students told of their ongoing resistance to the structures and processes and even the people, leading to their schooling being a waste of their time and, in many cases, the only option being

an early exit from the education system. The engaged students told of finding ways to navigate the system that saw them achieve some educational success but resulted in their having to deny (or at least leave at the school gates) their language, culture and identity as Māori.

The students in 2015 were more positive. These students told us of their success within the schooling system. This was a positive story that showed that it is possible for students to experience all that our education system promises. Sadly, though, the students also told us that their story was not a universal story—many of their peers, their friends and even their family had not been as lucky—and they had not had the same experiences and had fallen through the cracks of the system. We also referenced the 2018 Report: *Education matters to me: Key insights—A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, New Zealand School Trustees Association 2018). This report again confirmed that by not listening to the voices of Māori youth and all young people, we have missed opportunities to benefit from the information, insights and solutions they have presented.

We also reference a third slice of time of just over 20 years. In 1993, New Zealand became a signatory to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child where we promised that children would have the right to have their views given due weight in all matters affecting them. For the young people who have been talking to us for over 20 years, the promises we made by ratifying this agreement are hollow. They have been talking but we have not been listening. We have gathered their stories and asked the students to make themselves vulnerable, to share their painful and, sometimes, shameful stories, but we have not used this information to make life better for them and those who follow. When our policy-makers have listened, they have sympathised but have not seen past the story into the solutions that these young people have provided.

What will the next 20 years hold? Will our Māori youth be able to say that we have listened—that there has truly been “nothing about us, without us”? Or will we allow another 20 years to go past before we confront the shame of the experiences of our students and acknowledge that the solution for the future may well be already known through the collective voices of these young people? What will our legacy be?

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Chapter 8

Foregrounding the Stories of Secondary School Students with Disabilities



Angela Ward

Abstract In the context of the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular school settings, this article explores how narrative inquiry methodology supports the values and transformative practices in student voice research. As part of a larger study conducted over two years, four secondary school students with disabilities told stories of their experiences on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes: in this article, one student's story is foregrounded. The researcher created dialogic spaces, so the students were able to talk about and reflect on these experiences as social actors within an ethic of caring. Issues of control and editorial power are acknowledged and addressed, enabling students to be reflective about their experiences. Results showed that contextual, as well as personal and social factors shaped the students' friendships. The narrative inquiry process supported the students' agency to make changes in their present and future lives.

I can see him now, wheeling across the playground on his way to class. "Hi Guy!" yelled one of the boys as he walked past. Guy's face lit up as he began to reply.

The boy was out of hearing range when Guy said "Hi!" They always were. No one waited for his reply. The smile left his face and he continued on his journey. (Ward 2008, p. 3)¹

This article explores how a narrative inquiry methodology that foregrounded the voices of four students with disabilities supports Fielding's (2004) preferred aspects of a framework of transformative practices in student voice research, particularly "...the necessity of dialogue ... [with] ... Dialogic alternative: speaking *with* rather than for" (p. 296). Whilst describing and analysing narrative inquiry methodology I acknowledge and make transparent strategies to counter some problems of student

¹Names used are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

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voice research that some researchers have highlighted (e.g. Cook-Sather 2007; Fielding and Rudduck 2002; Mitra 2007) such as issues of control “of what is included and excluded in the text” (Fielding 2004, p. 298). In the narrative inquiry research report, the editorial power of the researcher is acknowledged and issues of narrative smoothing and decision-making are elucidated. Moreover, in the larger study the social, historical and cultural contexts of friendship, disability and inclusion were explored and analysed in order to contextualise the voices of the participants and the subsequent analysis and interpretation (Hargreaves 1996, as cited in Fielding 2004, p. 301). This methodological process enabled the students to become empowered within their lives (Lincoln 1993) as noted by one of my participants, Gemma:

I hope the teachers will think about what it is like for someone with a disability, and that they might be getting picked on.

Guy, in the introductory quote, was a student with cerebral palsy whom I taught in a secondary school, and his silence is an important voice to understand. Many students acknowledged Guy in this way during the day, but few spent any time with him. At interval his teacher aide would sit with him; during lunchtime he had lunch in the attached special unit, where many of the teachers thought he should have been anyway. Guy’s social interactions were limited to being a guest in some classes—at best “the inclusion kid” (Meyer et al. 1998). Many students acknowledged Guy with a hurried greeting or a wave during the day but did not wait for Guy to process and respond to the greeting and therefore gave him no chance to reply. Few spent quality or prolonged time with him. Most of his interactions were with adults: teachers, teacher aides and the taxi driver. He had no regular friends or a best friend to invite home, or to be invited out.

In traditional research, the views of many members of society were excluded or seen as passive subjects. During the 1990s, there was a global movement within an emerging rights discourse (Cook-Sather 2014; Lansdown 1994) towards including the voices—including children’s voices thus reflecting new views of “the child as a person” (O’Neill 2018)—of the previously disempowered in some social areas, for example the court system (Roche 1996). Issues of power began to be explored and there was a shift away from exclusionary to inclusive research methodologies whereby children were included as active participants (Alderson 1994; Mayall 1994; Oakley 1994). Traditional methodologies supported the power of the researcher and passive participation, so researchers needed to develop new methodologies to address the power issue and support active participation. “Student voice” has been interpreted in a number of ways with students being given opportunities to respond to adult statements and agendas (e.g. Tetler and Baltzer 2011), answering survey questions and/or participating in collaborative research with adults (e.g. Mitra 2007; Nelson 2015), and decision-making (Simmons et al. 2015), or having their words truncated into prose snippets to support an adult interpretation of what they heard (e.g. DeFur and Korinek 2010).

A narrative inquiry research design is another approach to include children’s voice in research. This involves using guided conversations over a period of time to tell stories of their lived experiences. In this research process, there is time for children to critically reflect on their experiences and to amend and enhance their stories as they make meaning of and interpret their lives. This is more than “having a say”; it is about creating spaces for a range of participatory experiences that foster “a culture of democratic participation, inclusion and active citizenship” (Percy-Smith 2010, p. 119) where young people can “increasingly acquire the capacities to shape their immediate environments, lives and futures” (p. 120), recognising “the child as agent” (O’Neill 2014, p. 229). It is a transformative approach to student voice (Fielding 2004) which places a priority on: social justice and the furtherance of human rights (Mertens 2010); emancipatory research (Oliver 1996); and a democratisation of the research process where it is about “with [and] by ... in contrast to research on them” (Nind 2014, p. 527). The methodology is underpinned by four core values of student voice research:

1. A conception of communication by dialogue;
2. The requirement for participation and democratic inclusivity;
3. The recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic;
4. The possibility for change and transformation (Robinson and Taylor 2007, p. 8).

In the following section, narrative inquiry methodology is described and the way it supports and foregrounds student voice is highlighted with links to current theorising and underpinning values and discourses. A research study that used a narrative inquiry approach is outlined with examples to support the argument that narrative inquiry is a valid methodology for student voice research.

1 A Narrative Inquiry Research Design to Support Student Voice

Narrative inquiry is a research approach that builds on an evolving tradition of narrative as a way of thinking: “Narrative inquiry is the study of experience ... an experience of the experience” (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, p. 189). As a personal experience method, narrative inquiry is strongly influenced by Dewey’s (1938) theories of experience in education, and Bruner’s (1985) narrative mode of knowing. Narrative inquiry is a process that enables researchers to listen to stories in the context of dialogic communication and foreground these to build narratives of students’ experiences on the landscapes where they live and learn.

Narrative inquiry enables an understanding of experience through lived and told stories. By listening to and including children’s stories in the research text, the research validates their experiences. Establishing a collaborative research relationship takes time and involves the researcher developing skills as an active listener, thus strengthening the students’ voice. Paley (1986) described an important

factor in listening as curiosity, and creating a climate where children expose “ideas I did not imagine they held” (p. 125). She observed that the stories “tumbled out as if they simply had been waiting for me to stop talking and begin listening” (p. 125).

Narrative inquirers want to listen to children telling their own stories and foregrounding their experiences to cause teachers and parents to reflect on their stories in order to create landscapes where *all* students can have positive academic and social outcomes—transformative for the students and others. The research process involves listening to stories, telling stories, re-telling stories and attempting to re-live stories as the participants reflect upon selected life experiences and explain themselves to the researcher in their own words. Using the stories of students alongside those of others in their lives enables the researcher to re-present a holistic account of the students’ lived experience within a “three-dimensional framework.”

2 The Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) approach to narrative inquiry works within a three-dimensional space—a metaphorical term that includes the personal (inward) and the social (outward), the temporal (past, present and future) and the spatial (place). The term mirrors Dewey’s (1938) principles of continuity (temporal), situation (place) and interaction (social). “The principle of continuity means that every experience both takes up something from those that have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those who come after” (p. 35), thus our experiences do not exist in a vacuum but are linked to our past and our futures on an “experiential continuum” (p. 28) that links the temporal, the personal and social, and place. To the narrative inquirer, this notion of temporality—past, present and future—is one cornerstone of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Recognising *temporality* as a central feature of narrative sees the participants, including the researcher as inquirer, moving forwards and backwards in time as their stories are told (Clandinin and Connelly 2000): “A narrative is an account of events ... patterns of events occurring over time” (Bruner 1991, p. 6). Thus, experience is seen as a process, a continuum, rather than an event, the result of which is growth (Dewey 1938); temporality acknowledges the possibility for change and transformation (Fielding 2004; Robinson and Taylor 2007).

Personal drives and purposes interact with the situation and time that the individual is in. These are the second and third cornerstones of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Together they are the moving and linking of the “inward” (the *personal*) and the “outward” (the *social*) with the “*place*” (the spatial context) aspects of the experience. Schön (1983) described the interaction of these dimensions as reflection-in-action, which comes as a result of reflection-upon-experience; thus, as we reflect on our stories, the ends and means interact, and thinking and doing (in the present and future contexts) cannot be separated.

Stories are listened to and read in the context of the three-dimensional space; in narrative thinking, “the *person* in context is of prime interest” (Clandinin and

Connelly 2000, p. 32). Thus, a narrative inquiry is a journey for the researcher and the reader, and the participants, with a “sense of a search, a ‘re-search’, a searching again” (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, p. 124). Narrative inquiry enables researchers to begin with the students’ experiences and to follow them where they lead; it creates “spaces for listening” in a person-centred community (Fielding 2010, p. 21)—it is a relational research methodology (Clandinin et al. 2017).

3 Participating in the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

In this section, the context for the research within a democratic rights discourse is briefly given. The research process is outlined and ethical dilemmas and power relations that can be problematic in the research context are addressed. Through the experiences of one student, I illustrate how a narrative inquiry methodology supports communication, participation, change and transformation.

The research question explored “What is the nature of the social relationships and friendships of four students with disabilities in secondary schools in New Zealand, and what factors shape these relationships?” I wanted to enter the life-worlds of the students and initiate conversations and establish dialogues with them and those close to them, and listen to their stories to understand their experiences of being in school every day, to hear the students speaking about their lived experiences, and through guided conversations enable them to actively reflect and make sense of, and perhaps change, their world.

Fielding (2010) purports that underlying philosophies create two models of inclusion and student voice: firstly, a neo-liberal market model supports a consumer model within a learning organisation that drives individual ambition and accountability; the second is a person-centred democratic model that supports a shared family/friendship model within a learning community which encourages relational dialogue. In the latter model, developing friendships and personal development are valued. In order to identify specific barriers to establishing and nurturing positive social relationships and friendships, it is imperative that the voices of the main actors are listened to and actions taken that support their views, and dismantle the barriers. The trend that is grounded in a rights discourse supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) towards listening to the voices of children is well documented and critiqued (e.g. Lewis 2010; Lundy 2007). The principles include provision, protection and participation articles where children’s civil and political rights are to be considered and taken account of, with children accorded freedom of speech and opinion. This represents a shift to the recognition of children as participants in society and “it therefore sets up a model of participation” (Lansdown 1994, p. 39). It has been argued that the voices of children are not heard and claims that adults do not have a culture of listening to children. For example, Hart (1992, cited in Miljeteig 2000, p. 171) states,

“Children’s participation is often promoted as a ‘children’s voices’ movement, but it should equally be an ‘adult ears’ movement.” We must examine the “acoustics” of the school (Rudduck 2006). To apply the participation principle, we must “provide them with real opportunities to express their views and explore the options open to them...” and “listen to their views and consider them with respect and seriousness and tell children how their views will be considered” (Lansdown 1994, p. 39). Lundy (2007) proposed a new model that supports her challenge that “voice” is not enough and that Article 12 should be reconceptualised to provide a more informed understanding of its facets. Gunter and Thomson (2007) posit that “inclusion is a political process... where students [as activists] can take part in making decisions about choices and strategies” (p. 181). It is in this temporal context that the research was conducted.

3.1 Participants

Four students from four urban co-educational secondary schools, their principals and their parents consented to participate in the research project. Ethical approval had been gained from the university and institutional consent obtained from the schools’ Boards of Trustees. I met with the students and their parents in their homes to explain what they would have to do and their rights in the research process. This first meeting was an opportunity for me to begin to establish a rapport with them, answer their questions and gain consent; this is an important phase in establishing a dialogue. All of them wanted me to interview them in their homes and were comfortable with the audio recording of the interviews. They also consented to observation in their schools and classes. I interviewed the students four times over a period of two school years. Their stories are embedded in the in-school and out-of-school landscapes so I also listened to the multiple voices of principals, teachers, teacher aides, peers, parents and siblings, more than once. I include extracts of Gemma’s stories in this article.

3.2 Dialogic Conversations

The interviews were about ninety minutes long. I had prepared some guiding questions, for example, “Tell me about...,” “What do you do at lunchtime?” however, most of the time the students talked about their experiences and their lives. I listened empathetically and at times asked them to expand or clarify a point. In between interviews, I transcribed and reread the transcriptions to get a sense of events, place, time and the inward and outward experiences of the students. At the beginning of the second and subsequent interviews, I began by referring back to things they had said and encouraged them to reflect and talk some more about that;

it was a dialogic process whereby I talked *with* the students. Rather than giving the participants, a verbatim transcription to edit and comment on I decided to weave their previous stories into the new conversations. This meant the participants did not have to read long pages of transcriptions, for example, this is from the transcript of the second interview with Gemma:

Researcher: Ok, in the first interview you talked about different crowds in form three to form five... [Gemma: Aha!], tell me about the cool crowd? You talked about the cool crowd. What makes them cool?

Creating conversations enabled the students to look back on, reflect on, and analyse their stories and empowered them to think about why and how events had transpired and to analyse their role in these events. They examined their emotional responses and talked about how this shaped current and future responses and actions. As well as telling stories they were able to engage in voicing their responses and thoughts about these stories. The interviews with others helped to contextualise the stories and helped me to construct a crystallised research narrative (Richardson 2000).

3.3 *Field Texts*

In my research, the stories are the field texts—the data for the research narrative. Narrative accounts are context dependent (Bruner 1991) so I gathered and composed complementary field texts as I listened to multiple voices observed in schools, and collected relevant documents such as Individual Education Plans, student reports, school policies and prospectuses to contextualise the students' stories—a process Richardson (2000) calls “crystallisation” (p. 934), a metaphor to represent the multi-dimensions of the research process.

The transcripts were analysed and coded and all the transcribed interviews and field texts were reread many times. The phrases and words were sorted into the major themes and subthemes as they emerged, not pre-set (Mitra 2007). I analysed them for description, reflection, agency and transformation, then I constructed the research text.

3.4 *The Research Text*

One of my main aims was to foreground the students' stories and “bring [their] message forward” (Eisner 2008, p. 9) in order to honour them and share their experiences. I wanted the research text to speak to my readers and capture the stories of my participants; at the outset I invited the reflective reader into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I wanted to foreground the students'

stories in a way that would focus on the “essence” of their experiences (Ely 2007; Glesne 1997) as well as engage the reader in a dialogic, reflective and transformative experience.

3.5 *Ethical Issues*

As in any student voice research, there are ethical and pragmatic dilemmas to consider as we write our research texts. “In our work as researchers we weigh and sift experiences and make choices regarding what is significant, what is trivial, what to include, what to exclude ... by doing so, we craft narrative; we write lives” (Richardson 1990, p. 10). In doing so, we uncover “real, practical problems” (p. 28) and face dilemmas of how to re-present these experiences in research texts, a crisis of re-presentation (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Lather 1995) that recognises the issues of power (Mayes et al. 2017; Seale et al. 2014). I had an ethical obligation “to present the stories of those people in ways that cleave as closely as possible to the essence of what and how they are shared” (Ely 2007, p. 569). Subsequently, when I presented the stories I only included the students’ words.

By foregrounding the students’ stories as discrete units I honoured the ethical commitments I had given to the students—their stories were collected within an ethic of caring and being in relation (Noddings 1988). This raised an ethical dilemma of how I was to foreground their stories so their voices would be heard—to respect the student voice without the intrusion of the adult researcher, without unnecessary narrative smoothing, and without imposing an adult interpretation on them. I also had the dilemma of having a large quantity of transcribed material as well as extensive field notes. To this end, I chose to represent each student’s stories in standalone chapters. Student interpretation is evident in their reflective stories; my researcher interpretive response narratives are written as a letter to each student and I follow each student’s stories in the next chapter. Keeping the stories/response narratives separate aims at recognising the diversity and complexities within and between the stories, and also guards against imposing a universalisation of, for example, the stories of students with disabilities (Cook-Sather 2007).

Another dilemma I faced was how to respectfully present the students’ stories. I sought to craft the stories of my participants to create a sense of empathy and resonance. By reading the narrative and being influenced by the emotions and facts that the stories conveyed, I wanted readers to decide if the stories had much in common with their experiences and be encouraged to dialogue and problem solve in wider settings. For this to happen, I needed to “create the appearance of ‘experiences’, the semblance of events lived and felt, and to organise them so they constitute a purely and completely experienced reality, a piece of virtual life” (Langer 1953, p. 212). To this end, I chose to tell the students’ stories by re-presenting them in poetic form. Later, I prepared these in individual booklet form for the students.

3.6 *Poetic Re-presentation of the Stories*

Poetic re-presentation is a method of re-presenting participants' stories to answer research questions. I use the term "re-presentation": the participants presented their stories to me when I interviewed them, and I *re-presented* these to the reader in the research text. The method involves crafting transcripts in a caring and relational manner in order to foreground the students' stories, creating verisimilitude by presenting the students' own words (Eisner 1997) as it "maps the real" (Denzin 1997, p. 10) experiences on the in-school and out-of-school landscapes, focusing on the essence of the experiences, creating coherent storylines, and creating evocative text.

Evocative writing "deploys literary devices to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses" and causes readers to experience material differently because it "touches us where we live, in our bodies" as we make connections with others (Smith 1998, p. 931). It invites the reader into vicarious dialogic communication with the participants. Poetry is a form of evocative writing that can create emotional as well as cognitive responses; it has the power to change and transform. In regard to the latter, reading the poems affects the senses and "makes one pause, reflect and feel. It "gives pleasure first, then truth, and its language is charged, intensified, concentrated" (Drury 1991 cited in Glesne 1997, p. 232).

When analysing the transcribed texts, I organised the stories into emergent themes. I presented these in a chronological structure to give a sense of story, and temporal flow. The real experiences and perspectives of the students were presented in their own words. This conveys a reality, creating verisimilitude; this is "real" (for a more detailed account, see Ward 2008).

4 The Stories

In this section, I present some extracts from Gemma's stories (for a full account see Ward 2008) to illustrate how the narrative inquiry process supported her in telling and reflecting on her relationships. I met her when she was in her last year of high school. We talked together three times in that year and then finally after she had left school when she was attending the local community college and studying hairdressing. Gemma had a severe inherited vision impairment that meant she had difficulty looking at the whiteboard, taking notes and reading written material. She sometimes wore glasses. She qualified for a high level of funding and had a teacher aide. She described herself as a "happy, outgoing, loud, bubbly person"; "I'm very girly and I'm very sort of nail polishy and ... I love my bracelets and my jewellery ... and shopping!" Our conversations were long, and she talked loquaciously: in the following extract from an early interview when she was still at school she describes how she wanted to make friends and moved around different groups trying to find friends:

There's certain crowds.

There's the bad crowd

the like totally nutty crowd
 and then there's just like all these different crowds.
 There was like the Māori crowd and stuff like that
 and I was like, "Oh ok, I'm not going to hang out with you" and so there's all
 these different crowds
 and so I've been basically round every single crowd except the cool
 crowd.
 There's like the Tiffanys,
 And the like the really cool people
 And I was like, "No, not hanging out with you" And so I've done
 basically done all of the crowds.

She talked at length about the different crowds and reflected on being at school
 and her transformative relationships with her peers. She reflected:

I did move round in crowds But when I said I
 moved round,
 I think I changed in each crowd. Like I was a
 different type of person. I wasn't sort of a different
 person.

I just acted differently with that crowd of
 people.
 You know how you act differently and
 yeah...looking back on it now it's like, "How did
 you do that?"
 It's like, "Why didn't you just keep like your one crowd?" But...yeah.
 It's basically just shopping round I think. Like it's just
 going into one store
 And then go into another and ... yeah ... I think...I
 think I was just looking
 for like a crowd like me.

She also reflected on how she perceived her impairment had impacted on making
 friends:

It's really hard for me to find friends It's really
 hard to put like ...
 Because like the whole eyesight thing ... like when you
 were little
 they always used to look at you, "Oh there's
 Gemma Wilson.
 She's got an eyesight problem!"

And that's how they would look at me. Kids are mean!
 Kids are so mean! And she
 concluded:
 Friendships are important I think. It's really hard
 to put like ...
 It's really hard for me to find friends so to me
 I think friends are the most important things in the world.

4.1 Responding to Their Stories: The Researcher's Narrative

Following the chapters of each student's story, I wrote my narrative response as an unsent letter. This enabled me to speak with the voice of a confidant, as a teacher, and with the voice of an academic researcher. I did not return these to the student because of the required academic-styled writing. The following is the beginning of my letter to Gemma and some subsequent extracts that responded to some of the stories I re-presented above:

Dear Gemma,

Thank you for the hours we spent together as you enthusiastically and loquaciously shared your experiences at high school with me. You and your parents welcomed me into your home and our sessions were friendly, relaxed, and comfortable...

...The threads running through your stories tell of how you didn't want to go to Jade High School and of how your intermediate school friends went to another school, so you had to forge new friendships. This was a difficult time for you as you "shopped around" the groups trying to fit in and establish friendships. Later you had romantic friendships with boys and eventually became part of a crowd with some close friends...

...Looking for a crowd like me. Being part of a group or crowd is important for adolescents (Bagwell 2004) and your stories showed that you wanted to be part of a group because it would enable you to fit in and help you cope with a new school structure in a sea of unfamiliar faces. It would also signal to others that you were accepted and like the others...

... The early high school years were a time in your life when you were seeking an identity—who am I? Belonging to a group gives you an identity and this thread in your stories motivated me to reread Erikson's (1968) classic theory in order to contextualise your experience in adolescent psycho-social theory. This time in your life parallels Erikson's stage of identity versus role confusion with your primary task at this age to develop an identity. Parker and Gottman (1989) confirm that "Who am I?" is the underlying theme for adolescent friendship and this is worked out in discussion with friends. So Years 9, 10, and 11 saw you jumping from group to group in a pattern of inclusion/exclusion, as you searched for "a crowd like me" (08/04). Your love of shopping for clothes provided a good analogy of this process: "Shopping around ... it's like going into one store and then go into another ... I think I was just like looking for a crowd like me" (08/04). So like clothes shopping, you "tried on" different groups but the "fit" was never right. On reflection, and with maturity, you could see this as a changing and transition time where everyone was trying out new things like smoking and wagging school. In response to these times you were happy to "be a sheep" and try new things if it meant acceptance by a group...

... Because each crowd was different you became a chameleon and acted differently to be able to blend into them; however, it was the “in” group, the “really cool” group that you wanted to be part of. Their lifestyle resonated with your “ideal” self ... Gemma, seeking the status of the “in” crowd resonates with Nilan’s (1991, 1992) Australian research into adolescent friendship networks.

“Looking for a crowd like me” was a major theme running through Gemma’s stories. She told how she tried to make friends and how she was rejected; she reflected on this process and how she, as a social actor, consciously changed herself to fit in; she constructed analogies as she rationalised why being accepted was so difficult. When she left school, she was enthusiastic about meeting new people in new settings and the possibilities for transformation.

5 Conclusion

The narrative inquiry process creates opportunities to talk with students and scaffold and enable them to reflect and be active and agentic in their own lives. It goes beyond “giving” opportunities because it is a student’s right as stated in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (Lundy 2007); it assumes that voicing one’s perspective *is* one’s right and so recognises the power whereby one “gives,” instead seeking to facilitate and *create* opportunities for dialogic communication. It goes beyond asking participants to respond to adult-created questionnaires and statements in the guise of “student voice” whereby there are no student words and “voice” is one dimensional—a *product* with no opportunity to clarify—and go back and reflect and change one’s life. This *product*-style research is appropriate for surveying a large group; however, to gain an in-depth understanding of students’ perspectives, the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space supports a participatory voicing *process* that enables an acknowledgement of the power of the researcher and seeks to establish trust and reciprocity in an ethic of caring and respect to hear the students’ voice. In this dialogic space, students can grow (be transformed) as together with the researcher as facilitator they affirm the positive and examine negative experiences whilst voicing their hopes, dreams, fears and frustrations and reflect on who they are as social actors in their lives. Listening to students’ voices enables the researcher to hear the timbre, the emotions and the silences as she/he writes a crystallised narrative of the students’ lived experiences.

In this research, student voice meant more than giving students the opportunity to tell stories of their experiences. Voicing their perspectives in the midst of a narrative inquiry process enabled the students to reflect on their multiple experiences and engage more deeply to analyse their feelings about their lives, and decisions they had made and would make in their future. There was fluidity in the created space as they returned to their earlier stories and reflected and analysed them. These reflections resulted in their thinking differently about their experiences and their future lives. Student voice became more than telling their stories; the

voicing of their experiences became a much deeper and personally empowering process and experience.

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Chapter 9

Students' Voice Shifting the Gaze from Measured Learning to the Point of Learning



Roseanna Bourke and Judith Loveridge

Abstract National Standards were introduced in New Zealand primary schools in 2009 heralding a new focus for teachers on the assessment of year 4 and year 8 students' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics with the potential to link these assessments to judgements about the performativity of schools. This research set out to explore year 4 and year 8 students' views about their learning in the early mandatory introduction of National Standards in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the findings showed that after three years of its introduction, the students had little awareness and understanding of National Standards. However, the young participants attended to something more pertinent to them, and the research broadened to include their accounts of the point of learning rather than the assessment of their learning. Five inter-related themes emerged around the point of learning and combined, they highlight an important distinction made by the children between learning as it is assessed and learning as they experience it. The findings show that if National Standards focus on a narrow aspect of the curriculum, children will continue to see a gap between their perceived point of learning and the assessment of their learning, an important distinction for these children. However, if teachers focus on students' perceptions of the point of learning and listen to student voice more intentionally, the assessment or "measurement" agenda that has less meaning to students may be countered and an achievement agenda supported.

1 Introduction

The introduction of the National Standards (NS) in New Zealand in 2009 was reflective of education policy developments that have emerged over the two past decades in Australia, England and the United States. Evidence of student learning

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dominated the discourse about what schools should accomplish and was often used for accountability purposes. It was also representative of the global audit culture into which New Zealand was being drawn, where international comparisons are made of students' achievements (Thrupp and White 2013). Previously in New Zealand, a range of nationally developed assessment tools had been used to assess students' learning but there had been no requirement to provide results to the Ministry of Education or for the results of individual schools to be reported publicly. With the introduction of NS, teachers were required to make an overall teacher judgement about each student's achievement against the relevant NS. To make the judgement, they were to draw on the student's level of achievement as measured by their performance on various assessment tasks and in relation to nationally developed exemplars, and their knowledge of the child from their daily interactions. The judgements were to be made against a scale of "above," "at," "below" or "well below" the standard.

Changing assessment practices in New Zealand schools was inevitable as the requirement to report against NS became an imperative. The assessment focus on literacy and numeracy specifically, as defined in *The Education (National Standards) Amendment Act 2008*, suggested that a narrowing of the curriculum focus for teachers and their students might occur. At the time of introduction, there was considerable unrest amongst teacher unions, politicians, school principals, academics and teachers with varying agendas on the intended and unintended outcomes that might arise from using a NS agenda in primary school education. It was in this contested and changing landscape, in which the focus of assessment had markedly changed for teachers, that the research for this chapter was conceptualised and conducted. In the light of the extent and nature of the new policy, it was imperative to map how changing assessment practices might influence the way young students think about and approach their learning. This was particularly important because earlier research showed that students are influenced by how they are assessed, or "measured" (Black and Wiliam 2006; Wortham 2006).

The triple function of assessment in schools—includes: (1) supporting learning (assessment as/for learning), (2) providing accountability of that learning (assessment of learning) and (3) a means to report to parents (assessment to describe their child's specific learning outcomes in relation to a standard); thus necessitating a balance schools make on a daily basis that at times creates tensions for both teacher and learner. An argument that school-based assessment policies and practices provide accountability measures to ensure teachers, students and schools are "on track" to ensure students learn obscures the focus on pedagogy that would make the difference for student outcomes (Alexander 2011). Assessment is, consequently, "a powerful activity which shapes how societies, groups and individuals understand themselves" (Stobart 2008, p. 1). Nevertheless, Stobart cautions, "as assessment purposes multiply, the more managerial the purpose, the more dominant its role" (p. 15). In other words, monitoring and accountability purposes of assessment outcomes tend to become hegemonic (Au 2009) and, as such, to marginalise assessment's formative purposes which emphasise learning processes and associated pedagogical repertoires. Emerging evidence suggested that NS were

influencing how teachers were teaching and assessing, and the time they afforded to assessment over other activities (Thrupp and White 2013). The divide between two key functions to support a child's progress within any classroom context—assessment and learning—was mounting.

It was therefore important to understand how learners themselves engaged with assessment material that contributed to the teachers' understanding of where they would be judged against the NS in a specific curriculum area. The focus of this research was to gain an understanding of students' understandings about NS and their learning early in the enactment phase of NS, and it was conceptualised within the field of student voice research. The research questions were as follows:

- How do year 4 and year 8 students understand and experience assessment?
- Does the introduction of national standards influence the way they think about assessment and their learning?

This chapter focuses on one aspect of the results. By foregrounding learners' experiences within the context of NS, the results highlighted that the documented point of assessment to raise standards is not one shared by the learners. Instead it became apparent that for the young learners in this study, focusing on learning was more important than an orientation towards assessment. They were in effect identifying the growing divide between assessment and learning agendas. The *learning* agenda, the findings from this study remind us, is *not* an assessment agenda. Recently, a newly elected coalition government has announced that NS will be removed and the focus will be on children's progress and achievement across the wider curriculum (Ministry of Education 2017). How this will be done has yet to be finalised. In consideration of this, it is timely to focus on, engage with, and respond to students' views about the point of learning.

2 Background to the Study: Listening to the Learner

In response to the emerging complexities of "student voice" research, Cook-Sather (2007) proposed that "Researchers who seriously engage in the work of seeking out, taking up and re-presenting students' experiences of school not only translate what they gather but are also translated by it" (p. 829). In using the term "translate," Cook-Sather referred to the ongoing process of changing a form or mode of expression so as to interpret it and make it tangible and newly accessible to other settings or people. This involves an orientation that is not impositional but is interpretive and reflexive. It requires the researcher to be attentive to language, lived experience, the context of that experience and how the researcher's own experience and understandings may influence and be influenced by the translation of students' experiences.

Whilst in the present research student voice was incorporated with democratic and transformative intentions (Fielding 2004) as a way to encourage a broader

understanding of the impact of NS, these students were not co-researchers where they could actively contribute to change. As we entered into this research, we were conscious that it was our agenda that set the initial parameters of the research. Informed by the recent debates about student voice work and the introduction of NS, the aim of this research was to establish an inter-generational dialogue (Mannion 2007) with students in which we would listen to the silences as well as a multitude of diverse voices (Arnot and Reay 2007) and be open to being translated by the data gathered. As argued previously, teachers and students need ways to engage in pedagogic listening because “student voice, when used effectively, inherently becomes a pedagogical tool for effective teaching, assessment and social practices within the classroom” (Bourke and Loveridge 2014b, p. 143). The objective was to learn from these students in the expectation that a more inclusive understanding would be gained of NS, learning and assessment, and as noted below, a greater sense of the cultural and social richness of learning and assessment that might contribute to a fuller understanding of each child.

3 Method

To ensure that children from a range of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds were recruited for this study, principals from four regional primary schools in the lower North Island across were approached by the researchers. The first four principals who were contacted indicated they were willing to have their school and students participate in the research. Information sheets and consent forms were subsequently distributed to children and their parents. On the day of each interview the researcher re-negotiated the children’s consent to participate in the interview prior to the interview starting and, if necessary, throughout the interviews (see Bourke and Loveridge 2014a).

The research subsequently involved interviews with 38 children from four schools: 20 year 4 children (14 female and 6 male) and 18 year 8 children (10 female and 8 male). School records provided showed children as being identified with a range of ethnicities. Sixteen children were identified as Pākehā (New Zealand European), 10 children were identified as Māori or Māori/New Zealand European, seven children were identified as from Pacific Islands (e.g. Samoan) or New Zealand European/Pacific Island (e.g. Tongan/New Zealand European), three students were identified as coming from an Asian country or Asian/New Zealand and two students were identified as Indian/New Zealand. The year 4 children ranged in age from 7 to 8 years old, and the year 8 children ranged in age from 11 to 12 years old.

Each child was interviewed by one researcher on his/her own in a separate room away from the classroom. The interview schedule was semi-structured and followed the responses of the child. Six months later children were interviewed again with questions that probed aspects of their learning in and out of school and following up

on any issues from the first interview that were of particular interest or needed clarifying. The questions asked included broad themes around learning and assessment such as:

- When you decided to take part in this interview about learning, what sorts of things did you think we might talk about? Can you tell me something you have learned this year?
- How did you go about learning it...? When did you know you had learned...? How did you know you had learned...?
- Sometimes teachers talk about assessment. Has your teacher ever talked about assessment? What sorts of things do they say? Does it help with your learning?

In the second interview, if students had not specifically mentioned NS they were given prompt questions: Have you heard about National Standards? Can you tell me a little about them?

After the interviews were completed, the tapes were transcribed verbatim. Both researchers followed an iterative data analysis process that involved moving backwards and forwards between data, codes and emerging themes (Miles et al. 2014). Transcripts were read through multiple times and codes were developed and discussed by the researchers to clarify their particular meaning. The transcripts were revisited as the researchers identified themes that were emerging in relation to the codes. Further conversations were then held by the researchers to clarify and agree on defining aspects of the themes and to deepen the analysis of the themes.

As part of this research, a children's research advisory group (CRAG) was also formed with year 4 and year 8 students at another full primary school. The involvement of a CRAG enables researchers to more fully explore children's perspective in research and has been used successfully in supporting researchers to work alongside children as co-researchers within wider projects involving children and young people (e.g. Bourke and Loveridge 2014a; Lundy and McEvoy 2011; Turtle et al. 2010). The CRAG met with the researchers three times throughout the research, initially as one group and later as two groups (year 4 and year 8). These students were consulted about questions for the interviews, ethical issues that came up in the research and their responses to the initial analysis of the interviews.

In our quest to reach the diversity of student experiences, ethical issues with regard to young people's involvement in educational research remained paramount. Although the proposed research gained full ethical approval from a University Ethics Committee, we noted that three of the young people expressed moments of discomfort or ambivalence when being interviewed. An astute awareness of children's non-verbal actions and gestures might not be enough [as these may not indicate the child's real view regarding consent (e.g. Dockett and Perry 2011)]. We found that even with prompting, children expressing signs of anxiety or who had alternative exciting classroom activities at the time of the interview were reluctant to withdraw and chose to continue. This raises debates around the need to give as much attention to informed dissent in research as we do informed consent

(Bourke and Loveridge 2014a; Bucknall 2012). Ultimately it requires researchers to facilitate “a dialogue with children throughout the research process” (Christensen and Prout 2002, p. 478).

4 Findings: The Divide Between Assessment and Learning

As part of Cook-Sather’s (2009) notion of being translated by student voice, the research took an interesting turn. Instead of a focus on assessment and its relationship to learning (assessment for, as, or of learning), the students turned their and our attention to the point of learning. In this section, we report first the children’s level of awareness of NS and then we explore how children talked about their learning agenda through examining their thoughts about the point of learning. In doing so, they opened up their world of learning and living, as inter-connected, social, economic and political processes.

The results from this study indicated that students were generally not aware of NS, what they were or how they represented their learning. Students only talked about their learning in relation to NS when they were asked explicitly if they had heard about NS. Over the course of the two interviews only five of the 20-year four students responded that they had heard about NS. The extent to which students connected in some way with the idea of NS appeared to be influenced by the particular school context and their parents’ engagement with discussions about NS. It was more common for year 8 students to have heard about them, with 15 of the 18-year eight students indicating they had heard about them. Students at two of the schools in particular indicated greater knowledge about them. At the lower socio-economic status area school, only two students indicated they had heard about them and they were both year 8 students.

Those students who did identify NS as part of their schooling experience tended to see them as goals to reach within their year group, to make them work harder to achieve the standard, to help teachers decide what needs to be taught and the need to be “tested” more. As one year 4 student stated, NS were “to work towards, you have to work quite hard, if you know that you have to get somewhere” (year 4). A year 8 student reported that he was “just below” spelling and attributed this to “I’m not that bright at spelling...it feels like I just got to try harder” (year 8). The belief that they would be tested more as a result of NS was prevalent amongst those students who were aware of them. The connection between goals and assessment identified by the students appeared to de-emphasise how they would achieve these goals (i.e. through learning).

The “below standard” label was apparent for some children, and for one child in particular, this included parental concern: “my parents were asking why I am ‘below’ and she [teacher] said it’s because it’s not the end of the year yet, so she hopefully wants me to go ‘above’ or ‘at’” (year 4). One year 8 student pointed out

that the NS were connected to being taught “the right things.” In this quote, he raises more explicitly the link between assessment and the point of learning: “I think it just means you’ve been taught the right things, ’cause sometimes I don’t really see the point about learning things, but I think it’s because it’s in the school curriculum” (year 8).

When students turned their attention to talking about their learning, there were no identifiable boundaries. Simply discussing learning raised issues for students of their family, economic implications, future careers, aspirations, friends and peers. On the surface, statements such as this might bear little relevance to learning:

If my mum has another baby I am just going to explode, I am just going to punch my head in the wall because I have already got too much brothers and sisters. I got 2 sisters and 4 brothers. (Year 4)

Given the researcher had not posed any questions around family issues, nor about his siblings, this response presents interesting aspects about what it means to learn from a child’s perspective. First, it illustrates how learning for children is interconnected with their entire lives: interests, family, siblings, peers and activities. The researcher in this example had merely started the conversation around what the child *learned* when going to the shops, something he had indicated earlier in the interview that he enjoyed doing. Second, it illustrates how children revert to talking about aspects of their lives that are particularly relevant, meaningful and immediate, showing that *measuring* learning is not foregrounded in conversations around learning, but that *experiencing* learning is.

There were five broad areas identified in the students’ responses as the point of learning. These included:

1. Connecting to others and belonging
2. Growing up and understanding how to live
3. Developing economic benefits
4. Understanding, developing and using talent
5. Teaching others.

While all children reflected on a point of learning, and saw it as an important aspect of their school lives, they identified the point of learning in different ways. Inherent in these five areas are social and cultural influences on learning. Students recognised their need to gain knowledge, and to understand what they learn. There is an acknowledgement that through learning, they facilitated the development of peer relations and family connections and that likewise their learning is facilitated by peer relations and family connections. Threaded through the responses, the students talked about gaining something meaningful in terms of economic benefits, social knowledge, understanding, talents and skills, peer relations and family connections. To probe a little deeper into these themes, we briefly explore examples from each.

4.1 Connecting to Others and Belonging

For these young children, at a very basic level, learning or participating in a learning activity was a means to connect with others and belong to a group. Overwhelmingly the children talked about what they learned from others (parents, teachers and peers) as part of a group activity. A year 4 student explained how he was learning to do an ollie on his skateboard by getting tips from his uncle, because he was the first skateboarder in the family, and everyone in the family could do one except him. Once having mastered it, he would show his “dad first, then my uncle, actually every single person in my family.” At school, the connecting with others was related to science fairs, sport and social studies units, while at home it was often cooking, and helping out with typically Dad’s “DIY,” and within the community clubs such as swimming, mountain bike riding, dance and Scouts. Being part of a group also had the effect of encouraging wider participation through friends or family. As one child explained, through joining Scouts his friend also joined, and then:

their dad joined as a leader and he takes us on tramps quite a lot, we started to do shooting or we go to the pool sometimes 'cos you have to do a swimming badge, occasionally doing knots and usually finding geocache. (year 8)

The importance of friendships for these students’ learning was not just as a collegial way to learn, but as a pedagogical approach. Across the year 4 and year 8 students, the importance of learning to be a friend and having the skills to initiate and maintain a friendship was identified. For one year 8 student, “I think if you’re like in a sports team or something you don’t just learn knowledge you learn social skills, like how to make friends and like you learn useful stuff for when you grow up” (year 8). A year 4 student noted that learning the rules of a game was important to participate otherwise it would be difficult to play “[when] your friends know a new game but you don’t know it but you join in but you don’t know how to play it” (year 4).

Often the talents that children wanted to foster and develop were ones that were important to others in their family, and they spoke of enjoying compliments of their work, or being compared to their parents’ successes.

4.2 Growing up and Understanding How to Live

The children were aware they were able to learn a range of skills in order to live, and in their terms, to live “better,” both in the short-term and longer term scale. A year 8 student explained how her family support her learning in a range of ways:

[mum] was teaching me how to do bolognaise, but I have already learnt how to make chocolate cup-cakes. My dad, in England he used to do DIY projects and I used to help out

so I learnt about that and I also learnt if my brother and sister are crying you don't go near them 'cos they kick you. (year 8)

Thinking longer term, children mentioned getting a licence and learning to drive a car, studying at university, getting a job and teaching their own children. In the more immediate term, the students referred to going to the shops and learning the right change, being able to participate in games and activities, learning to make friends, to look after themselves and to care for their siblings.

At the start of this section, a year 4 child was seen to be bemoaning the fact of having too many siblings when discussing learning. This same child talked about learning that \$6.99 is in reality \$7.00. He discussed this in the context of learning from his poppa whom he lived with at the time, learning in a shop the value of money, his money banks, the destruction of these money banks by a sibling, interactions within his family and his frustration of not being able to keep his property "safe" from his siblings. For this child therefore, learning about \$6.99 took place in a wider context of whānau shopping and money tins.

4.3 Developing Economic Benefits

The children from both year 4 and year 8 cohorts identified the point of learning as often about future work: "when you get older and you have a job you can use all those strategies or maths" (year 8, D3). Responses also revealed that children made connections between getting an education and getting a good job that would bring economic benefits:

I have learnt that learning is actually important and it means that if you learn heaps then you might be able to get a good job instead of getting rats out of people's houses, that's a bad job. (year 4)

Identifying economic benefits of learning was also connected with other aspects of learning that were important to these students such as teaching and learning from each other, and part of growing up and learning to live:

I learn when I go to friends' places when we are playing a game or something, we learn different strategies in that game. And if we go to a park we learn different strategies on how to play with our scooters or when we go to a shop we count up our money and we see what we can buy with it. (year 8)

4.4 Understanding, Developing and Using Talent

When talking about their learning at school, out-of-school students identified a range of interests and talents they were developing. These included areas like learning martial arts, writing songs, being in a band, writing poetry, cooking,

skateboarding, kapa haka, skiing and drawing. Often when they talked about their learning in relation to these interests and talents students identified embodied and holistic ways of knowing they were doing well with what they were learning and it felt good. Their responses indicate that they relied on reflecting on theirs (and others') bodily senses, emotions and thoughts to gauge how they were doing with what they were learning. One year 8 student, who talked about how writing songs for her band felt, said she knew she had achieved what she wanted to with the song: "when it makes sense to me and it tells a story and it's catchy. It feels really good" (year 8). Another child, reflecting on how he knew he had learnt something at Kung Fu, noted "I feel awesome" (year 8). A Pacific Island student highlighted the holistic understanding of learning, indicating she knew learning occurred "When I have looked at something and I have done it and I know I have done it, my heart knows that I have done it, my whole body knows I did it and my brain knows I've done it" (year 4).

4.5 Teaching Others

Although the interviews centred on learning and assessment, the students referred to teaching others as a means to both learn and assess. Therefore, while they were not explicitly asked about helping others to learn, many of them referred to helping others to learn both at school and out of school. In school, they taught each other things like mathematics and assisted each other with their inquiry learning projects and setting goals. One student explained how she helped others generally:

sometimes because a lot of people struggle, because I am a pretty fast learner and others aren't, so once I have got the hang of it I just go and see other people are alright with it but if they are not then I just help them. (year 8)

Out of school, these students also taught others in the context of fostering each other's interests, helping with a Brownie group, helping young children at a mother's kindergarten after school, helping younger children learn how to cook at the after-school programme and helping each other with homework. For one boy talking about skateboarding, teaching each other tricks was key to learning: "We, me and my friends, tell each other how to do different tricks and stuff and show each other" (year 8). For a young girl, the unrealised talent of her peers at school was important, and she had noticed how some wanted to learn art and music but were not able to have private lessons. She wrote songs and played guitar for a band that practised at school because "I just want to basically bring out talents because there are so many hidden talents out there" (year 8). Another talked about her and a friend hanging out after school and helping each other with homework: "We help each other with homework and she also helps me how to do like a thing in math and how to actually answer it correctly and how to work it out" (year 8).

5 Pointing to Learning

The initial focus of this research shifted from how children experienced the enactment of NS to how they experienced learning. By listening and responding to students' voices and silences (Lewis 2010), the research shows that focusing on the *point* of learning when discussing assessment is important for children. This raises a dichotomy between the *intent* of the NS and the enactment of these for young learners. Given the research shows that assessment practices may affect or influence what these children learn, but not necessarily how they view the point of learning, it suggests that children will reasonably question the point of learning at school if NS encourage teachers to focus on a narrow aspect of the curriculum. Achievement levels might arguably go up as teachers focus on the specific standards but children will continue to see a gap between their perceived point of learning and the assessment of their learning, an important distinction for these children. These findings also suggest that if teachers are constrained by what they need to assess through pre-determined NS, it can distract them from focusing on supporting children to consider the *point* of learning more intentionally and openly. In other words, if teachers could counteract the assessment or measurement agenda through helping learners to fully appreciate the point of learning, their focus on the mandatory responsibilities to standardised assessment measures, such as NS, may be compromised, resulting in ethical dilemmas associated with assessment (Bourke and O'Neill 2012).

Early indicators show NS had not impacted on how students viewed learning but given this research occurred in the introductory phases this may have changed. Instead, what was shown was that the point of learning had more currency in terms of what children thought about learning, rather than what was being assessed. Although we have presented separately the five themes that emerged from the students' dialogues about the point of their learning, they are clearly interconnected. Across all themes, there was evidence that students do not live and learn as detached subjects in isolation, but in networks of relationships with adults and children. Wyness (2012) argues that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), particularly the rights expressed in Articles 12 and 13, "connect with the values of more Western affluent nation-states including individualism and self-reliance" (p. 432). He suggests that in less affluent contexts globally children are more likely to be found immersed in their families and communities, participating alongside adults. The children participating in this research came from families who live across a range of economic conditions, some of which could be described as affluent but some of these children also lived in conditions of poverty. Given more than one in four children in New Zealand live in poverty (Child Poverty Monitor 2013), it is critical to acknowledge the cultural factors including economic conditions that influence children's learning. Factors such as economic variables may contribute to greater interdependence between children, their families and their communities in the New Zealand context.

This would be something to explore in more depth in future research. Consistent with earlier research (Fielding 2007; Mannion 2007; Wyness 2012), these findings identify the need to conceptualise and conduct student voice work in a way that recognises the interconnections and relational interdependence between adults and young people.

The diversity of the five themes that were identified in relation to students' points of view about their learning also point to the need to conceptualise and conduct student voice research in a way that enables the expression of a multitude of diverse student voices rather than a collective voice about school experiences (Arnot and Reay 2007; Cook-Sather 2007; Fielding 2007). In particular, the emergence of the expression of an embodied voice within the theme relating to understanding, developing and using talent suggests the importance of finding ways to generate and gather data that reflect the centrality of the body in creating meaning and making sense of experiences. Nielsen (2009) proposes that a multi-modal approach can be used both as a pedagogic and research tool to enable students to express their embodied experiences in a plurality of modes of expression.

Within student voice work a strand of critique, drawing on the work of Rose (1999) has emphasised the potential for student voice work, in the context of neo-liberalism, to encourage students to take part in processes that are used to invent and regulate them so they become self-knowing, self-regulating, autonomous, responsible subjects (Bragg and Buckingham 2008; Gallacher and Gallagher 2008). Within the statements that students made about the point of learning in this research, there is a clear sense that these students are becoming subjects who govern and regulate themselves as they reflected on the talents they were developing, the social and life skills they were accruing, and their active involvement and initiative in helping others learn. Bragg (2011), Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) and Raby (2014) acknowledge that there are both positive and negative effects in relation to governmentality and performativity from student voice work. Neo-liberal processes involving self-regulation and the individualisation of the subject can be seen as obscuring structural inequalities due to the focus on individuals as determining their own lives. However, Raby (2014) argues that while techniques of self-government may equip students to govern themselves, they do not necessarily lead to the prioritising of individual autonomy and they also cultivate conceptions of agency. Furthermore, participatory initiatives may foster individuals who are socially conscious and with social justice and collectivist sensibilities. Recognising the interdependent nature of people's lives, it is also possible to conceptualise participation as a collective project rather than as an individualised one.

Another strand of critique within student voice work is based on research that has shown that gathering student voice and reporting on it does not always guarantee that it will be listened to or incorporated into future developments or reform (Draxton 2012; Mager and Nowak 2012). In Chap. 10, we report on research where the findings from this research were shared with teachers and their responses to it were analysed. The findings and their implications are explored more fully in Chap. 10 but it is important to note here that teachers responded to student views

through their own curriculum and pedagogical frameworks. This suggests that it is not just pre-determined NS that can distract teachers from focusing on supporting children to consider the *point* of learning more intentionally and openly. The following chapter picks up on what happens when student voice is taken back to teachers.

While the current research took place within the NS arena, throughout the research the learners focused on what really mattered to them: their learning. The context of assessment has recently changed in New Zealand with the announcement by the new Labour led government (November 2017) of the removal of NS. The new approach to providing parents, whānau, schools, kura, and the Ministry of Education with information about student progress and achievement has yet to be determined. Shifting our gaze from measured learning and being open to what students in this research were interested in talking about—the point of learning—could now contribute to supporting an enriched and broadened achievement agenda.

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Chapter 10

Beyond the Official Language of Learning: Teachers Engaging with Student Voice Research



Roseanna Bourke and Judith Loveridge

Abstract In student voice research, an enduring issue has been how teachers and policy makers act on the views of young people, and how potentially problematic issues that children raise are resolved. This qualitative study within seven New Zealand schools involved teachers reflecting and commenting on previous ‘student voice’ research on learning. The teachers’ initial responses were to use their own frames of curriculum reference to interpret the student views. Teachers used pedagogical and curriculum developments at their own schools to interpret the students’ views, and this may become an unintended barrier to hearing and understanding the student voice (Bourke and Loveridge 2016).

1 Introduction

Research has shown that student contributions to matters around educational reform significantly improve the intended outcomes for students (Cruddas 2001; Mitra 2004; Yonezawa and Jones 2007). Ranson (2000) identified the importance of a pedagogy of voice when involving ways for students to explore how their views made a difference to understanding their identity as learners. More recently, on the basis of a review of research about student voice, an argument has been made to suggest the effects of student participation are more likely to include the impact on life skills and developing citizenship than say, improvements in academic achievement (Mager and Nowak 2012). Research has demonstrated, however, that

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attempts to listen to student voice do not guarantee that students are listened to, or their views incorporated (Draxton 2012; Mager and Nowak 2012). Within a New Zealand school context, schools are adopting a student voice agenda, and as teachers have observed, it can be very powerful: 'It [student voice] is indeed the major change agent in our school' (Tait and Martin 2007, p. 39). Even so, there is a reported tendency to focus only on what can be changed, and not what confronts practices, especially if the student feedback is challenging. To understand more fully the potential of student voice as a pedagogical tool, it is important to explore what happens when the results of research using student voice are presented to teachers.

Learning as a phenomenon is understood differently by teachers and their students, and the views of each are shaped by their respective roles and focus on what is important to learn. Teachers may have their own philosophies about teaching and learning, but these are enabled and constrained by mandated curriculum statements and explicit learning outcomes as teachers are professionally required to support students to meet specified standards. For the learner, their perceived importance of learning is influenced by their own social lives and aspirations, and this affects how they approach a learning task, and as shown in earlier research influences their personal goals around learning (Bourke 2010; Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Therefore, the importance of learning might be seen on a continuum from simply meeting pre-determined, externally identified targets through to experiencing and learning about life. While not incompatible, this can lead to tensions around what is valued and by whom, and subsequently, what is attended to in the classroom.

This article focuses on the perspectives of teachers when they are presented with findings from earlier research on students' views about the importance of learning. The initial research was conducted when National Standards, a new approach to reporting on student achievement, were introduced in New Zealand schools (Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Some of the teachers involved in the current study had been the teachers of the students in the original study, and others were recruited from similar schools and teaching at the same level.

In this article, first the background to the original and subsequent study is introduced and the methodology and method of the study are explained. Next, teachers' reactions to, and understandings of these students' views are presented and explored. Of interest, the results portray teachers' desire to engage with the findings from student voice research but their understandings are clouded by their teachers' lens, and more specifically, through a mandated curriculum lens.

2 Background to the Original and Subsequent Study

The *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (NZC), revised in 2007, is the guiding document to support teaching and learning in primary schools. It provides the overall vision that young people will 'be confident, connected, actively involved,

lifelong learners' (Ministry of Education 2007). The values are made explicit (excellence; innovation, inquiry and curiosity; diversity; equity; community and participation; ecological sustainability; integrity and respect). Of direct relevance for teachers are the five key competencies that are integrated throughout nine official learning areas. These key competencies are as follows:

1. Thinking
2. Using language, symbols and texts
3. Managing self
4. Relating to others
5. Participating and contributing.

In addition, the NZC provides an overview of effective pedagogy and explicitly sets the direction for teaching and learning in New Zealand English-medium schools and is considered a framework rather than a detailed plan. This means that while every school curriculum must be clearly aligned with the intent of this document, schools have considerable flexibility when determining the detail. In doing this, they can draw on a wide range of ideas, resources and models (Ministry of Education 2015).

In 2009, when the National Standards were introduced in New Zealand primary schools, the focus on the curriculum areas of reading, writing and mathematics tightened, and subsequently the earlier 'considerable flexibility' for teachers became compromised. The introduction of National Standards was reflective of education policy developments that are often used for accountability purposes. Representative of the global 'audit culture' into which New Zealand is being drawn, where international comparisons are made of students' achievements (Thrupp and White 2013), the National Standards require teachers to identify whether students are 'well below', 'below', 'at' or 'above' pre-determined standards at each level. Teachers make an overall teacher judgment (OTJ), based on a range of assessment tasks. The teachers mediate their results about each student's achievement against the National Standard within their schools, rather than premising their judgment on one specific assessment or test. Although the areas identified in National Standards include the curriculum areas of reading, writing and mathematics, personal experience in some schools presented examples where student progress in 'non-curricular' areas, such as 'attitude and effort' were being judged by teachers as above, at, or below standard.

When the National Standards were introduced, the impact of these on the way young people viewed their learning was the premise of the original study. It explored how 20 Year 4 (14 female and 6 male) and 18 (10 female and 8 male) Year 8 students understood and experienced assessment, and whether the introduction of National Standards influenced the way they think about their learning. The year 4 students were 7–8 years old, and the year 8 students were 11–12 years old. The children were interviewed individually for between 30 and 45 min using a semi-structured interview. Six months later the children were interviewed again with questions that explored their learning in and out of school and followed up

Table 1 Themes on the importance of learning identified by students

<p>Connecting to others and belonging To work and play with peers/ be part of a classroom/school/ family Friendships are important to learning</p>
<p>Growing up and understanding how to live Knowing about shopping, accessing correct money/change in stores Learning to care for yourself and others is part of getting a 'better' life</p>
<p>Developing economic benefits To get a job/for a better life Education leads to a job and this provides further opportunity</p>
<p>Understanding, developing and using talent To learn how to use interests (e.g. song writing, sports, maths) Understanding yourself, and being able to grow talent and interest which in itself is motivating</p>
<p>Teaching others To help peers, siblings, whānau, teachers Teaching others is part of learning, and also helps learning</p>

issues of interest from the first interview or matters that needed clarifying. The data were coded iteratively, moving backwards and forwards between codes and emerging themes. Agreement about the use of codes and the emergent themes was established through conversations between the researchers throughout the analysis process. Discussions were held three times with a Children's Reference Advisory Group constituting students from another school to inform the initial formulation of questions used in the interviews and to get feedback about the emergent themes and ethical issues that emerged during the research (Bourke and Loveridge 2014).

Results from this earlier study showed that although students had little awareness of National Standards at that time, they did understand that their learning was being assessed. Those from low decile schools,¹ and in year 4 were less likely to know about National Standards than those from year 8 and in higher decile schools. When they did know about National Standards, it was generally in terms of a goal to make them work harder to achieve the standard. For 1 student, it meant 'you've been taught the right things', cause sometimes I don't really see the point about learning things, but I think it's because it's in the school curriculum' (Bourke and Loveridge 2014, p. 154). The students also had clear ideas about the importance of learning (Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Five inter-related themes emerged around the importance of learning and highlighted that students made an important distinction between learning as it is assessed, and learning as they experience it (see Table 1).

¹All schools in New Zealand currently receive a decile rating (1–10) used by the Ministry of Education to allocate funding. For example, Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities and are allocated additional funding targeted to support students. See <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/resourcing/operational-funding/school-decile-ratings/>.

The five broad areas identified in the students' responses about the importance of learning included a broader reach than the NZC. As the students spoke about these five areas, they revealed the social and cultural influences on their learning. There was an acknowledgement that through inter-generational learning, they facilitate the development of peer relations and family connections. The students talked about 'gaining' something meaningful in terms of economic benefits, social knowledge, understanding, talents and skills, peer relations and family connections.

As a result of this work, we were interested to explore what teachers would make of these themes, and whether these students' views would influence teachers' understanding of students as learners. The current research therefore took the student voice data back to teachers to explore how teachers engaged with the year 4 and year 8 students' views of learning and whether access to student voice through research would influence the way teachers respond to pedagogical challenges (e.g. through assessment) in the classroom. The question we had was that if teachers considered students' perceptions of the importance of learning within their own classrooms, would their assessment agenda with the mandatory National Standards be countered?

3 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

A constructivist epistemological framework and an interpretivist theoretical perspective underpinned the research. From this perspective, teachers' ideas about learning and what they think about students' views of learning are constructed from their interactions with the social world in which they are located. Crotty (1998) argues that from an interpretivist perspective, individuals' understandings need to be understood as 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (p. 67). Thus, teachers' own personal experiences of learning and their professional knowledge will be reflected in their responses, as well as the influences of the contemporary discourses within the immediate (school) and broader (education policy) context in which they work. Hence, it is possible for individuals to produce a range of constructions in relation to the same phenomenon, and some of these may be contradictory.

The research was exploratory in nature in order to understand more clearly how teachers engage with student voice about learning. The approach to involve teachers in focus groups from both the schools that participated in our original student voice study and from schools that were demographically similar enabled a broader context to explore the phenomenon. Focus groups are considered useful in exploratory research as they enable researchers to gain a range of views about a situation or a subject and provide the opportunity for researchers to explore those views through interactions and discussion within the group or by posing additional probing questions (Gray 2014; Krueger 1998). When focus groups are skilfully

facilitated, they can help reveal similarities and differences in views held by participants. Given a limitation with focus groups is that there is the potential for confidentiality to be breached, teachers were interviewed within their own school, with their colleagues rather than across schools. In this way, the participants shared their views as professionals in a meeting with colleagues from their own school. A limitation with focus groups is that they often comprise convenience samples and hence this limits the generalisability of their results. In this case, the sample was a convenience sample in that the teachers who participated were those who were available and willing to be involved. Therefore, this research was exploratory and there were no aspirations to generalise findings to teachers in general.

The research questions that guided this exploration of teachers' understanding of how students represent their own views around learning were: How do teachers respond to representations of how students articulate what learning is important to them? Would teachers assess students in other ways if the students' focus on learning was different to their [the teacher's] focus?

3.1 Method

A range of schools were approached by the researchers to be involved in the research, including all those schools involved in the earlier study. In total, 49 teachers (male and female) participated in this study, providing responses from a range of school deciles (see Table 2). They included novice teachers with 1–3 years of experience through to those with over 20 years of teaching experience. The size of the focus groups² varied as school principals mediated the invitation to teachers to participate in the research. In some instances, this led to the focus groups being scheduled as part of another meeting and in other instances only those staff who taught years 4–8 were offered the opportunity to be involved as this was the year groups from which the earlier student voice data had been collected. Each focus group was conducted within each school setting at a time convenient to the teachers, typically at the end of their school day. Each interview lasted around 50 min and was tape recorded, but not transcribed verbatim. The audio recordings were made to augment researchers' notes at a later date.

Ethical approval was gained for the study from Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. All participants were given an information sheet prior to beginning the focus groups and the opportunity to ask questions about the research and the processes involved. In small groups individuals signed consent forms, and where the focus groups were conducted in full staff meeting situations it was explained that participating in the discussion would indicate consent to participate in the research under the conditions set out in the information sheet. During

²In the largest Focus Groups, where 17 teachers were present for the discussion, not all teachers actively contributed.

Table 2 Participating teachers

Schools	School decile	Number of participating teachers (In the largest Focus Groups, where 17 teachers were present for the discussion, not all teachers actively contributed) (<i>n</i> =)
School A	1	12
School B	2	2
School C	4	10
School D	9	3
School E	10	1
School F	6	4
School G	10	17

the focus group interviews, the teachers were presented with a table outlining the students' responses (Table 1) and were invited to explore the five themes arising from the year 4 and year 8 student data. These themes were provided, with additional quotes from the children, and elaborated on by the researchers to place them in context. The aim of the interviews was to explore with the teachers what the student findings meant and how these related to their current student cohort. Semi-structured interview questions, as distinct from the research questions noted above, opened the discussion with the teachers and included the following:

1. What do you think of the students' representations of the point of learning [i.e. what was important to them]?
2. How do these students' representations relate to: (a) your own views, as a teacher, about the focus of learning and (b) how your own students might represent the point of learning [i.e. what was important to them]?
3. Do these representations challenge you to engage with, or assess, your students' learning in a different way than you are now?

At the end of the focus group interview, the researcher summarised for the teachers the main themes from the discussion in order for participants to contest or verify. Documents relating to learning and assessment from each school were collected to provide contextual information about each school. Only one school highlighted their specific approach in using student voice to inform their policies and practices. Data analysis followed an iterative process. Each researcher analysed the notes from the focus group meeting they had been involved with in conjunction with the documents they had gathered from the schools and information available on the school websites. The researchers then met to discuss the emerging themes and to clarify each other's understanding of the themes. After this discussion, the researchers examined the data across all focus groups and collaboratively discerned the themes. Outlying themes that seemed to relate to particular schools were identified, and then, information was used from the documents from the school and the website to help contextualise the theme.

4 Findings

Across the seven schools, teachers used their frames of reference to interpret the student views, but these reference points tended to be curriculum orientated, rather than around learning theories or their own views about learning. In addition, rather than engaging in the students' ideas as a means to challenge their own views of learning, the teachers tended to examine whether the students' views were consistent with either the New Zealand Curriculum or with their own views of what they were trying to achieve with their own learners. Six of the seven schools saw a great deal of similarity between the students' ideas about the importance of learning and their own [the school's] articulated frames of reference. Some of the teachers at a further school (School G) thought that if their own students had been involved in the research, their responses would have looked quite different. They indicated that they were implementing a dialogical pedagogy aiming for a diverse understanding of student views. In their view, their students would articulate more explicit and sophisticated ideas related to learning in the classroom.

4.1 *The Link to the New Zealand Key Competencies*

When exploring the themes about the importance of learning, teachers at six of the schools resoundingly connected three of the students' themes to the New Zealand Curriculum key competencies in general even though, in the teachers' views, the students 'are not using the same terminology'. Specifically, three of the key competencies were identified and foregrounded by the teachers: relating to others, participating and contributing, and managing self. By linking the key competencies to the students' views, it reinforced these teachers' own beliefs about the importance of learning. The teachers did not mention the two other key competencies (i.e. thinking and using language, symbols and texts) as these were not apparent to them in the student responses. The following examples in this section illustrate how the teachers interpreted the student responses, and how these teachers directed their thinking back to the pre-determined key competencies within the curriculum:

T1: The first thing that I would think is that a lot of these are connected to the key competencies, and in terms of our curriculum, they are referred to quite a lot. That is great, they are not using the same terminology but the essence is there of the key competencies. Probably the participating and contributing comes through the most from all of those. (School E)

Teachers at one school remarked on their practical nature and that they were linked to aspects of daily living:

T1: The first one, connecting to others and belonging, I think that's exactly what our children would say.

- T2: Because we do a lot of what about being part of the classroom, the whānau,³ being a member of the school.
- T3: I'm impressed that they're all so practical. There's nothing, sort of, airy-fairy. They're all nearly based on life skills. (School B)

In another school, the competencies or relation to others, and participating and contributing were also identified:

- T1: Definitely the friendships are important because we're encouraging peer-assessment, and we are also encouraging to talk, as in 'buddy', when we are sharing ideas, learning partners, buddy systems with an older class—they might go on to a game together so one's helping the other, and I think that's the concept they're putting forward that they learn from their peers. We found that, especially Māori children, work better with a partner, or in a group. They do interact, and they do talk, and they get purpose from the partnership, rather than just sitting there like they used to, and not really making any connections. They seem to work better when firing ideas, and getting into a conversation, and they do a lot of talking. So we're kind of changing our thoughts on what is best for different children's learning.
- R: So what influenced that change?
- T1: It's really been the Ministry [*then discussed the nature of the Assess to Learn, and Assessment for Better Learning, formative assessment programmes*]. Working with the WALT,⁴ new Ministry booklets on how to help Pasifika and Māori children to be successful learners. They've been quite informative and for these children, they must feel part of their own learning, *own their learning*, and the social aspect is that they actually work better in groups. (School B)

Many schools had developed a whānau orientation within their schools, where students had the opportunity of teaching others. For some, it was the tuākana-tēina relationship between an older or more skilled (tuākana) and younger (tēina) person. Teachers explicitly linked the theme of teaching others to this relationship:

- T1: The teaching others, at this school we call it tuākana-tēina, where they don't particularly have to be older, but they have particular skills they share with the others. It has become more and more apparent in our unit here. So that is not a surprise either. (School F)

For another school, it was articulated in terms of buddy classes:

- T1: The teaching of others, that is part of something that we are trying to do and the challenge is not so much in what we are doing but how to sustain it and how do we maintain it. So buddy classes is something we have—older children matched with younger children and

³Whānau is a Māori term commonly used to represent family and the wider family connections, although the term has more complex connotations.

⁴WALT is an acronym for We Are Learning To...

that is not just about playing but going in and teaching and learning from one another. (School E)

In contrast, one of the teachers at School G, where teachers did not think their students would have identified such themes, commented that he was ‘surprised at the utilitarian nature of the themes and there is nothing there about the fun of learning’.

Teachers interpreted consistency of their own ideas with the student responses as an outcome of ‘doing their job right’. Teachers from one of the schools where the research had been conducted with the students saw ideas that they, as teachers, thought were important ‘coming through’:

- T1: That’s actually good, I like the developing economic benefits. It is good that that is coming through. We are just about to launch into these children developing and running a business and we also have a person from ASB [a bank] running a financial literacy programme in the school.
- T2: We are quite strong in teaching careers and we have quite a reasonable programme of introducing our students into thinking about career paths at years 7 and 8 so they can develop their options at college towards a first career, and over the years, we have become more pointed about this because we have developed our strong beliefs about careers and children and so our students are quite linked into that. (School F)

4.2 Re-interpretation Through Other Pedagogical Lenses

As well as re-interpreting what the students had said in terms of the New Zealand Curriculum key competencies, the principals and teachers across the schools also re-interpreted the students’ views in terms of governance or pedagogical discourses that were particular to their school. A principal believed the students’ views represented the school charter⁵ being reflected back:

- P1: I think if you go back and look at the school charter, that’s what you’ll see in them. That’s what the parents want. That’s what the teachers want. This is charter stuff. (School D)

The teachers in this focus group discussed how, although the children do not read or see the official school charter sent to the Ministry of Education, the ideas are clearly ‘filtering down to children; they’re getting the messages, that’s quite cool isn’t it!’ (School D). Another teacher noted that it was the teachers, parents and principals who determine the charter, so when the children talked about their

⁵Each school in New Zealand has a School Charter that outlines their mission, aims, objectives, directions and targets of the board and must align with the National Education Guidelines. The school submits a School Charter annually to the Ministry of Education.

learning, it was reflected back, and ‘there’s the charter again’. For this school, even though the student voice was not from their school, they did feel on the whole, it represented their own values. As one teacher noted, this is ‘from kids we don’t know’ and yet they were talking about the point of learning in the way these teachers would want their own students to talk about learning. For other teachers, it became a catalyst to think about their own students, ‘I wonder if our students think this’ (School C).

The teacher at School E noted that the student theme of understanding, developing and using talent related to their approach to getting students engaged in learning through interests:

T1: This one here ‘to learn how to use interests’ is interesting because often with some of our senior students at the moment we are talking about them going off into an area that they are interested in and for a lot of them it is about the rugby or the dance or the sewing and it can be very hard for them to know what they want to find out about that. So it is the next step of ‘great, we are engaging you through your interests’ but are we helping them do something effective about it? Are we looking at the impact that the interest is either having on their learning or in helping them?

Teachers at School G were involved in a school-wide project of implementing a dialogical pedagogy. They were working with three categories of dialogue: oral dialogue taking place in the moment; written forms of dialogue to extend class learning conversations; and more teacher driven dialogue indicating next steps for learning and goals for students to respond to. One teacher noted that ‘there is no evidence of incremental learning—or ideas about learning about learning’ and another said that he would ‘expect to see more talk about literacy, enquiry questions and talk relating to the bigger picture of life’. Even though the teachers were given examples from the student interviews that showed the students had taken their discussions into a much broader terrain than school, they did not see the students’ themes as being related to the bigger picture of life. Although a younger teacher made a connection to the theme relating to economic benefits, saying that her students talked about learning for a better life, this was dismissed by one of the teachers who had been advancing the ideas about the school-wide pedagogical approach. He said ‘but who would they [the students] hear say those things—do they hear their parents say it or is it in the media?’ implying these were not the students’ own views. These teachers were very committed to the pedagogical approach they were developing as a school and it subsequently seemed difficult for some of these teachers to engage with the ideas of the students without re-interpreting them or critiquing them through their own pedagogical lens. Interestingly, in minutes from area meeting notes relating to learning conversations, reference was made to research they had read (e.g. Hattie and Timperley 2007) indicating how the effective part of dialogue is when the students respond to what the teacher offers.

While students identified a range of interests and talents they were developing informally and at home, teachers across the schools were more likely to view talent

as school-initiated activities that were formally presented to the students such as kapa haka (form of Māori dance, performing art), tennis lessons, drama and music. For one teacher, ‘Talent is like a fixed learning trait—you either have it or you don’t. You can’t get better; either you have a talent or you don’t’ (School D).

In contrast, from the students’ perspective, talent was neither an inner trait nor context specific and included learning such as martial arts, writing songs, being in a band, writing poetry, cooking, skateboarding, kapa haka within the community, skiing and drawing as being important. Critically, the emotional dimension of talent was important for the children. For them, developing and realising talent was not just about acquiring skills, but also the affective feeling it gave to them. A child discussing his learning of Kung Fu identified how he felt awesome (Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Another child explained that when writing songs for her band, she knew she had achieved, ‘when it makes sense to me and it tells a story and it’s catchy. It feels really good’ (Bourke and Loveridge 2014, p. 157).

4.3 Influences Impacting on Engaging with Student Voice

Across at least five of the seven schools, teachers raised questions about two of the student themes: economic benefits and understanding, developing and using talent. These two themes were the ones that challenged some of the teachers the most because in their view (1) talent is seen as a fixed trait; you either have it or you do not and (2) economic benefits of learning were not something they naturally connected to the New Zealand Curriculum, their teaching, or the school’s vision. As one teacher stated, ‘I am getting a very small group that say they need a job one day. I’m the one bringing it up. I’m not getting it from my current students’ (School B).

Two schools raised a question that technology was not apparent in the student responses, and given the digital initiative drive in schools⁶, perhaps they felt the students would reflect this when discussing their learning. Teachers from the school that had three digital classrooms specifically questioned the absence of technology. Teachers at another school also questioned the lack of technology, but as another teacher noted, ‘That might be that it’s just part of their life. They don’t need to mention it because it’s just part of their daily life’ (School C). School F had developed a Modern Learning Environment (MLE) for their year 7 and 8 students, which gave them a lot of access to different forms of technology. They felt the MLE had resulted in a pedagogical change that gave their students more choice about what they were learning and how they were doing it. They commented that it had been important to scaffold the students into this way of learning ‘so that they have the skills to do it and that allow them to organise themselves’ (School F).

⁶For example, Learning with digital technologies; the Network for Learning Limited (N4L)

The teachers' own philosophies about teaching and learning are both enabled and constrained by curriculum expectations and assessment requirements. Clearly the National Standards had created an influential context for the teachers in this study to determine which learning outcomes were important, and the tension between assessing children's learning in a way that shows their progress alongside that of assessing children against standards was evident. Importantly, responses from teachers reveal the extent to which their focus on learning and assessment is constrained to learning within the classroom and this impacts on how they conceptualise learning.

Teachers in all schools used a range of assessment approaches when determining whether a child was 'at' 'below' or 'above' standard. These are seen as contributing to making judgments about where a child is in relation to the standard, but the teachers were adamant they did not teach to the test. For these teachers, assessment was not outside of the teaching process. Teachers certainly reported a distinct tension when needing to report a child as 'below' standard because it did not reflect the child's learning. Their point is that even when their students learn and make good progress, the National Standards system does not necessarily reflect this progress, and this creates a moral tension for them. As the teachers in the extract below note, it affects their reporting to parents:

- T2: It's affecting us hugely. Because we have to report back to the Ministry. We're sitting with our OTJs [overall teacher judgments] at the moment that have to be done by Friday again, so [principal] can send it to the Ministry.
- T1: Because you see, it affects us, because they (students) might be 'below' [standard]. They've gone from here to there (*indicating a span with her hands from left to right*) but that's not counted. And they have moved tremendously, but it doesn't show in National Standards. They (NS) don't take the amount they have moved within that area. And it's quite frustrating. A child can be 'at' [standard], at the end of the year, but because of the next step up, but they are back at 'below' [standard] at the beginning of the next year.
- T2: So you've just shared this happy report [with parents] and then you have your conference at the end of term 1 and the parents ask 'but he was above. He was above. How can he be below now?' And you've got to show them.
- T1: That it's actually the graph that we have to fit it on. That those children at 'at' [standard], you have to make sure, they can maintain 'at' and nearer above. The 'above' children maintain the above [standard], but the 'at' ... they're floating. But the actual graph they can be 'at' at the end of the year, but at the beginning of the next year, I know we've got a whole year to bring them back to 'at' [standard] but they [the children] are see-sawing—they're going 'at', 'below' 'at', 'below' so they're not actually progressing—and it's actually the graph.
- T2: It's like the stock exchange fluctuating.
- T1: And it's actually the graph. (School B).

Taking another example, teachers noted the importance of moderating assessment results and were focused on getting the expected assessment procedures

‘right’. As distinct from School B, where getting it right did not make it ‘morally right’, this school focused on whether the assessment reflected the child’s standard, but not necessarily their learning:

- T1: I wouldn’t assess a child as ‘below standard’ simply on that [on normative test results]. I wouldn’t say they’re ‘above standard’ simply on that either. You’ve got to have something else. It’s a checkpoint—it’s a one-day one-test thing. And if you’re having an off day you’re having an off day. If you got lucky, you got lucky. So you’d need to have some other stuff to support it.
- T2: It might be a trigger to go and get a second opinion.
- T3: You’d go to a team leader or another teacher, and say I’ve got this child and I got a rubbish result here or a fantastic result but that’s not what I really thought of that child.
- T2: So could you have a look for me and see what you think?
- T3: A lot of moderation goes on here.
- T1: You’ve got to have it right. (School D).

Teachers specifically identified how the moderation process involved in their Overall Teacher Judgments of students allowed them to compare and contrast work to ensure they provided the appropriate teacher judgment against National Standards. Even this process has been shown to be problematic. The assumption that moderation processes by teachers within and across schools will ensure reliability of student level data has been questioned (Hay and Macdonald 2008) because teachers internalise their own criteria and make intuitive judgements about student performance.

Another tension noted by a teacher occurred when ‘there’s a big push for learning to be contextual and culturally relevant but we don’t assess that’ (School A). Within this school, the principal noted a tension around National Standards assessment and the needs of their children, but noted ‘I believe that the staff are professional enough to know when that [assessing against national standards] is just something we need to do, and what really needs to be taught and make those kind of judgments’ (School A).

Teachers at School F were part of a Learning Change network that involved schools with a common interest and willingness to work together and with their communities, and to form networks to analyse achievement challenges and identify change priorities. One of the tasks they engaged with through their involvement with the network was to explore what learning meant to the children, using mind mapping an activity undertaken away from the classroom. Given that these teachers had recently been in this situation where they had actively listened to student voice, they tended to be more open to the dialogue of the learner. So although they did respond to the themes identified by the students through their own frames of reference, they also tried to understand the themes in terms of what they had heard recently when they had listened to their own students. The principal at this school noted:

- P: For me I look at that and think children are starting to get an understanding of why they are learning, they are not just learning because ‘Mum and Dad told me I have to go to school’ or ‘the teacher told me this is what you have to do’. They are actually contextualising it.

4.4 Responding to the Challenge of Assessing Learning that Is Valued by Students

A number of the teachers examined the students’ ‘point of learning’ views, and rather than engaging with these ideas as motivational aspects around student learning, instead wondered how they would assess these. They identified the use of reflection, observations and dialogue with the students as one way to facilitate assessment of them, in the same way they ‘assessed’ the key competencies:

- T1: The first thing you would have to be sure that students had a common understanding about those points of learning and you would have to be very careful about assessing because it would either have to be a point in time or something that you noticed over time and through observations or jottings of discussions. (School E).

The need to develop a common understanding about the importance of learning missed the point that students would have a range, and different views than them about learning. Teachers at another school also emphasised the importance of discussion with children, but then extended this to the critical reflection that teachers could engage with in relation to their own practice. As one principal noted, ‘I think part of the assessment is that self-reflection into your own practice about making sure students know why they are doing what they are doing and making sure your inquiry topic or reading actually has some relevance to their understanding’ (School F).

5 Discussion

The initial focus of this research involved listening to students’ voices about their views of assessment and learning (Bourke and Loveridge 2014). Through this research the students shifted the attention from assessment to something more fundamentally important to them—the importance of learning. As shown in the current research, however, the natural response from teachers to these students’ views was to re-orientate the focus back towards the curriculum and the key competencies. By doing this, it suggests that an unintended consequence of a structured curriculum might be its influence on teachers to ‘institutionalise’ their own notions of learning, and therefore not readily hear the student voice about

learning. Given that research shows that assessment practices might influence ‘what’ these children learn (Black and Wiliam 2006; Wortham 2006), but not necessarily how they view the importance of learning (Bourke and Loveridge 2014), the teachers’ responses to this created a dilemma. On the one hand, teachers constructed their own understandings of the students’ views through a curriculum filter and identified tensions *they the teachers* experienced through assessment reporting requirements, but on the other hand, they missed the essence of the message from the learners. For students, the importance of learning was about their needs, their interests, and their lives, not around a stipulated curriculum. For the teachers, the importance of the curriculum focussed on how they viewed learning, and the students’ views were used as a means to confirm what they attempted to do. For one school, it reinforced the school charter, and for another, their day-to-day values.

These findings also suggest that teachers might be constrained or distracted from focusing on supporting children to consider the *importance* of learning more intentionally because their view of the curriculum, and of National Standards, reinforces what official and public learning looks like. As earlier noted by Draxton (2012), when teachers consulted with their students, they tended to prioritise their responses to the data by addressing the social emotional needs of students first, followed by environmental changes, and then lastly by making adjustments to content and instruction.

It could be that teachers are more likely to engage with and be challenged by their own student voices, rather than ‘research data’, especially if the student voice does not reflect their own views (as in School G). This suggests we need to consider that student voice is generally first a *tool of reflection* for teachers, if it is to be a *tool for change*. Irrespective, the teachers in this study actively engaged in the ideas the children presented, if only to see whether these student voices reflected back the images of learning, the teachers intended to portray. Arnott and Reay (2007) have observed this when they note ‘The student voices heard in process of consultation are not in fact independently constructed “voices” rather they are the “message” created by particular pedagogic contexts’ (p. 317). The findings from this study suggest that this argument can also be applied to teachers’ voices.

The results show that teachers explored student voice responses in relation to their understanding of the New Zealand Curriculum framework, not from a child’s frame of reference. When there was consistency between the curriculum and the students’ views, the teachers made comments such as, ‘students are getting the message’. The teachers from six of the seven schools felt the views presented through the student voice research would be consistent with the views of their own students. Teachers related specifically to three of the student themes mainly because they were consistent with the key competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum framework. Teachers in five of the seven schools expressed ambivalence around two specific themes—*economic benefits* and *talent*. Interestingly, neither are explicitly presented in the key competencies.

For children, the importance of learning extended beyond school and broadened to areas such as their future and developing and using their talents. The teachers’ responses to these students’ views connected back to the curriculum, and by

association, narrowed their understanding of the learning of these students and their lives beyond school. Students took the focus away from National Standards and to the point of learning; teachers took the focus from the point of learning and back to their reference point (e.g. the school's vision, curriculum, charter and National Standards).

This paper has explored why the importance of learning is a necessary consideration for both teachers and learners, yet it is not typically made explicit in day-to-day learning contexts. This becomes a case where, through the student voice, teachers can challenge their own views of learning, and the influences behind these views. It challenges the notion that official curriculum documents, which assume there is a common understanding of why students engage in learning, do not necessarily represent the reality for many teachers or learners particularly when students have not contributed to the ideas in the document. When students are asked about the importance of learning, they see beyond the school gates, or explore how the point of learning helps them get *out of the school gates* (i.e. for the 'future'). As this paper has shown, when teachers are given research on student voice about their learning, teachers' understandings are mediated and filtered through their own understanding of curricula and official understandings. Perhaps not surprisingly, they attempt to bring their understandings back *into the school gates*. Consistent with previous research, 'A teacher's agenda has an implicit and loud voice already embedded in the school culture' (Kroeger et al. 2004, p. 53). In this paper, we have suggested there is more to learn *outside of school* in order to inform learning in school, and through the student voice. Implications of this work suggest that further research working with students and their teachers *together* could create new understandings about: (a) learning and assessment; (b) what young people value; and (c) how these ideas might be translated back into the classroom. Through student voice, teachers can develop the ability to translate classroom cultures, pedagogical practices and school-wide practices: 'if we were to understand education as translation and schools as sites that support the translation process, we would need to understand the languages of those who spend their time in schools and learn what they need in order to become new versions of themselves' (Cook-Sather 2009, p. 229).

Implications for this research include working more closely with teachers and incorporating student voice as part of their own professional learning and development. As noted by Messiou and Ainscow (2015), 'the views of students can stimulate reflection and the development of new thinking amongst teachers...[and] can contribute to teacher professional development' (p. 246). Indeed, the potential for student voice to become a 'threshold concept', that is, a phenomenon that opens up transformative ways of thinking (Meyer and Land 2003), must be raised. At a tertiary level, Cook-Sather (2014) proposes that student-faculty pedagogical partnerships, which are informed by teacher engagement with student voice, is a threshold concept. Within a school-based context, this research suggests there is potential for the same, and as noted by Cook-Sather (2014), while such concepts can be troublesome, they lead to irreversible and transformative ways of thinking.

In the current study, in situations where teachers had recently sought to engage their own students about their learning outside of school, they could engage more readily with the learner voice. The need to create opportunities to use student voice, and their specific understandings around the point of learning can become a pedagogical and transformative tool, and used as a learning framework so that student voice and teaching practices have common understandings and joint agency. Encouraging teachers to analyse how voices are created by particular pedagogical contexts, reflexively consider their own responses to student voice, and encourage discussions about the politics of listening, are pedagogical strategies to engage with. By listening to the student voice(s) and their conceptions of the importance of learning, it is feasible to broaden understandings beyond the official language of learning.

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Chapter 11

Student Voice, Citizenship and Regulated Spaces



Bronwyn Wood, Rowena Taylor and Rose Atkins

Abstract Student voice and youth citizenship participation programmes in school at times rest upon simplistic and naive assumptions of the hierarchies of power that are embedded in regulated spaces. Such assumptions can also result from the prevailing models of youth participation that often rely on oppositional notions of power between students and adults. In this chapter, we critique these positions by interrogating the exchanges of power between secondary school students and teachers during the implementation of a participatory social studies curriculum project in which students took ‘personal social action’ for assessment credits. Drawing on research with five schools in Aotearoa New Zealand involving classroom observations, student focus group interviews ($n = 93$), teacher interviews and collaborative research, we share two case studies which explore the influence students or teachers had on controlling the social action process. Our findings illustrate a highly dynamic and intergenerational process in which the locus of power continually moved between adults and students during the course of the social action process. The need for complex understandings of power-sharing is required if young people are to participate in student voice and citizenship action in the context of highly regulated school spaces.

1 Introduction

Including the voices, perspectives, ideas and rights of young people is a unifying theme of literature in both citizenship participation and student voice initiatives. Those advocating for greater youth citizenship participation and enhanced student voice share a belief that young people have rights and that these rights need to be honoured, protected and advocated for in light of their perceived unequal status to

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adults in society (Cook-Sather 2014; Invernizzi and Williams 2008; Thomas and Percy-Smith 2010). They also hold a commitment to seeking to consult with, gain feedback from and engage young people in their education (Cook-Sather 2014; Fielding 2004) and more broadly, across society. An underlying premise of citizenship and student voice research, policy and practice is the commitment to recognise the rights of the child as portrayed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (Lundy 2007). Regarded by some as ‘unquestionably the most significant milestone for the development of current child policies’ (Woodhead 2010, p. xx), the UNCRC provided a foundation for a new position of children in contemporary societies where their rights to both protection and participation were outlined clearly (Invernizzi and Williams 2008). The ‘new’ social studies of childhood developed by James et al. (1998) in their pivotal book *Theorizing Childhood* also set out a new agenda that viewed children as competent social actors in their own right. These shifts in thinking about and valuing the contributions of children were pivotal to the growing proliferation of citizenship participation and student voice initiatives that have emerged in many western nations since the 1990s.

Yet despite this momentum, the idea of children and young people participating as citizens remains highly contested. There are significant differences in how people define and enact youth participation, and wide variation in how nations interpret participation in their curriculum policies (Faulks 2000; Kennedy 2007; Nelson and Kerr 2006). Barber (2009) suggests that a notional spectrum of involvement from passive to active can be used when attempting to define participation, but this raises questions about how these concepts are defined and measured. In order to support teachers, educators and others involved in enhancing the participation of young people in society, several models and typologies have been proposed for both student voice and citizenship participation work with children and young people. In this chapter, we begin by examining these as a starting point for a broader discussion on what it takes for young people to experience authentic, agentic and meaningful experiences of participation and student voice in schools. This discussion forms the backdrop to our two-year study in five secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand in which we examined a curriculum and assessment initiative that required social studies students to take *personal social action* (New Zealand Qualification Authority [NZQA] n.d.). In this chapter, we discuss how our examination of the process of senior secondary school students (aged between 15 and 18, in Years 11–13) taking social action highlighted the interrelational and intergenerational nature of student participation. Drawing on two case studies, we illustrate how student voice and citizenship participation needs to be understood as a dynamic and negotiated partnership of power-sharing between young people and adults within regulated sites and spaces. This analysis draws us to a much deeper reading of the models of participation frequently used in student voice and citizenship participation work in schools.

2 Models of Participation and Student Voice

Since the 1960s, several explanatory typologies have attempted to evaluate, measure and address the complexity of youth participation. One of the earliest models was Sherry Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizens' Participation*. While not focused specifically on children and young people, Arnstein's graduated ladder—from 'manipulation' to 'citizen control'—was an early attempt to examine in whose interest participation serves. Drawing on this ladder metaphor, Roger Hart created one of the most well-known and widely used frameworks with children and young people—Hart's *Ladder of Participation* (1992). Specifically with children's participation in mind, Hart attempted to address the 'strong tendency on the part of adults to underestimate the competence of children while using them in events to influence some cause' (p. 9).

Several other frameworks have been proposed that have adapted Hart's original ladder. To illustrate just some of these, we will describe five here which capture some of the variety of similarities and differences: (i) Treseder's (1997) *Degrees of Participation*—while this draws heavily on Hart's Ladder, Treseder reimagines the states of participation as five possibilities without hierarchy, thus abandoning the ladder metaphor; (ii) Shier's (2001) *Levels of Participation* shifts the focus onto structures that hinder or enable young people's participation. Shier also includes three stages of commitment by adults (openings, opportunities and obligations) to demonstrate how such ideas could be implemented in institutions.¹ More recent developments that use a similar continuum approach and apply this specifically to citizenship participation include: (iii) McLaughlin's (1992) minimal–maximal forms of citizenship; (iv) Thomson and Holdsworth's (2003) four-fold continuum of school participation with 'turning up' or 'taking part' at one end through to political action at the other; and (v) Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) well-known *Kinds of Citizens* model (personally responsible, participatory and justice-oriented citizens).² These models and typologies have proved influential in work related to young people's participation as active citizens (Barber 2009; Shier 2001).

Inspired by the same desire for greater student agency and participation as the models discussed above, student voice research in education specifically addresses issues of youth participation in schooling contexts and educational institutions. For example, Fielding's (2011) *Patterns of Partnership* describes seven types of partnership models in student voice work ranging from using students as data sources—at the minimal level—through to intergenerational learning as a 'lived democracy' at the maximal level. Fielding describes a lived democracy as having a shared commitment to the common good across a school community that also includes

¹For a review of additional models of participation, see <https://360participation.com/models-of-participation/> and Mayes et al. (2017) *Theories and images of power in student voice work* <https://ijsv.psu.edu/?article=what-can-a-conception-of-power-do-theories-and-images-of-power-in-student-voice-work>.

²For a review of these latter three models, see Wood et al. (2013).

occasions of equal sharing of power and responsibility. In more recent work, Pearce and Wood (2016) developed an *Evaluative Framework* that identifies key attributes and principles of more transformative types of student voice work. Based on a systematic literature review of student voice research since 2011, Pearce and Wood identified four dominant types of student voice work—dialogical, intergenerational, collective and transgressive—which they viewed as a series of building blocks resting upon dialogic approaches, and moving through collective, inclusive and intergenerational processes to produce more transgressive outcomes. Each element in the framework relies to some extent on the others, with the student voice work likely to fall short of transformative goals should one of the elements be neglected.

These models provide an invaluable role in helping students, educators, community members and governments to evaluate the nature of their youth participation programmes. However, the trouble with models that are presented as ladders or tables is that they can make concepts like participation and voice appear quite simplistic and linear. Indeed, they have the potential to abrogate the adult responsibility further away from including a child or young person simply because one can argue they are somewhere on the ladder. A simple reading of these models can foster a view that adults *permit* young people to participate (Wyness 2013) or *give away* some of their power in order to share it with young people. This can lead to the assumption that as long as adults make way for young people's participation, their participation is assumed. These models also imply that young people will have the ability to act as full citizens and feel empowered by this process. This suggests a rather normative and hierarchical notion of participation that is based on an oppositional model of power in which adults are assumed to possess power and children are not (Gallagher 2008; Holt 2004). Such initiatives also assume a level playing field for all young people, with the idea that if the conditions are set up for their participation, all young people can participate equally. In addition, such models have been used to justify participatory approaches to research with children and young people that create a methodological hierarchy 'in which "good"—or perhaps "best"—practice will be situated on the top-most rung (full participation), above less "participatory" projects' (Gallagher and Gallagher 2008, p. 501). Finally, these models often overlook the power imbalances in highly regulated spaces such as schools and include narrowly conceived notions of student voice and participation that rarely include the right to be transgressive (Pearce and Wood 2016; Skelton 2007; Wyness 2013).

Schools remain highly regulated sites for young people which further minimises the opportunity to practise participation (Mitra 2005; Robinson and Taylor 2013). Yet the pre-existing landscapes of power that operate in classrooms and schools are often overlooked or viewed quite simplistically when implementing student voice or participation initiatives. Critical and post-structural theorists both offer deeper insights into understanding how power operates within school settings. Critical theorists such as Bourdieu, Apple and Giroux draw attention to how the locus of power in an institution such as a school is located primarily within adults, those in authority, and those who hold access to resources. These hierarchical patterns of power replicate wider unequal relations of power in society that serve to

marginalise the voices and expressions of those less powerful (such as children). While student voice initiatives consciously attempt to disrupt these imbalances and can succeed, there is a tendency for covert expressions of power to still lead to regulation, social control and restriction rather than emancipation, democracy and freedom (Gallagher 2005, 2008; Giroux 2009).

Post-structural accounts of power are also useful in helping to illuminate how power operates in student voice and citizenship work (Robinson and Taylor 2007, 2013). Rather than viewing power as residing in individuals, Foucault (1980, 1982) theorises power as a constellation of relational influences which circulates between individuals in a dynamic and flexible state. Post-structural theories of power draw attention to the hidden ways power operates to steer students into forms of social control and compliance as ‘schooling subjects’, rather than towards more emancipatory goals (Arnot and Reay 2007; Robinson and Taylor 2013). In classroom settings, this theoretical lens sheds light on the norms and behaviours that reinforce and legitimise power through social interactions and discourse. For example, Arnot and Reay’s (2007) analysis of student voice in a school context—which can involve classroom talk, subject talk, identity talk, and code talk—revealed that the classroom norms and rules of the teacher–student encounter tend to produce a ‘schooling voice’ in line with expectations on learners as to how they should communicate and what they should say. The production of such ‘performances’ are created through common classroom practices such as bells and timetables that regulate and discipline young people’s actions and behaviours (Jenks 2001). Post-structural theories also look for examples of how certain actions modify others (Foucault 1982) and these reveal moments of resistance, opposition and disobedience resistance (Gallagher 2008).

Rather than assume that young people are fully autonomous or that teachers are fully in control, our study sought to examine how the actions of teachers and students were related to each other. As Jeffrey (2011) argues, we cannot assume that young people carve out spaces of individual assertion independent of adult worlds; instead, we need to focus on the deeply social and interrelational (and often intergenerational) nature of participation and agency. These two theoretical approaches therefore provide a critical lens which helped us to examine how both young people and adults navigated power relations with school settings when attempting to participate in social action.

3 Research Study and Methodology

A mixed methods approach underpinned data gathering during the two years of the project (2015–2016). The research team comprised a collaborative partnership between four university researchers and five secondary school classroom teachers (Wood et al. 2017). The aim was to explore teachers’ practices and young people’s experiences of the *personal social action* achievement standards in Senior Social Studies, from the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA)

in New Zealand, and to identify strategies and approaches that would support students to participate actively in critically informed social action. Two of the university researchers made regular visits to the five schools involved in the project to talk with teachers, observe students during their social action projects, and conduct a total of 12 focus group interviews with students in years 11–13 (ages 15–18) ($n = 93$). The research team also jointly analysed data, shared new points of learning from the practitioner inquiries, and reviewed emerging research findings.

The schools and teachers involved in this research into Senior Social Studies achievement standards were purposively selected. The five teachers were experienced practitioners who had prior experience of facilitating learning in relation to the *personal social action* standards undertaken by students as part of the national assessment and credentialing system in New Zealand. The schools were diverse in terms of their socio-economic status, location (provincial and urban) and student population (ethnicity). This diversity enabled the research team to examine patterns within and across the cohort (Stake 2008). To situate the micro-spaces of the five teachers' practice and students' experiences at the schools within national practice, teachers throughout New Zealand were surveyed through an online survey ($n = 141$) and the NZQA data on participation and attainment in the three NCEA *personal social action* achievement standards were examined.

The findings reported in this chapter are drawn from the in-class observations, and the reported experiences of teachers and students during the case study of implemented practice across the five participating schools. Our focus during data collection was underpinned by our commitment to exploring what teachers taught, as well as the young people's experiences. For example, teachers and students were asked to describe the approaches they were taking during the social action. Comparing students' views across a range of schools with those expressed by their teachers enabled us to identify cross-school patterns and themes (Cohen et al. 2011). These were shared with teachers and together we developed a theoretical framework for social action learning that was then applied and developed further during the second year to analyse subsequent data according to *a priori* themes (Braun and Clarke 2013). This analysis enabled us to further explore and validate initial findings and postulate about the transferability of practice to different schooling contexts. In the following section, we examine themes that emerged in relation to how the process of taking social action occurred in the five school settings.

4 Taking Social Action

Our classroom observations, the focus group interviews with students, and ongoing discussions with the five teachers drew our attention to the ways in which both teachers and young people navigated aspects of power throughout the process of taking social action. We were particularly interested in examining the balance of power between teachers and students during this process. Broadly, there was a

spectrum of experiences in the classrooms in our study. We identified three broad approaches to social action learning: teacher-led, teacher-guided and student-led. For example, teacher-led occurred where teachers held higher levels of power and control than their students; student-led involved occasions when students possessed significant degrees of direction and control for their learning; and teacher-guided involved a combination of power and control between teacher and learner.

All five teachers employed these three approaches at varying times according to the contexts they were working in. When teachers adopted a teacher-led approach, they tended to use more structured and controlled processes for student social action projects. For example, a teacher might select the societal issue that the students were to explore and take action on and provide resources, teaching and other inputs—guest speakers, field trips and appropriate audio-visual resources—to heighten students' awareness of the issue. Some students expressed how they appreciated this approach as they felt well supported as it gave them more guidance and enabled them to make community connections. For example, after meeting representatives from the Red Cross at school, one student explained how this enabled her to connect more with such people in the community as 'you are not doing something completely random in the community that you have no connection or association with' (16 years). However, other students did not enjoy this level of teacher-directed learning. As Ben (18 years) articulated:

Like this was kind of imposed on us, we didn't get any choice this year whereas last year we got to choose our charity [to fundraise for]. Whereas this year we got a set one [social issue]. I mean it gives us all the substance of what we have to do but at the same time I feel I don't feel as emotionally charged about it.

Maria (17 years), in the same class, commented 'It's obviously easier to teach if you just give a set topic in class with one issue but I think when you get to choose it [the social issue] yourself you get more [fired up about it]'.

At the other end of the spectrum, students held a higher level of control and direction of aspects of their social action process if they were enabled to select their own social issue and direct significant parts of their social action themselves. Examples of such student-led activities included: contacting community members to arrange interviews; creating petitions; and talking to media. While for many this led to high levels of engagement in their chosen focus, others were frustrated at the lack of guidance. For example, Angie (17-years) described how her group struggled to even find a significant social justice focus for their social action and wished they had more teacher input or guidance, especially as their assessment required a policy focus:

Well, our one was a bit of a flop. It didn't go very well ... I think actually the biggest thing that we found was we weren't very passionate. Like my group wasn't really passionate about anything in the community and the fact that we had to limit it to the community was quite hard. Yeah, we could do something like that, but we couldn't think of anything proper so ... it did kind of turn out to be something that didn't really properly link to an actual policy and I think that's where we went really wrong.

Angie went on to describe how when they approached the Senior Management Team in the school for permission to circulate their surveys and send emails, they were told ‘no’, ‘which was quite frustrating’. Angie concluded that she wished her teacher had given her group better advice at the start and given them the opportunity to see or hear what other students had proposed for their social actions.

Our analysis of some of the frustrations (especially for older high school students) of the extremes of both teacher-led and student-led approaches pointed us to a more middling position: a teacher-guided approach. However, this was a very complex position to articulate and describe as we found that the actions of teachers and students were constantly intersecting through tightly connected and shifting exchanges of power-sharing. High levels of trust underpinned such an experience where teachers actively supported their students. This meant at times ‘letting the students take initiative and sort out problems for themselves’ (teacher interview), yet at other times taking a much more involved role. In addition, we noted that while the initial steps in the process of students taking action took place in planned lessons during school, most students then undertook considerable work outside the school. For example, students connected with key members of their local community interviewed people, used community resources such as libraries and archives, and undertook many aspects of the social action outside of school (such as displaying information boards, fundraising, organising petitions, talking to media, and writing to local body or central government politicians). Therefore, it was not only teachers who were involved in these social action programmes, but members of the community and key adults (including parents) who played a role in enabling and supporting student action.

This led us to a much closer examination of the exchanges of power between students and adults which we illustrate in the following two case studies. In both cases, we outline examples of mediated and negotiated partnerships of power-sharing between the teachers, strategic adults and students at two of our research schools. In both cases, students were in year 13, ages 17–18, and working on the Level 3 NCEA achievement standard that requires students to *Examine personal involvement in a social action(s) that aims to influence policy change (s)* (NZQA n.d.).

4.1 ‘We’re Actually Allowed to Go Out and Do Something’: Community Engagement

Kahikatea College³ is situated in a mid-sized provincial town in New Zealand. Tina, the teacher at this school who was involved in our study, was a passionate advocate for social studies and social action. Her approach was to create well-supported experiences of community engagement that involved a balance

³Schools have been given pseudonyms.

between teacher-led approaches, by setting up the foci of students' social action, followed by student-led approaches of planning social action and communicating directly with community and political members. For example, at the start of the social action focus, she invited local Members of Parliament (MPs) and representatives of community groups (such as the Red Cross) into the school to talk to the students. This quickened students' attention to social and political issues and allowed her to provide teaching support for students who struggled to choose and plan social action. She also had developed a 'staged by age' approach to social action which involved introducing students to 'easier' forms of social action at the junior end of the high school (ages 13–14), and then building upon these experiences to become more 'political' and engaged at the national level of politics by the time they were senior students (ages 17–18). For example, in year 11 (ages 15–16) students often undertook fundraising to support social causes, and in year 12 (ages 16–17) enacted closer connections with community organisations (including volunteering). By year 13, students undertook a stronger focus on national policy and international issues. Across all these foci, Tina focused strongly and systematically on creating awareness and knowledge about the issues. For example, she encouraged students to create educational information boards to share their learning with members of the community. With the rise of social media, she also encouraged students to use various media platforms to disseminate their messages:

The main message is that social media serves to amplify students' actions (more exposure) but that it can also be used strategically to communicate information and then link to other forms of social action (e.g., petitions).

This supported students to construct robust knowledge about their selected social issues so they could engage with members of the public in meaningful ways and develop personal agency. As students gained more experience in taking social action, they could then move away from more structured teacher-led learning to less structured student-led approaches.

As part of her commitment to creating a climate of enhancing student voice and participation in her school, Tina had also managed to establish a social action prefect on the Student Leadership Committee. This role helped to cultivate a culture where student voice and social action was a norm and was 'definitely encouraged, students can do it if they want to' (focus group member). The Social Action Prefect in 2016 was a participant in the focus group discussions. She described an outwardly focused school that took part in a wide range of whole-school social action initiatives (such as Red Nose Day, Pink Shirt Day and World Vision's 40 h Famine) that had been organised through the Student Council. The school also actively supported many community-related student social action projects that had been instigated through the Senior Social Studies programme. 'Our school knows when it's social action time. They understand it'.

The students described how this culture and the incremental decrease in the role of the teacher input made it easier for them to take ownership of their social actions in year 13. Students reported that they could draw on their own (or other students') learning from earlier years to enhance actions that needed to be more 'political' and

might involve contacting MPs and liaising with other members of the community. Two students (aged 17–18) reflected together that their cumulative prior experiences and Tina's actions had made the final year easier, even when they were faced with having to focus on community, regional or national-level issues:

Miriama: I think in a way it's got harder but, in a way, it's got easier. So, it's harder in respect to that you're not [just] going out and selling cupcakes.

Sophie: You've actually like got to do like the research and everything like that.

Miriama: You've actually got to do a policy and have a background knowledge. Easier in the respect that if you've done it the previous two years, it's easier.

While some students worked on school-based policies such as gender-neutral toilets or an enhanced curriculum for indigenous Māori students, the majority focused on issues in the local community that mirrored significant societal issues nationally, for example, poverty (provision of school lunches for children who turned up to school hungry), domestic violence, supporting refugee settlement, issues relating to mental health and suicide and the need for a Living Wage. To enable students to engage with members of their community, Tina had a long-standing relationship with the local librarian in the town who encouraged students to display their social issue information boards, to host petitions and to talk to members of the public. The library provided students with an appropriate place to interact with the public and share their learning about taking social action. For example, two students described how displaying their information board on an opposition MP's Bill in this library helped them to canvas support for their action and collect signatures for their petition:

Gina: We talked about the Bill and the effects of it and we sort of like talked to people individually and they would sign if they agreed.

Sophie: They could leave their email address or their normal address if they felt comfortable enough.

School rules and policies, however, presented several challenges for students' social action plans and their wide use of this public library. While it was about 10-min walk from the school, students were not generally allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours without extensive health and safety forms being completed. As access to the library was vital for their research, and the dissemination of their social action, Tina devised systems that enabled her students to leave the school grounds in a safe way that did not get them in to trouble. This point of public engagement for the students was highly valued as it contributed to their developing personal agency and engagement in authentic learning experiences. As Miriama articulated:

It's really nice getting out into the community and it's also that you've actually got that one-on-one contact with people and say if someone tells you something of their like opinion or anything like that, you can use that in your assessment as primary evidence.

4.2 *'We Are Voices for Children': Presenting in Parliament*

Our second illustration relates to a specific event where a group of students presented a submission to the Select Committee in Parliament following their social action project in school. This case illustrates the integral role of the teacher, yet also the conviction and courage of students to take an active role in a Parliamentary process.

Pōhutukawa College is a medium-sized co-educational college in a relatively affluent community in a small urban centre. This school had less of a tradition of social action than Kahikatea College, but the teacher, Suzie, was keen to establish higher levels of student voice and participation in the school. To equip the students who arrived in year 13 without much prior experience of social action, Suzie supported their choice of issues by providing an initial list of six societal issues linked to national-level policy that they could potentially explore to align with curriculum requirements. She also encouraged their critical thinking and engagement through several 'hooks' that aimed to inspire students to get involved. She had also constructed some structured templates that included a list of evaluative questions (e.g. 'Does this issue affect many people or a few?') which students needed to work through to ensure their research and social action process was rigorous.

Students conducted some initial research on these issues to elicit information that would help them to decide which issue they would focus on. A group of five students decided to focus on a Bill before Parliament that sought to legislate for landlords to maintain a minimum standard for their rental properties. Called the *Healthy Homes Bill*, the then Leader of the Labour Party, Andrew Little, had drafted this Private Members' Bill and it had been selected by ballot for debate. The students worked as a group to research the background to this Bill, the conditions of housing in New Zealand today and, in particular, how children's health and well-being were being affected by growing up in poor quality housing. One of the group members, Katie, explained that while poor quality housing did not affect any of them directly, this issue 'stuck with us and knew we could help future leaders and children of New Zealand who do deal with this issue of poor quality housing. We are the voices for them'.

Using the information that they had gathered during their research, the group's social actions involved writing a letter to the Opposition Leader Andrew Little to explain their support for his Bill, collecting signatures on a petition to support the Bill and running a campaign to create greater awareness through gathering views from various levels of the school community (e.g. a workshop with a year 9 class). Later, this group of students became aware that the Bill had been drawn to go to the

Select Committee in August 2016. Suzie extended the formal assessment submission date to enable this group to add to their social action to include a formal submission to the Select Committee. Before becoming a teacher, Suzie had worked for the Select Committee Office so she encouraged these students to tick the box: ‘I will submit in person to the Select Committee’. Coincidentally, one of the students met Andrew Little at a Labour Party function in the region and he encouraged her to let him know if her group would be presenting at the Select Committee. Everyone was surprised and nervous when they were given a date and time to present their submission in person. With Suzie’s support, these students prepared their oral submission. Their school principal showed his support by also attending the Select Committee hearing.

Students described the process of presenting to the Select Committee as ‘very nerve-wracking. We weren’t exactly sure how it would go down’. Even the prestige of the buildings and the ‘number of people in suits’ was intimidating. As Conrad reflected following the submission:

A lot of the things that I said I thought that they were a little bit underwhelming, so to speak, because I didn’t feel as though I was quite professional enough for the occasion. Especially considering that I’m 17 and most of them are double my age ... more experienced and so on.

When reflecting on this experience, however, these students felt it was a highly positive experience as they received warm support from the then Members of Parliament Andrew Little and Jacinda Ardern (now Prime Minister of New Zealand); as Katie said ‘I could tell they loved having us there’. In addition, the chair of the Select Committee provided some encouraging feedback to them on the value of young people presenting their views in this forum, yet still asked the students some rigorous questions during their submission. This caused the students to subsequently express concern that they had not undertaken deep enough research into the issue. While at Parliament, the students and their teacher also got the opportunity to visit the then Labour Leader’s office and, as they were leaving the Parliament building, the students were interviewed by a reporter from a major daily newspaper. The students reported that they felt well supported by adults—especially their teacher, school principal and the aforementioned politicians. They felt the skills and knowledge that they developed during this learning would help them confidently undertake similar actions in their adult lives.

5 Discussion

Our analysis in these two illustrations is not intended to undermine or reduce the impact of young people’s actions. Instead, we agree with Fielding (2007) that there has been at times ‘too sharp and too exclusive a focus on the standpoints of young people’ (p. 304). This attention has celebrated young people’s participation, but often at the expense of recognising significant and powerful roles adults play—

especially in the context of regulated spaces such as schools (Bartos 2015; Fielding 2007; Wyness 2013). In both these examples, it was almost impossible to extricate the role of the teacher entirely at any stage of the social action process. Yet, in both examples, students had good levels of independence and autonomy over aspects such as their selection of social issues (with some guidance from the teacher), the nature of their actions (such as choosing to write a letter or petition), and their selection of community and government members they communicated with. Instead of analysing this as a process that was student-led or teacher-led as many participation models would have us do, the intersecting contributions of students and teachers and the relational sharing of power interested us.

Teachers were in the picture at all stages of the process and involved to a greater or lesser extent. While the level of their involvement may have waxed and waned through the process (see Mutch et al. 2016), this reflected a dynamic exchange state of power relations (Foucault 1980) which were mediated between teachers/adults and students. For example, Suzie's provision of a set of issues for students at Pōhutukawa College to choose from gave some structure to the students' choices. Yet this was balanced by giving students freedom to set up their plan of social action to suit their personal strengths and goals. Teachers also provided strategies for community engagement, such as linking to the library as a key site for interaction with the public at Kahikatea College, and opportunities to connect with key people in the community that built upon relationships that were not completely random. Teachers discussed how this process involved their letting go of power and control at times, to allow students to take risks and show initiative, while at other times intervening to ensure students had strong levels of learning and engagement. For example, Tina held a strong commitment to get students to disseminate their own knowledge and research to the wider community, so she worked hard to enhance her students' depth of understanding. Mitra (2005) describes this process as a balancing act that allows youth the space to stumble at times whilst also ensuring they succeed more often than they fail.

We can see that young people's participation in citizenship action and student voice is much more than an oppositional model of power in which adults must relinquish power in order for young people to participate. Instead, the story is much more complex. Critical theoretical approaches helped to reveal how teachers who held generally greater levels of power, authority and knowledge used this to equip and empower their students to greater levels of agency. For example, in the second case, the strategic knowledge held by Suzie about the Select Committee where she had worked gave the students far more confidence to go ahead and present their submission to the committee in person. Beyond the teachers, we were surprised to notice how many other adults also played a significant role in supporting and encouraging students. In the Select Committee case, students were encouraged by welcoming encounters with MPs Andrew Little and Jacinda Ardern which meant that despite the nerves, these students viewed this as a positive experience. Later, they recognised the value of this support as, whilst they felt intimidated by the place and process, they considered they could take such actions again in the future. The creation over many years of a school climate at Kahikatea College that supported

social action also demonstrates a type of power-sharing which equipped students' participation. What we want to highlight is that *due* to this highly regulated nature of schools and the power asymmetries that exist, a much greater focus on power sharing needs to occur. Teachers needed to actively share power to create opportunities for student participation and agency and enable a more meaningful citizenship experience.

An understanding of power as relational and dynamic through post-structural theory also helped to illustrate how both teachers and students enacted forms of resistance in order for greater levels of participation to occur. Whilst both colleges that feature in this chapter had supportive environments for student social action, there were still constraints imposed upon students, such as restrictions in leaving the school site at Kahikatea College, in this case, Tina's agency in finding ways for students to leave the school grounds at Kahikatea College. Power therefore was not something teachers held, and students did not, in a zero sum game where some have to 'lose' for others to 'win' (Foucault 1982); instead, social action was a *partnership* with commitment from both students and teachers that included, at times, creative and radical forms of resistance. If we view power as something that is exercised or an action, rather than only something which is held, we can also see how students themselves created spaces for agency and resistance (such as showing creativity, resilience, and courage as they connected with adults, including community members, MPs, etc. many years older than themselves) in order to generate new constellations of influence (Foucault 1980).

The cases discussed here and others from our study (e.g. see Wood et al. 2017) demonstrate that student voice and agency need to be understood as a negotiation between young people, young people and their peers, and between school and community members, in dynamic ways:

In each of these ways of working the power relations are different, thus not only enabling or prohibiting the contributions of one side of the partnership but also influencing the potential synergy of the joint work, thereby affecting the possibility of both adults and young people being able to listen to and learn with and from each other. (Fielding 2011, p. 67)

Fielding (2006) refers to this as a kind of 'radical collegiality' (p. 308), which involves going beyond a reciprocity of topic and technique to teachers and young people learning from each other in holistic, co-constructive and collaborative partnership, rather than one party using the other for often covert ends. These types of processes and relationships must therefore involve a certain amount of critical training or education as students and staff engaging in student voice work must have the theoretical tools to understand the pervasive effects of power and knowledge in order to resist these (Taylor and Robinson 2009). A useful starting point for schools contemplating student voice work could be to use these two case studies for discussion and critical application to their own contexts.

In conclusion, we return to the models of participation discussed earlier that help frame this research. These models are useful as they provide a way to analyse and evaluate participatory and student voice projects and we have used them extensively in our own research and teaching. These models, however, do require reading

with a great deal more complexity than they are normally given. Our intention is not to dismiss the use of these models, but instead to recognise their limitations and the need to more fully engage with prior landscapes of power that operate in school spaces and the highly dynamic state of intergenerational interplay in participatory projects. In fact, a close reading of both Hart's (1992) and Fielding's (2007) models arrives at a very similar point to our argument in this chapter—that is, that the highest rung is not student autonomy as many expect. Instead, Hart outlines a position of 'child-initiated shared decisions with adults' and Fielding describes a 'pattern of partnership' between adults and students that is intergenerational and involves learning together as a living democracy.

We recognise that we still have a long way to go to truly experience radical collegiality in schools, but nonetheless we can see some of this in our study. Recognising the highly complex hierarchies of power within highly regulated school sites and the difficulty of enabling students to experience a genuine experience of student voice and citizenship, we affirm Hart's (1992) statement when he says: 'We need people who are able to respond to the subtle indicators of energy and compassion in teenagers' (p. 14). Our research confirms and explains the importance of student voice in education, involving learning together as a living democracy, towards a dynamic notion of partnership, where we argue that power-sharing is key to student participation and student voice.

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Chapter 12

Teachers and Power in Student Voice: ‘Finger on the Pulse, not Children Under the Thumb’



Emily Nelson

Abstract Theorising power is a key aspect of theorising student voice. However, with teachers increasingly committing to enact radical collegiality with their students, power theorising is needed that accounts for what student voice requires of teachers, and how teachers act powerfully to position students with substantive influence in pedagogical decisions. Drawing from one empirical study, this chapter demonstrates how three teachers partnered with their students to share pedagogical decision-making in their classes and engage with their students as agents of their professional learning around good teaching. Findings suggest three imperatives drove teacher action: (1) constructing new identities in interaction with students that accorded students status and influence; (2) expanding and opening up the pedagogical decision-making agenda to students; and (3) appropriating current educational discourses to their student voice goals. These imperatives represent also teachers deploying power productively to enact partnerships with students. Within an education system largely designed to preserve status quo arrangements of power, theorising power productively is vital to take account of the complexity of power relations involved when teachers commit to radical collegiality with their students in classrooms.

1 Student Voice and Power

Student voice refers to activity that involves students and their perspectives in educational debate, design and decision-making. In practice, student voice occurs through a diverse range of activities: consultation by adults to amplify the ‘missing’ voice of students on schooling (Beattie 2012); participation initiatives to include students actively in improvement projects relevant to their experiences of learning

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and school; and more recently, partnership orientations that engage students as leaders and decision-makers with teachers (Healey et al. 2014). These orientations differ in the degree to which they enable substantive student influence. As Lundy (2007) argued, the depth in the student voice concept is easily diminished. She contends that student voice work, as a participation right for students (United Nations 1989) and not a privilege bestowed by adults (Lundy 2007), must: value students' unique perspectives; provide students support to form their views; provide space and audience for the expression of these perspectives; and lead to substantive student influence in determining actions that result from their participation.

All student voice activity is saturated with power. Thomson (2011) argues:

'Voice' is inherently concerned with questions of power and knowledge, with how decisions are made, who is included and excluded and who is advantaged and disadvantaged as a result (p. 21).

Different orientations to student voice configure power relations in particular ways. Consultation creates opportunities for students to share their views, a vital starting point, but does not necessarily shift their status beyond that of informant. Participation initiatives actively involve students with each other and alongside educators on issues and challenges related to schooling but, lasting shifts in influence are not necessarily implied. Partnership orientations, on the other hand, challenge educators to engage in ongoing influential decision-making relationships with students (Toshalis and Nakkula 2012). However, even within partnerships, the agendas on which students are invited to collaborate with teachers are often constrained by adults, with substantive student involvement in decisions around pedagogy within the classroom a rarity (Lundy and Cook-Sather 2016; Thomson 2012). I am interested in how students can act as radical 'agents of adult professional learning' (Fielding 2008, p. 9) as teachers of young adolescent students. I am also interested in how teachers and students can work together to co-design classroom pedagogy as governance partners (Nelson 2014; Thomson and Gunter 2007), that is, making pedagogical decisions for the good of the whole class. The classroom focus links to Robinson's (2014) contention that student voice should 'pervade life inside as well as outside the classroom' (p. 19) and involve re-conceptualising student and teacher roles. The research I report on in this chapter takes up these challenged partnership orientations to student voice.

Teachers play an important role in enacting student voice in classrooms, especially in enacting student voice as student/teacher partnership. Such work positions teachers and students in a mutually constitutive relationship with any changes in status for students producing implications and changes for teachers also. Lundy and Cook-Sather (2016) argue that 'one of the most influential relationships that children have is the one with their teachers' (p. 265) and even though this relationship is characterised by adult power and authority, this should not be exercised 'in a way that undermines a person's right to be treated with dignity and equality' (p. 265). Positioning students as pedagogical partners will necessarily involve teachers and involve the development of a radical collegiality (Fielding 2001) promoting more democratic engagement between students and teachers. As Fielding (2001) argues,

excluding consideration of teachers and their voice in student voice work 'is a serious mistake ... The latter is a necessary condition of the former: staff are unlikely to support developments that encourage positive ideals for students which thereby expose the poverty of their own participatory arrangements' (p. 106). In this chapter, I take up this challenge, drawing on one empirical study to examine what student voice required of teachers and how power dynamics played out in the process of enacting student/teacher pedagogical partnerships in practice.

Power itself is a contested notion (Robinson and Taylor 2013). In the student voice field, an assumption of power as repressive has underpinned scholarship (Taylor and Robinson 2009). From a repressive view, power functions in a 'power over' relationship to maintain the dominance of some social actors over others through 'coercion, domination, manipulation, authority and persuasion' (Taylor and Robinson 2009, p. 166). Power is viewed as finite, a resource that some have more of than others and 'presumes a world of subjects (teachers) and objects (students) arranged in a hierarchical relation in which only the former have power' (Taylor and Robinson 2009, p. 165). Student voice becomes a project to emancipate students from hierarchical and unequal relations through teachers relinquishing power and balancing unequal relations (Mitra 2008). However, this view assumes that power is only repressive, that teachers are interested mostly in maintaining their status quo dominance, and that power relations can be escaped. A repressive view of power is increasingly challenged as insufficient to explain the nuanced and complex effects of power (Bahou 2011; Bragg 2007), especially within the dynamics involved in teacher/student partnership relationships. As Lundy and Cook-Sather (2016) argue, 'aligning the rights of teachers and children can be in the interests of both, and that children's rights are not a zero-sum game in which teachers inevitably lose out' (p. 272). Lukes (2005) contends that even within power over approaches, 'power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity' (p. 109). However, even when power is conceptualised as operating beyond a zero-sum framework (Lundy and Cook-Sather 2016) in student voice, it continues to be largely conceptualised as domination (see for example Robinson and Taylor 2013) (for exceptions see Bahou 2011 and Mayes 2018).

2 Power as Productive: What are the Possibilities?

Increasingly, focus is applied in student voice to what different views of power can 'do'. Mayes et al. (2017) contend that any theory of power should be interrogated for 'what it makes visible and what it masks, what particular ways of thinking about power help us to describe and explain, and what exceeds or escapes from these theories' (para 1).

A repressive view of power draws attention to problematic issues of domination but masks the ways in which power creates material effects, some of these positive. The problem this poses student voice is that if power is only viewed as repressive,

then teachers' participation in student voice can only be read through this lens and a repressive view does not explain generatively what teachers are doing when they participate in student voice to build partnerships with students. Opening up to positive aspects of power, I argue, is especially important in student voice initiatives when increasingly, teachers participate in student voice, not to minimise students' influence but to expand it.

Foucault (1977) offers a way forward beyond the repressive binary, arguing power is productive in its effects:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces; it produces reality (p. 194).

If substantial student influence is the aspiration, power can be deployed to produce this reality. Foucault also emphasises how power circulates relationally, diffuse and dispersed without individual author (Gaventa 2003), 'ubiquitous, and appear[ing] in every moment of social relations' (p. 1). From a productive view of power, power relations are inescapable. Relations of domination are still possible effects of power and some relations are perpetually asymmetric (Foucault 1988). However, Foucault argued that even within perpetual asymmetries, 'margins of liberty' or the power to act differently in your own or others' interests, do exist. Power shifts to a project to minimise domination (Foucault 1988) towards producing desired social outcomes.

A final aspect of power relevant to this chapter is that power circulates through discourses. Discourses constitute 'ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities or kinds of people' (Gee 2012, p. 3). Discourses both shape social actors' identities and are shaped by them. Student voice is enacted within social contexts already populated with discourses, saturated with power that influence the 'kinds of people' students and teachers can be. Perhaps the most important challenge of student voice is to push back on discourses that position teachers as more able to identify students' 'best interests', and through this resistance, expand the possibilities for student influence in framing their own interests.

Foucault describes how discourses produce subjects in particular ways. In this research, the term 'identity' is used in preference to 'subject' taking up Burr's (2003) contention that the interaction between subject positions and discourses is 'the process by which our identities are produced' (Burr 2003, p. 110). The term positioning is also utilised to look at how 'people are subject to discourse and how this subjectivity is negotiated in interpersonal life' (Burr 2003, p. 116). In this negotiation, identities are either accepted, countered or resisted in interaction with others.

A productive view of power in student voice opens up possibilities for analysing how teachers deploy their positional authority, albeit asymmetrical, to enact decision-making partnerships with students. A productive view requires us to consider a multiplicity of possible relations, how power operates in visible, hidden and discursive ways (Lukes 2005) and acknowledging the nested nature of teachers'

work within broader educational and political systems that constrain their autonomy (Taylor and Robinson 2009). For instance, Bourke and Loveridge (2016) identify how teachers pay attention to student voice that relates to their curriculum imperative and Rudduck (2007) contends that teachers, as key gatekeepers of change, take account of student perspectives they perceive as general rather than personal, and feasible to action. As orientations to student voice shift towards partnership, a concomitant focus on teachers and the potential they bring to the challenge of enacting student voice is needed, whilst acknowledging also that for teachers, student voice work represents a significant, and at times risky, professional aspiration.

3 Teachers and Students Collaborate as Pedagogical Partners

This section reports on research between three teachers and their students in one Decile 8 intermediate school. The research school promoted student voice as part of its philosophy for educating young adolescent students (aged 10–14). The project utilised a collaborative action research framework (Collins 2004) to bring teachers and students together to design and enact pedagogy in their classrooms that aligned with the students' perceptions of good teaching. Collaborative action research enabled students and teachers to collaborate towards desired social change (McTaggart 1994), in this case positioning students as pedagogical partners with their teachers. Participatory methods, coupled with reflective opportunities, enabled teachers to participate as learners (Borko 2004) and students to participate as agents of teachers' professional learning (Fielding 2008).

Full ethics approval was gained from the author's institution for the study, and permission was granted by the Board of Trustees for interested teachers and students to participate. The research design was presented to teachers at a staff meeting, and they were invited to indicate their interest to participate via email. Three teachers of years 7 and 8 (ages 11–13) composite classes agreed to participate. The teacher in Class A had been involved in student voice research previously, the teacher in Class B was interested in enacting student-led learning and the teacher in Class C identified student voice as a current professional ideal that she wanted to learn to enact. All were experienced teachers, having taught for between six and 15 years each, and all worked together within the same teaching syndicate. The three teachers chose the names of their first pets as pseudonyms and are referred to in this chapter as: Chicken (Class A), Betty (Class B) and Lincoln (Class C).

The central question guiding the research was: How might teachers utilise their students' perceptions of good teaching to co-construct responsive and reciprocal pedagogy with them in their classrooms? This question was explored iteratively across three terms of the school year through three Cycles of Action: (1) establishing starting points; (2) exploring wider perspectives; and (3) taking action.

Findings from each cycle informed the next. Each cycle comprised a mix of research and pedagogical intervention. The teachers met with me in individual planning and reflection sessions (seven in total) across the three cycles of action and together in five collaborative action research sessions at the beginning and end of each cycle. These sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Students participated in slightly different ways. The majority of students in the three classes (approximately 90 students) participated in the study primarily as part of their classroom programme. They were made aware that their teachers were participating in a research project that would involve them also as pedagogical partners. Consent was gained from students (and their parents) to participate in the research on this basis, or to opt out. The 2–3 students in each class who chose to opt out did not have any of their contributions to class action research sessions included as data.

A student research group (SRG) of 12 members, four from each class, was established to act as an advisory group to the participating teachers and myself throughout the research. The opportunity to join the SRG was offered to all students through a presentation about the role of the group and the activities that participating would involve across the school year. Despite informal indications of high student interest, low initial sign-up numbers through lunchtime introductory sessions necessitated a change in recruitment strategy. Each of the three teachers approached 4–6 students who had informally expressed interest. This approach was more successful. Twelve students consented (with parental approval) to participate. The SRG comprised four male and eight female students, a mix of five year 7 and seven year 8 students, two of whom identified as Māori and 11 who identified as New Zealand European (one student identified as both Māori and New Zealand European).

Each SRG member selected their own pseudonym for the project (Nespor 2000); these are used in this chapter. This process generated much creative expression, with names invented or borrowed from popular culture. Only one student pseudonym ‘Barak Obama’ was changed through negotiation on the basis this might cause confusion in any US-based publications. The student adopted ‘Captain Underpants’ instead.

In Action Cycle One, the SRG completed a photograph assignment. Photo elicitation (Capello 2005) is particularly suited as a participatory method with young people. It reverses adult researcher/student power relations by shifting the locus of control in data generation and data analysis to participants [although this remains problematic in practice at times, with students tending to defer to adult researchers (Rose 2016)]. Each SRG member used a disposable camera to take a series of photographs over a week that represented their perceptions of good teaching. Student-led photograph elicitation interviews (Capello 2005) followed, enabling the students to assign meaning to these images as the first analysis (Collier 2001). The participating teachers analysed the 12 elicitation interview transcripts generated utilising a constant comparative approach (Silverman 2005) during a collaborative workshop. This process generated an emergent framework of students’ perceptions of good teaching.

In Action Cycle Two each teacher shared the emergent framework from Action Cycle One with their class. This sharing generated further discussion and pedagogical intervention with a focus particular to each class. In Class A, the students designed a 'Utopia' home learning project to begin exploring more creative and integrated home learning (but still designed by the teacher). In Class B, the students and teacher designed 'successful learner' goal setting records to explore more relevant self-assessment and reflection practice. In Class C, the students produced 'Me as a Learner' visual maps to teach their teacher about themselves as learners. In this way, the broad findings from Action Cycle One were situated, and deepened in the specific contexts of the three classes. This meant that the perceptions of the 12 SRG students informed their teachers' learning about good teaching and acted as a starting point for broader student and teacher exploration of the topic.

Action Cycle Three culminated in ten-week class action research projects. The focus of each project emerged from the previous cycles of action. Class A decided to re-design the home learning programme because the existing school-wide approach did not suit the students' (or the teacher's) ideas of engaging home work. Class B decided to revitalise reflection practice, frustrated by the existing formal and individualised process for reflecting on learning. Class C enacted student-led learning through an inquiry into film-making. Project sessions were integrated into each class programme.

In Action Cycle Three, the teachers were asked to video record three snapshots of classroom practice across the project to illustrate: (1) desired student involvement; (2) teacher actions that opened up opportunities for student voice; and (3) opportunities missed. These snapshots were shared and reflected on collaboratively with the other participating teachers. In addition to the video snapshots, data comprised eight transcripts of teacher planning and reflective sessions (including transcripts of reflections on video snapshots), seven transcripts of class SRG focus group discussions (two for each class and one combined at the end of the ten weeks), student work samples and classroom documentation (class learning stories, charts and photographs) related to each project.

Findings in the projects focused on enacting the pedagogical partnerships iteratively, and on re-vitalising aspects of classroom practice mutually important to students and teachers. This situated knowledge was acted upon immediately in the form of next steps in each project. The explicit analysis of power dynamics was conducted retrospectively once the research had ended but was prompted by the reflections of both students and teachers. This process involved firstly, constructing a chronological account of each class action research project and secondly, overlaying this with a discourse analysis. Firstly, the data analysis focused on 'how did teachers take account of students' perceptions of good teaching and engagement to co-construct responsive pedagogy with them?' Key events of each project, and the activities within these (Gee and Green 1998), were identified and collated as a chronological case account.

Secondly, discourse analysis tools were applied to the video snapshot data and transcripts of reflective teacher sessions and SRG sessions to examine how power was deployed through discourse and practice. Foucault's techniques of power

(see Gore 2002) were applied to identify processes of norming, classifying and regulating conduct. Lukes' (2005) three dimensions of power, as visible contests, control of agendas and engendering consent to be governed through discourses were applied also. Additionally, a theoretically eclectic toolbox (Thornberg 2010) of discourse analysis constructs enabled further examination of the interplay between authoritative discourses (official messages most commonly controlled by teachers) and dialogic discourses (grassroots discourses that emerge from students) (Scott et al. 2006), and patterns of discursive interaction between students and teachers and how these shifted across each project (Brodie 2010). Insights from this analysis are presented in the next section.

4 Imperatives for Influential Pedagogical Partnerships

Three 'imperatives' drove teacher action when enacting the pedagogical decision-making partnerships with their students emerged during the classroom research projects:

1. Creating new identities to position students as partners;
2. Expanding the pedagogical decision-making agenda students could participate in; and
3. Appropriating current professional discourses to enact student voice aspirations.

These imperatives comprise key pedagogical interventions of each project and, taken together, represent how teachers deployed power productively to position their students as partners. In the next three sections, I introduce and illustrate each of these imperatives with data from the Action Cycle Three class projects.

4.1 *Enacting Identities for Pedagogical Partnership*

New student voice identities, related to each project focus, enabled teachers and students to work together as decision-making partners. New norms were established to normalise (Gore 2002) students and teachers working as partners together.

In Class A, designing and implementing a new home learning programme was proposed as a design challenge for the class. The students wanted to leap straight to solutions but Chicken insisted on a systematic and collaborative process that involved students as 'researchers':

I was looking at my ladder of pupil participation and I was thinking that, the kids are definitely right up the ladder, they are 'pupils as researchers' 'cos I thought they were involved in the inquiry and they've got an active role in the decision making, they're not just in the inquiry, they're actually involved in the decision making.

Students working together as researchers, using *The Ladder of Pupil Participation* (Flutter and Rudduck 2004) as a heuristic, provided an identity through which students could participate as agentic, and influential decision-makers with each other and with their teacher.

In Class B, the teacher, engaged her students as ‘co-triallers’ to revitalise reflection on learning practice. Collectively the students enacted this identity by contributing possible strategies of reflection to trial as a starting point:

Now we’ve brainstormed, we’ve done like a brainstorm of how we can reflect and we’ve picked the ones we’re going to trial. And we had to do like starters like overall and how I thought about it or like did I enjoy it and some other stuff. (Sandy Dee)

Levels of student agency as co-trailers were high. The use of the collective ‘we’ in the quote above suggests collective student ownership of the reflection project. Together the teacher and students trialled four reflection strategies, applying each to learning within the curriculum. The class also reflected collectively and voted on the efficacy of each reflection strategy against criteria they negotiated with the teacher and with each other.

Finally, in Class C student-led learning was enacted through a movie-making inquiry. SRG member Captain Underpants described student-led learning as ‘We kinda get to choose what we do in class without it getting chosen for us’.

The students chose to organise the curriculum in the ten weeks around an integrated theme. The teacher decided inquiry learning would form the pedagogical vehicle for this. The inquiry quickly morphed into the students making a horror movie. The students positioned themselves as ‘movie-makers’, drawing on norms of the film industry to negotiate the structure and roles they required:

We voted as a class on the producers and then the producers chose the Director, which is me, and then at the moment we’re like choosing all the other roles for people. (Captain Underpants)

Lincoln positioned himself as a consultant to the student-led movie studio. SRG descriptions indicate that participating as movie makers invoked a sense of real ownership and responsibility for the movie:

It’s quite a big responsibility, ‘cos like when we’ve got our parts you’ve got to be always ready to do it (Hityu) ... If the movie looks bad then it wouldn’t be good to put out so it becomes a waste of two terms. (Captain Underpants)

Each identity developed for the student voice projects necessitated teachers working co-constructively with students. These identities also positioned teachers as learners and students as agents of teachers’ learning:

I became a learner. I became someone, I wasn’t the person with all the answers. It was good because when I did pose questions they **did** have answers and they were able to justify what they thought ... I enjoyed that. I enjoyed that and I just let go the reins. (Chicken)

This shift in student/teacher power relations was described by one SRG member as:

Student voice. You actually get to do the same things the teacher does, but you also get to do a few things that you want to do as well. So it's like the teacher and you actually doing it together, you're having student voice and you're planning it. (Shortstuff)

Power was shared through these new identities and their attendant norms, and created new possibilities for student and teacher action. The new ways of working enabled teachers and students to be different kinds of people (Gee 2012) whilst maintaining more conventional teacher/student patterns of relating in other areas of the class programme.

4.2 *Expanding the Decision-Making Agenda*

The second imperative driving teacher action involved expanding the classroom decision-making agenda to include students in decisions teachers would usually make themselves in the 'best interests' of the class. This most explicitly involved the students defining the key constructs of each project.

In Class B, the students iteratively identified the criteria on which reflection strategies would be adopted as enjoyable, useful, time efficient, and later in the project, supportive of student/student collaboration.

Some people were going to do these skits to reflect on [learning] but it was going to take too long, it was going to take a couple of days [Tim Bob Jim: to reflect on the skit] and you can't reflect on a skit. (Sandy Dee)

Betty described the dialogic emergence of these criteria from class discussions on another occasion:

Stop motion [clay animation], it would have taken weeks to do, and so a kid was like, 'but like that would take us all term' and so we decided that [time effectiveness] would have to be one of the criteria. (Betty)

Along with students gaining licence to make decisions teachers would normally make themselves, the spaces for this licence to be enacted were often enacted through collective class discussion forums or pedagogical strategies that required students to talk together. The 'potential for student collaboration' criterion emerged in this way, when the students were encouraged through a think, pair, share (TPS) strategy to reflect on the value of discussing their self-assessment of their performance in their class speech. They worked in pairs with a continuum ranging from 'black terrible' to 'blue amazing' to rate their speech performance. The 'share' aspect of TPS enabled increased student talk in the whole class 'share' aspect of the discussion. This collective talk also made student thinking more available to the teacher, ensuring the take-up of students' grassroots discourse around the importance of collaborative reflection opportunities into the thinking of the teacher. One student reflected: 'if your class knows how you feel about yourself, when it comes

to judging yourself, they can like tell you'. The class then incorporated this student-preferred criterion to adapt all subsequent reflection strategies trialled.

In Class C, the roles, focus and parameters of the movie were devised by the class and the student-led production team. As Lincoln noted:

They are wanting to be here and involved in it, which is good, so they are all really owning it at the moment. (Lincoln)

Chicken reinforced this governance level of decision-making:

It's more than creating activities ... they're owning all the criteria, they've made it [...] They decide[d] ... 'cos it's through their feedback, well they've owned it, they owned everything from the ranking, the justifications to the rankings, to the whole [home learning] grid.

The SRG students enjoyed the influence this expanded decision-making realm opened up to them with one noting 'You get a say in what you're doing and it's cool'. (Shortstuff)

At times, expanding the decision-making agenda required teachers to hear uncomfortable truths (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2015) communicated in student reflections on aspects of the project innovations. As Betty reflected:

I don't know, when [feedback] is specifically about the teacher, then I start to feel under pressure. I know there is good stuff in there too, don't get me wrong but when it is black and white and in your face that this is what you don't do, you sit there thinking, 'well who else thinks that?' 'Are there thirty kids that think that about me?' Even though I have worked my butt off to do that, you know it is just a hard thing.

In contrast, the SRG students valued the opportunity to communicate feedback to their teachers. Honey Bunny summarised this: 'I liked it 'cos we got our say and the teacher listened to what we wanted'. This tension between student voice as generalised or personal feedback highlighted the ongoing vulnerability pedagogical partnerships produced at times for the teachers in relation to their own professional identities.

4.3 Appropriating Discourses for Student Voice Action

The third imperative driving teacher action involved appropriating existing educational discourses as familiar starting points for positioning students as decision-making partners. The three teachers appropriated discourses that promoted licence for this, such as: student-led learning promoted within inquiry learning, assessment for learning and enacting students as 'confident, connected actively involved, life-long learners' (Ministry of Education 2007, p. 7). For instance, in the Class A home learning project, defining home learning was linked to developing students' assessment capability (Ministry of Education n.d.). Students defined 'high quality work' and the criteria that would indicate success (see Fig. 1). They also

Fig. 1 Finalised home learning success criteria

Learning Intention

We are learning
to...

- Design and implement our own home learning

Success Criteria

We'll know we are effective when our home learning reflects these points

- Structure-has a theme or focus
- Full of relevant facts/knowledge which is easy to understand
- Planning meets an individual or class need
- The work reflects the criteria set, relevant content and best work.
- The presentation has words which describe, has clear writing, layout including borders and meets the criteria set.

evaluated their proposed home learning programme plans against these agreed criteria.

This assessment for learning discourse assisted students and teachers to transform student voice aspirations into practice.

In the Class B reflection trial, SRG members explicitly linked the ownership potential advocated in student voice to inquiry learning. When asked about the opportunity to influence pedagogy that inquiry learning offered them, Timmy Star noted ‘That’s pretty much what inquiry is, we go and look for the information, not sit down and read a book.’

The inquiry framework facilitated student ownership and engagement similarly in Class C. Lincoln describes this effect:

I came back into class and I found that they [Production Team] had done selection criteria for the students that were going to be acting out roles. And they even had little cards for the kids to fill out with information for their audition ... I didn’t tell them at all, they just decided that. That was quite good.

The inquiry also introduced students to ways of operating a film studio, which at least initially, supported the production team to lead the class, an opportunity welcomed by the students, ‘it’s cool, people your same age being in charge of you’ (Lulabelle).

The influence of circulating accountability discourses meant that each of the three teachers reported locating their student voice projects in ‘low-stakes’ areas of the class programme: home learning, reflection on learning, and inquiry learning. The teachers noted that priority areas like literacy received the most external surveillance and offered the least scope for partnering with students:

With literacy, there is a massive emphasis on it like staff-wide. And all these tests and we get all this stuff through at the end of the year and you see in black and white. You see where your kids have moved to, and not moved to, and for me, it is kind of scary. If I gave them too much leeway and then they didn’t meet those test targets then your room looks bad. (Betty)

Restricting the participation agenda for students to low-stakes curriculum areas was perceived as not ideal but still valuable by teachers:

I think it is good that we have the inquiry and the PE where we can branch out and have some of the co-construction. And the kids, I don’t think they mind that they don’t get as much say as long as they feel as a whole that they are getting a say. (Betty)

Interestingly, no SRG members commented on the projects’ locations in these low-stakes areas. The focus of each project was in some way important to the students.

In addition to the educational discourses teachers appropriated to enact their pedagogical partnerships with students into practice, they also appropriated a student voice discourse around power sharing as zero-sum at times. They described ‘handing over’ or ‘stepping back’ to promote student-led learning. Lincoln characterised his identity as ‘consultant’ in the movie project in this way:

That is when I step back. At the moment I am just working as a facilitator. So there are students who are above me in class and they get to make the final decisions.

Betty linked stepping back as a response to the capability of her students to work independently of her:

These guys can be let go to do a lot more and you can step back and watch from a little bit back. (Betty)

Chicken linked promoting student voice as ‘letting go’, linking this explicitly with power:

Teachers letting go – what is it? I just thought of this the other night “finger on the pulse but not children under the thumb” [...] And for some it’s really difficult because it’s about the power – they want to know exactly what’s going on and sometimes kids go off on tangents and you have to let them.

This perspective is suggestive of a productive view of power, with power circulating as a pulse rather than as repression, associated with students being ‘under the thumb’ of teachers.

Reflecting at the end of the project, Chicken highlighted the importance of pedagogical scaffolds and a gradual release of responsibility to students:

And it's not going to happen overnight, like I knew getting into it I thought, just little steps each time because it's not the sort of thing you can go "hey guys, so you tell me you didn't like the home learning, let's change it", there had to be a process you had to go through.

This perspective indicates that for teachers to support students as partners require more active engagement with them to build their decision-making capacity, especially within a governance realm associated conventionally with teachers.

5 Student Ambivalence to Being Involved in Classroom Decision-Making

Student voice partnerships that pervade the classroom (Robinson 2014), whilst engaging students in new partnership roles with each other and with their teachers, also disrupt conditions of schooling that work well for some students (Cremin et al. 2011). In this research, SRG students reported ambivalence around partnering with teachers in practice even when they had espoused a desire for more influence in pedagogical decision-making earlier in the project. Drawing on Hyde's (1992) typology of categories that typify students' responses to being involved in curriculum negotiation (Thankful and amazed, Suspicious but open, Contempt and Dismay) the students discussed the tensions inherent for them in partnering with their teachers.

Those students who identified with being 'thankful and amazed' reflected that being encouraged to make pedagogical decisions indicated the teachers' respect for their decision-making capability:

I'm thankful and amazed because our teacher obviously respects us enough to make our own decisions and trust us, what we can do. (Captain Underpants)

Opportunities to make learning choices deepened students' engagement: 'well it's kind of better learning what you want to learn because you're more engaged and you get to learn more' (Asheley Green). One student linked decision-making with getting a job in the future: 'that's what's going to help us learn, in the future, when we want to get jobs'. (Lulabelle)

For others, partnering with teachers generated suspicion combined with openness to the possibilities the change this new positioning might generate:

Usually like the teachers say 'oh we'll do this' and it sounds really fun and we're like 'okay'. Then, they never get round to it or they forget about it or they just don't do it. (Hityu)

Participating in pedagogical decision-making with teachers also brought students into a pedagogical decision-making relationship with each other which was not always welcomed. As Tim Bob Jim contended: 'sometimes they just say stupid stuff which isn't helpful'.

Although open to increased influence in the classroom, students discussed the importance of teachers setting the learning direction. One student contended that if

the teacher did not set the learning direction, the students would not know what to do, arguing ‘[they’re] a teacher not a sit-around-and-watch-us-er’ (Flippinschnip). This student-generated identity for teachers was reinforced by Honey Bunny who argued:

They’re the teachers ... because they went to university and got their degree so they are teachers, that’s their job, they come here to teach us and we come here to learn ... we shouldn’t be the ones that say what we should do all the time.

The SRG students promoted balance between teacher direction and student autonomy as a feature of good teaching and ideal student/teacher positioning:

Sometimes I like to have like the teacher telling us what to do and sometimes I like to do my own thing, but I wouldn’t like to have it all the teacher telling us what to do, and I wouldn’t like to have it all like we want to do. (Bubbles)

6 Accounting Productively for Teachers and Power in Student Voice

Teachers created pedagogical partnerships with students by deploying their positional authority productively to create identities that normalised students as pedagogical decision-makers. The identities, in turn, generated local student voice discourses for each project. Foucault (1980) refers to power as local solutions to local challenges. In this research, the class projects were focused on re-vitalising one aspect of pedagogy of mutual concern to students and teachers. In this respect, the identities created local discourses of student voice, with their attendant norms and practices, that could be taken up in the class action research project sessions to enact students’ preferences of good teaching in partnership.

Expanding the decision-making realm that students could participate in involved creating new spaces in the class programme for the projects and involved students in governance-level decisions. Expanding the agenda also involved the teachers making themselves subject to the views of students in the decision-making process. This was not an abdication of their responsibility as educators, but a commitment to a robust dialogic process where teachers engaged discursively to understand students’ thinking, deepen students’ understanding of their own thinking, and at times, acquiesce to student viewpoints.

To co-construct responsive pedagogy with students as partners, the teachers also appropriated educational discourses that circulate in the contemporary realm of education, putting these to work to position students with substantive pedagogical influence. The discourses of assessment for learning, inquiry learning and 21st century learning provided familiar starting points for action in the three projects and offered practical ways to shift power relations.

New positioning as decision-making partners changed the conversation and questions teachers and students considered together (Yonezawa and Jones 2009)

and how they related over an extended timeframe. However, these new ‘radical roles’ (Fielding and Moss 2011) and students’ ambivalent responses to them ‘are evidence of the multiplicity of reactions that are possible in these situations and the complexity of identity work in student voice’ (Mayes and Groundwater-Smith 2013, p. 8). This ambivalence perhaps is to be expected in a student voice project embedded within an educational and societal context where neo-liberal discourses are entrenched. I interpret students’ ambivalence as an indication that partnering with teachers also involves students partnering with each other, due to the collective and collaborative activity that is invoked. Student perspectives around this co-constructive relationship with peers need further investigation. At times, their perspectives suggest this opportunity to know and be known by peers is valued by students, and at other times, collaboration is identified as disruptive to ways of working that students prefer. As well, the student reflections indicate the need for an overall configuration of power in student voice that continues to value the professional expertise teachers bring to pedagogy, supported by an increased focus on teachers supporting student capacity building (Nelson 2017) and characterised by ‘finger on the pulse’ engagement rather than ‘students under the thumb’.

In this study, analysis of power relations indicated that rather than act to minimise students’ influence in order to maintain their status quo dominance, as might be expected from a repressive view of power, the teachers used their resources (identity, agendas, strategies and discourses) to enact real influence for/with their students. Partnering with students at times was not easy and involved teachers engaging with uncomfortable truths and negotiating ongoing accountability expectations that made them vulnerable. Within a broader system, designed increasingly for teachers to enact performative accountability, students participating with teachers as pedagogical partners remain simultaneously transformational and problematic (Quinn and Owen 2016). Robinson (2016) raises ‘cautionary concerns’ that must be addressed around power in student voice including ‘school practices unwittingly reinforcing the school’s prevailing cultural norms’ (p. 87) and ‘topics central to school policy and organisation not being open to negotiation’ (p. 88). These concerns were relevant in this study where the interventions of each class aimed at better reflecting students’ preferences of good teaching and challenged totalising school expectations of conformity. The students in Class A were not free to dispense with home learning, the students in Class B were not free to dispense with reflecting on learning, and the students in Class C had to engage in a class inquiry. The teachers were not free to dispense with these aspects either. These pedagogical foci were important to the philosophy and pedagogical approach of the school, and linked to circulating accountability discourses. However, the interaction between these circulating discourses and the pedagogy negotiated at a local level by participating teachers and their students rendered these negotiated interventions risky for teachers.

As Mayes et al. (2017) note, ‘any attempt to unwind conventional power hierarchies is always already inflected with power relations that dynamically shift and change’ (para 6). Attending to the multiplicity of power relations involves recognising what student voice requires of teachers, as well as the productive role they

can play in the entangled activity of student voice in practice. This is especially important where student voice pervades classrooms and pedagogy and is enacted over extended timeframes.

Teachers in this research committed to work with students as decision-making partners, a challenge identified as new for all of them. Their attention to identity and positioning, expanding the decision-making agenda and appropriating discourses carve out opportunities for other educators to attend to when planning for radical student/teacher partnerships and reflexively interrogating their current practice. Their example demonstrates what can be achieved by putting unequal and persistently asymmetrical teacher/student power relations to work to enhance student status and influence, whilst acknowledging also the structural responsibility placed on teachers for student learning in schools.

This chapter has focused on power in student voice, but from the teachers' perspective. This may appear counter-intuitive and one-sided in a field where the inclusion of students in making decisions in their own educational interests is at issue. However, if teachers are vital to the success of student voice in classrooms, then we need to engage with, and honour how teachers deploy power productively to foster student/teacher pedagogical partnerships, enacting these with students into radical reality.

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