

**BRIMBANK LIVE: Young People of Brimbank Using Community Radio to Create Sites  
and Narrate Stories of Resistance**

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## **Abstract**

Young people of Brimbank, in Melbourne (Naarm), report experiences of discrimination and exclusion in community spaces, and are often subjected to dominant narratives that conflate and paint them as problems. This thesis focuses on the curation of and engagement in a program called *Brimbank LIVE* which was used to address and respond to structural and symbolic forms of violence faced by the young people of Brimbank. The *Brimbank LIVE* program was supported by Sydenham Neighbourhood House (SNH), and enabled young people from Brimbank to create a youth-centred community radio station and engage in crafting radio content about their lives and perspectives which they showcased on their own radio shows. The aim of this research was to understand the types of stories young people produce through radio-making, and examine how these stories may challenge dominant framings that often misrepresent and homogenise young people. It also sought to explore how these forms of violence can be counteracted through the participatory meaning-making practices of community radio. Data was collected through focus groups, interviews, participant observations, and radio archives from nine of the young people participating in the radio program. Interviews were also conducted with the three adult mentors who supported the radio program and process. Situating this research within the field of critical community psychology and drawing upon intersectionality as a supporting framework, critical narrative analysis led to the identification of three major aspects. The first reflected stories of young people naming and discussing the violence experienced because of their age, as well as a range of social categories attached to our identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status, which amplify our experiences of discrimination and exclusion. The second narrative reflected how these young people disrupted violence on radio by dismantling majoritarian and conflating notions about our lives as well as sharing our complexities and capacities, thus creating new stories about our lives. The third aspect of the findings represents how the young participants spoke about radio-making as enabling processes of storytelling, meaning-making and cultural production from the margins, and how our stories landed and resonated with others through broadcasting and archiving radio content. The study shows how through access to tools and support from community spaces and adults, young people of Brimbank were able to agentically lead knowledge production and voice our truths about who we

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are. The study also captures how radio as a practice can enable resistance to experiences of violence, as radio-making enabled us to counter forms of misrepresentation and supported the process of building new understandings of the youth of Brimbank. The work contributes to a body of literature that emphasises the power of creative and participatory vehicles in forging meaning, and the importance of working collectively with young people in research processes to understand youth-oriented practices which enable them to respond to forms of violence. The findings also highlight the need for institutions to support, resource and centre young people in self-determined programs and processes to empower them in naming and sharing their identities, experiences and perspectives, and critiquing the world around them.

**Student Declaration**

I, **Roshani Janya Jayawardana**, declare that the PhD thesis entitled **“BRIMBANK LIVE: Young People of Brimbank Using Community Radio to Create Sites and Narrate Stories of Resistance”** is no more than 80,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work. I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University’s Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee HRE19-186.

The thesis has been copy-edited and proof-read by Lee Miller, MA, AM (Harvard), MBA, Principal Editor at Edit Mode, whose services are consistent with those outlined in Standards D and E of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP).

Signature: R. Jayawardana

Date: 19.01.2024

**List of Publications**

The following publications have been published based on, or including aspects of, this research:

Sonn, C. C., Agung-Igusti, R. P., **Jayawardana, R. J.**, Quayle, A. F., & Keast, S. (2024). Community Arts, Decoloniality, and Epistemic Justice: Liberatory Practices for Community Empowerment. In Print. The Cambridge Handbook of Community Empowerment. *Cambridge University Press*.

**Dedication**

“As (Corinne) Kumar reminds us, “The world needs other stories.” But it also needs more people with hammers, more folks from different territories of the globe willing to assume and become part of the collective work and praxis of cracking coloniality’s wall, opening, widening, and connecting the fractures, fissures, and cracks.” (Walsh 2022, p.12).

This thesis is dedicated to the young people who shared their stories through Brimbank LIVE, as well as those who worked in collaboration with and made space for the young people to lead this realm and tell their stories.

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## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Below is a list of abbreviations which are integral to the context and place of the research, and are frequently used throughout the thesis:

BNH&CC	Brimbank Neighbourhood House and Community Centre
SNH	Sydenham Neighbourhood House
LGA	Local Government Area
NH	Neighbourhood House
SES	Socioeconomic status

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview**

### **Background**

This thesis is about young people of Brimbank, how they experience forms of symbolic and structural violence, and the ways they respond to this violence by asserting and voicing their identities and social worlds through the participatory practice and creative vehicle of radio. This study documents work that is situated in the context of Brimbank, a Local Government Area (LGA) located in the West of Melbourne (Naarm), Australia. Brimbank is not only the municipality where this research was conducted, but it is also the community and area where I was born, raised and reside. The LGA of Brimbank is often depicted in reports as having low health and economic wealth, diminished levels of youth engagement in civic and institutional spaces, as well as being a hot-spot for gang-related crime and youth unemployment (Brimbank City Council, 2018; PHIDU, 2014; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021). It is also an area that is made up of a high number of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds (Brimbank City Council, 2021; Jayawardana, 2021; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021). In light of this, Brimbank reports often explicate that racism is a key determinant for youth in the area, as processes of racialisation and race-based discrimination are frequently reported and considered serious issues in the municipality (Brimbank City Council, 2019a; Brimbank City Council, 2019b). Anecdotal evidence and local government reports show that these processes can elicit forms of exclusion, discrimination, and surveillance of young people, which influence the way that they are treated, move and interact in their community, and which often hinder youth's sense of inclusion and comfort in community and institutional spaces (Brimbank City Council, 2019b; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021). Furthermore, whilst young people are framed through the lens of race as well as their presumed structural disadvantage because of their area of residence, these constructions about young people stigmatise and stereotype young people, while also conflating and categorising them as disengaged, at risk and troublesome (Brimbank City Council, 2019a; Brimbank City Council, 2019b; Jayawardana, 2021; Koob & Pearson, 2020). This often leads to negative constructions that misrepresent young people, fail to match their realities and potential,

and incorporate very little about the complexities of their identities and social worlds (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

### **Young People and Structural and Symbolic Violence**

This section aims to paint the ways that young people are often understood and conceptualised as an age category, and how in light of this categorisation and positioning they are documented as experiencing and being susceptible to forms of structural and symbolic violence. The ways that these broader concepts are prevalent in young people's lives as well as how they are important to focus on in the context of this work are argued. This is then followed by *The Present Study* section which gives an overview of the pervasiveness of these forms of violence in the Brimbank context, and of the work undertaken in response that informs this research.

**Young People.** The definition of a young person varies based on culture, processes of development, and institutional, economic and political factors (Checkoway, 2017; Hammack, 2010; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2020). Age is a commonly adopted indicator used to identify young people, and although there is no concrete age bracket agreed upon, young people are often deemed to be those between the ages of 15 to 30 (Coyette et al., 2015; UNDESA, 2020). While age is a simple parameter and way to define young people as a group, many scholars alternatively see youth as being beyond biological age and instead a stage in their journey of both personal and societal growth (Hammack, 2010; UNDESA, 2020). This journey of personal and societal growth through young adulthood, marked by transitions within education and employment systems, the building of relationships, and the development of an independent identity, reflects a social process (Hammack, 2010). As scholars state the importance of seeing young people beyond their biological age and alternatively through these processes, they also convey that one's youth should not be regarded as a stepping stone or an ambiguous status where they are simply in a waiting period before becoming fully formed people, but instead young people's lives must be validated as rounded and important years in and of themselves (Checkoway, 2017; Hammack, 2010; Percy-Smith, 2015). This also humanises young people as it acknowledges that they have distinct and valid

experiences, ideas and visions and are active citizens in their everyday lifeworlds (Percy-Smith, 2015).

**Structural Violence.** In the context of Brimbank, according to local government and media reports, racism is a key social determinant in young people's lives (Brimbank City Council, 2019a; 2019b). This work, led by these understandings, began by focusing on the ways that exclusion and discrimination occur through the lens of 'race'<sup>1</sup>, and how racism is understood and imposed to place young people from Brimbank on the margins. However, although racism is posited as "a serious concern to municipalities like Brimbank whose communities are among the most diverse in Australia" as well as "a major factor in creating inequity in health and wellbeing, education and employment" (Brimbank City Council, 2019, p. 9), it is not the only way that marginality can be understood. As young people are marked in different ways, they are also positioned as a category that is socially, culturally and structurally marginalised through various dynamics and forms (Fox & Fine, 2013). Therefore, in this thesis, I've turned to conceptualising the marginality and inequality young people face through forms of structural and symbolic violence (Galtung, 1990). I have used structural and symbolic violence in this work since looking at racism and racial violence alone may be insufficient and lead to overlooking and neglecting other dynamics that contribute to the exclusion and discrimination that young people experience. Structural violence operates based on categories of age, race, gender and class, all of which are constructs connected to structural arrangements and hierarchies in society (Galtung, 1969; Prilleltensky, 2001). Groups are placed within these hierarchies, with majority and minority power relationships functioning and being exerted in light of their positionings (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001), leading to disadvantage for particular groups of people through mechanisms that exclude and restrain their quality of life (Dutta et al., 2016; Galtung, 1969). As racism, alongside concepts of sexism, classism and ageism are also forms of structural violence, focusing on structural violence as a broader concept better encompasses all the forms and facets pervasive in

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<sup>1</sup> Race is not essentialist and taken for granted, but goes beyond biological senses and connects to structural arrangements and social constructs. Brimbank City Council (2019a) define and see race through "majority and minority (power) relationships", where the dominant power in Australia is "white and Eurocentric" and attached to whiteness and the advantages that come with it (p. 24)

young people's lives which may contribute to young people's marginality, and thus enables us to see the various ways young people may experience marginality in addition to and in combination with their age (Galtung, 1969; Lee, 2016). This violence operating at various levels of society and intersecting with other forms of prejudice and discrimination may further complicate and amplify the unequal and marginal positions that young people have (Crenshaw, 2017; Fox & Fine, 2013).

While young people are not an oppressed category, structural violence presents a way of understanding how, through economic and political systems, government policies, institutional practices and unjust laws, marginalisation of groups can occur (Browne et al., 2016; Lee, 2016). This marginalisation can deprive such groups of "cultural, practical and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of recognition and interaction" (Young, 2008, p. 42). In addition to these formal manifestations, structural forms of violence are also informally expressed through media distortion about them, and through the unjust interactions, such as social exclusion and hindered access or opportunities, that they experience (Galtung, 1969; Lee, 2016). Structural violence has been specifically documented in reference to young people and is said to occur through young people's lack of power, unequal access to resources and limited control and authority in institutions and organisations, as well as the denial or hindrance of their opportunities to participate and lead processes to their full potential (Osborne et al., 2017; Schwebel & Christie, 2001; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). This violence is often embedded within social, economic and political structures and systems, and functions through mechanisms of government policies, institutional practices and unjust laws that allow, encourage and maintain young people's marginalisation and subjugation (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Loebach et al., 2020). This is particularly pervasive for young people in Western societies where there is a tendency for the presence of an "age-segregated structure" in society that seeks to legitimise adult power over young people through discursive, structural, meaning-making and legislative practices (Loebach et al., 2020; Young-Bruehl, 2012). Whilst young people may be positioned subordinately in these societal hierarchies in light of their age, structural violence presents as a useful concept and theoretical bridge to understanding the way that these unjust and subjugating instances may occur and manifest, combine and intersect in combinations of age

with race, gender, sexuality and other various forms and dimensions of structural violence (Shaheed et al., 2022).

**Symbolic Violence.** While structural violence is important in the context of this work, structural violence is reinforced, sustained and justified through symbolic forms which manifest in one's everyday experiences and reminders of marginality. Symbolic violence is frequently enabled by institutional processes, discourses, inequalities, indifferences and power relationships (Bourdieu, 1989; Collins, 2000b; Drahos, 2011; Scheper-Hughes, 1996). Symbolic violence is produced and legitimised through social conditions that shape the perceptions, thoughts, and actions of members of society, and are inscribed as forms of dispositions (*habitus*) which are the embodied and deeply ingrained habits, preferences and tendencies that guide behaviours and worldviews (Bourdieu, 1989; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Therefore, these social conditions become inseparable from the relations and structures of power that produce them (Bourdieu, 1989; Kraus, 1993; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). These ingrained dispositions that individuals and social groups acquire through their socialisation and experiences not only enable and justify symbolic violence, resulting in levels of suffering and inequality, but can also contribute to its reproduction and the violence experienced on a structural level (Dutta et al., 2016; Farmer, 2003; Fine & Ruglis, 2009; Galtung, 1969; Galtung, 1990; Lee, 2016; Martin-Baró, 1994; Scheper-Hughes, 2004; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016).

Symbolic violence is reinforced on ideological levels, through ideas and beliefs, reinforcing existing power structures and maintaining social inequalities that subordinate groups and individuals through symbols, language, and cultural norms (Bourdieu, 1989). Connolly & Healy (2004) argue that symbolic forms of violence operate through the dominant culture's imposition of its values and beliefs, and these can be seen through the media, in the education system, or in everyday interactions of being stigmatised, stereotyped, excluded or rendered invisible. Such forms of violence which manifest through power and lead to the marginalisation of individuals are also marked by a sense of subtlety, and often overlooked as nothing more than the ordinary difficulties of life for groups (Connolly & Healy, 2004). Scholars state that due to this violence being invisibly embedded, symbolic forms of violence may instil greater hurt, pervasiveness and harm than physical violence (Bourgois, 2001; Fine & Ruglis, 2009). This

embeddedness can also lead to its normalisation and the “gradual acceptance and internalisation of ideas and structures that tend to subordinate certain groups” (Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016, p. 148).

Symbolic violence in this thesis is understood through dynamics of exclusion and discrimination which may manifest in light of young people’s age as well as other social categories that they affiliate with (Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Symbolic violence is seen in the context of young people through dominant values, stereotypes and beliefs imposing notions about youth’s limited abilities, maturity and knowledge, which lead to their exclusion and being rendered invisible in spaces of leadership and participation (DeJong & Love, 2015; Emslie, 2015; Young-Bruehl, 2012). It can also be seen in derogatory language being used to describe and label young people, as well as their opinions and perspectives being dismissed or not taken seriously in decision-making processes (Young-Bruehl, 2012). Such ideologies and cultural norms underlie and reinforce social inequalities and power dynamics that may interact across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions, which maintain or legitimise forms of subjugation over young people, and deliberately place them on the outer (Browne et al., 2016; Dutta et al., 2016; Lee, 2016; Popay, 2010). For young people, these forms of discrimination and exclusion can also be justified and normalised through discourses of paternalism and adultism which not only position youth subordinately, but rationalise how their perceived limits, power and privilege through structures and systems are for their own good and protection (Liebel, 2007). Bell, J. (2010) defines adultism as “behaviors and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people, and entitled to act upon young people without their agreement” and states that this mistreatment “is reinforced by social institutions, laws, customs, and attitudes” (p. 540). The concept of adultism is also used synonymously with the term youth oppression which is “rooted in examination of discourses that create childhood as a subordinate social status in relation to adults, and parallels with certain discourses of colonialism” (DeJong & Love, 2015, p. 489). Symbolic violence can also persist through epistemic forms of injustice that exclude young people from knowledge production (Pérez, M., 2019; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016). Adults are often assigned as the knowers who get to explicitly speak and construct ideas about young people, whilst young people are excluded and positioned as inferior in knowledge



production processes (Pérez, M., 2019; Loebach et al., 2020). Reyes Cruz (2008) speaks of Knowledge (capital K) and how it is produced and validated by people with power who hold the cultural and social capital to impose and reproduce their authority over others, and how it “is wielded as a tool to silence the voices of people fighting their marginalization” (p. 652). This coincides with sentiments from scholars who state that the lack of young people constructing stories about themselves is not necessarily reflective of a shortage in interest of youth in curating their own stories (Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020), but rather of how dominantly appointed knowers control knowledge production, and use their power to decide who young people are and what they can be. Similarly, Malherbe et al. (2017) state that this can produce epistemic violence which sees the perception of imposing “very particular - often stereotypical - ways of knowing and seeing onto the Other, with a sociocultural elite most often being in possession of the mechanisms that drive these modes of knowing and seeing” (p. 167). The maintenance and reproduction of this violence occurs through dominant outlets continuing to position and enable adults to construct stories about young people’s lives, identities and worlds, with youth being sidelined or excluded from these opportunities and positions to make meaning about their lives. In addition to these processes silencing, excluding and devaluing young people’s perspectives and forms of knowledge as well as denying young people the opportunity to contribute and take ownership of how they are understood in public discourse, the control of knowledge production by adults often leads to the creation of the inflated or exaggerated social constructions that prevail about youth. These constructions are said to misrepresent and pathologise youth identities, be inconsistent with young people’s realities or potential, and limit the visibility surrounding their diverse experiences and perspectives (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

### **The Present Study**

This research was conducted in partnership with Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres (BNH&CC). BNH&CC are a body that governs a range of community spaces in the Brimbank area and aims to respond to the needs of community members through its programs and facilities. As young people in the Brimbank area are notoriously reported to experience forms of discrimination as well as exclusion and disengagement from community spaces, the BNH&CC unit understood that young people needed access to spaces where they

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could feel safe and included, and that youth should be able to engage in sites, processes and practices that spoke to their interests. In light of this, BNH&CC made a commitment, in policy and through their prospective program delivery, to provide young people, particularly those who experience racism and various forms of violence, with initiatives and opportunities to harness community strengths, draw on local knowledge, learn and gain skills and lead programs and initiatives (Brimbank City Council, 2019b). Working with Sydenham Neighbourhood House (SNH), which is a specific BNH&CC location, the SNH unit consulted with young people and actively listened to their ideas for ways of working that could adhere to these commitments, as well as address and respond to the issues they faced. Through this commitment to include young people in the community space, and in order to implement young people's expressed desires to engage in activities and programs of a creative nature, the SNH supported Brimbank youth in forming the *Brimbank LIVE* radio program where a group of young people aged between 15-30 engaged in carving out a youth-led community radio station and their own radio shows. Situated during the time and context of COVID-19 and its subsequent lockdowns in Melbourne, *Brimbank LIVE* was executed through digital tools and technologies, responding not just to young people's exclusion and their interests, but also responding to the lockdowns and digital-turn due to the pandemic. The creative practice of community radio is conceptualised as a vehicle to create opportunities for individuals and communities to exercise agency and control through their programming, and to articulate their own meaning about matters that they choose to create and share (CBAA (Community Broadcasting Association of Australia), 2014). Within the radio program the young people engaged in the process of forming and running the *Brimbank LIVE* radio station as well as creating their own radio shows that were broadcast on the station. Through the self-determined activity and practice of radio-making, they were also provided a platform that gave them the opportunity to speak their own stories about their identities and lives through radio.

### **Aims and Research Questions**

This thesis documents how young people from Brimbank engaged in and led radio-making activities in the context of the *Brimbank LIVE* program, with the support of and access to resources from SNH. This research seeks to explore the way that responses and counter-activity

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to marginality, discrimination and exclusion can take place working with SNH as a local council organisation, and within the context of the participatory and creative meaning-making practice of radio. It aims to specifically understand the potential and role of youth-led community radio practice in amplifying young people's voices and eliciting processes of storytelling in response to the forms of symbolic and structural violence that often undermine and subjugate young people, and that conflate and hinder wider understandings of their identities and lives. In addition, this work seeks to convey the ways in which self-determined processes of radio-making were used by young people for making visible resistance to dominant stories through articulating the local and societal forms of violence they experience, as well as through voicing counterstories. Furthermore, this work is interested in how the setting and practice of community radio enabled young people to create and author new understandings and diverse knowledges about their identities, communities and worlds, and how through their radio content they not only produced culture but also re-constructed and re-signified who they are. With these aims, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What stories do young people share about their identities and subjectivities using the tool of community radio in *Brimbank LIVE*?
- What are the mechanisms and features that enable and support young people on the site and in the processes of *Brimbank LIVE*?
- How does the process of young people making community radio through *Brimbank LIVE* and constructing stories about their lives respond to structural and symbolic forms of violence?

### **Researcher Positioning**

I am a young cis-gendered woman who was born in Brimbank to parents who immigrated to Australia from Sri Lanka in the 1980s. The suburb I am from, situated within the municipality of Brimbank, is considered to be one of Melbourne's most multicultural suburbs, with 67.5% of its residents being born overseas and a high proportion of residents having a non-English speaking background (ABS, 2021). Although Brimbank is characterised by its diversity, growing up as a child of immigrants or a 'third culture kid' I have always been reminded of my difference

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in colonial and white spaces as my brown body does not fit the dominant, white phenotype nor bring the privileges that come from this dominant positioning. Due to this, like many other young people in the area, I have grown up negotiating and renegotiating, constructing and reconstructing who I am ethnically, and exercising caution in different spaces due to perceived ideas attached to racialised youth from Brimbank which often result in processes of exclusion and discrimination. I recall experiences at school being entangled with both explicit and subtle reminders of the limited potential and capacity to succeed assumed for both my peers and myself, fears that we were dreaming ‘too big’ by holding aspirations for future careers and study pathways, or perceptions that we would be lucky to even finish school, particularly expressed by adults and teachers in our lives. Furthermore, ideas of us being deviant or troubled in nature simply by being from Brimbank and coming from migrant backgrounds were also reinforced. These were etched in my firsthand experiences of being questioned, surveilled and excluded from local spaces, such as local community areas and shopping centres, as well as within the location that this study is affiliated with, SNH. As I recount and document young people in this research, and young people specifically from the area of Brimbank, I recognise and acknowledge that my position of being a young racialised person from this community connects me to my research on a personal level. As my age, race, and area of residency situated me as an insider in this research, I wrote myself within my work as a member of the group that is its focus, not attempting to separate myself from this research, but allowing it to further enable my understanding, empathy and curiosity through the process.

In writing about this particular work, my own community context also formed and gave impetus to my thinking about how I was engaged within the program of interest, *Brimbank LIVE*. As I was born, raised, and live in Brimbank, and was at the age of 23 when the program was conceived, I fit the criteria of being a participant in *Brimbank LIVE*. Therefore, I drew upon participatory principles from community-engaged research and explored what it meant to become a part of the radio program I was documenting. This participatory nature was enacted through my immersion and participation in the program as I collaborated and engaged in the practice of radio-making with fellow young members of the team, which furthered my embodiment of this work. During this involvement and participation in the radio program, I also

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held a researcher role as I collected data. This involved me asking participants of the program sets of questions about their experiences within the community radio setting and process, as well as using and analysing the stories they chose to tell through their radio shows.

### **Thesis Structure**

#### ***Chapter 2: Constructions of and Categorisations about Young People***

This literature review chapter contextualises and examples the various forms and ways that young people are framed and constructed in the literature as well as through media and government reports. I begin by detailing how young people are often stereotyped and subjugated due to their age and how this casts them as disempowered, half-citizens and subordinate. I then analyse the way that these constructions and understandings tarnish ideas about young people as well as their knowledge, input and potential, and how they are reported to experience structural and symbolic forms of violence as a result. The ways that the social categories and characteristics of young people play a part in exacerbating these stereotypes and experiences are then explored, specifically through the lenses often drawn upon to categorise youth such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and socioeconomic status and class. These social categories and identity positions in combination with their age are explored in detail to show how young people with various affiliations are constructed in ways that reinforce incapable, deficit, troublesome, vulnerable and at-risk framings, and how these constructions and positions further amplify discriminatory, exclusionary and stigmatising experiences for young people. The impacts of these unfavourable constructions and violent experiences are then described in relation to how young people's participation and movement within institutional and community spaces are often hindered, and how these constructions may produce restrictive, one-dimensional and negative framings about youth identities that may not match their realities and inhibit understanding the complexities within their lives.

### *Chapter 3: Young People Responding to Structural and Symbolic Violence*

This literature review chapter conveys the approaches that are documented in the literature which enable young people in leading processes and responding to forms of violence, and highlights practices that can be used in the context of these approaches to articulate meaning about young people's lives. Drawing from community psychology and positive youth development literature, this chapter begins by detailing community-engaged and participatory approaches, with detailed consideration of their principles, impact and benefits, particularly around their ability to include young people's input and knowledge as well as elicit their participation, empowerment and agency in creating social realms and initiatives to address and respond to the forms of symbolic and structural violence that they experience. In the next section of this chapter, the specific activities and practices that can be used in these community-engaged contexts are explained. As scholars suggest that methods and practices that enable communities in generating their own knowledge and articulating their own identities and world views are important, narrative and meaning-making practices are then examined to show how they enable and aid communities in constructing their own meaning about their lives and experiences. The various creative and multimodal vehicles that are used to support meaning-making and storytelling practices are specified, particularly highlighting the tool and practice of community radio which is the creative vehicle used in the context of this study. I analyse examples in the literature of young people engaging in processes of radio-making and storytelling through radio to show how these tools can enable self-driven stories about young people's lives, identities and social worlds. Through this, I aim to demonstrate the ways that such creative activities not only include, centre and facilitate processes for young people in articulating and asserting meaning, knowledge and alternate understandings, but also how these practices can be understood to address and counter structural and symbolic forms of violence.

The chapter closes by illuminating the challenges, gaps and areas for further investigation regarding storytelling processes. This is in particular relation to practices and sites of meaning-making in the literature usually having predetermined constraints about what types of meaning and stories young people tell. The way that researchers often position themselves and engage

with community in light of these storytelling processes are also critiqued, as well as the importance of documenting the intricate journeys that these processes incite.

### ***Chapter 4: Context and Formation of Brimbank LIVE***

This chapter details the context of the work and program of interest, drawing on local government reports and anecdotal accounts from participants, as well as on my own fieldwork experiences of the process and space. The first section of the chapter describes the geographic and demographic history of Brimbank. I then outline the BNH&CC spaces within the municipality and talk about each of the premises and its objectives for the community. One of these is the SNH which is the BNH&CC space that aims to cater to young people, yet where young people have reported encountering symbolic and structural violence. The mechanisms of change that the unit engaged to respond to these occurrences and transform the SNH space for young people are then detailed. These changes included the commitment to and implementation of policies fostering youth-led initiatives and programs, as well as the relational practices adopted to engage and include young people into the space along with their ideas and input. Detail of the program delivery that emerged from this is described from my fieldwork experience engaging in the program at SNH space, as well as through the accounts from SNH staff. The impacts of COVID-19 and how the pandemic halted the in-person program at SNH are then described. The way that the SNH and BNH&CC unit worked with young people in carving the *Brimbank LIVE* program using digital tools and technologies is then detailed. The *Brimbank LIVE* program gave young people the opportunity, platform and resources to create their own shows on the youth-led *Brimbank LIVE* radio station, where they unpacked experiences and issues important to them, as well as engaged in sharing their passions and interests. The steps, processes and challenges of working within the *Brimbank LIVE* program are then elaborated upon, using quotes from members of the program as well as adults who supported the radio work.

### *Chapter 5: Methodology and Methods*

This chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks informing the research, as well as the methodological ways in which this research took place. I begin this chapter by situating this research within the field of critical community psychology, drawing upon intersectionality as a supporting framework. Community-engaged approaches are then discussed, as well as the practices of accompaniment that have formed the way I have engaged in this research. The use of these approaches and ways of enacting the research is detailed, with a focus on how these share a commitment to epistemic justice and the goals of transformative social change, as well as how these techniques connect with the aims of the research. The next section explains the methods used to collect data and details of the participants in this study. As I held similar identity positions to the group that is the focus of the research, was connected to the Brimbank community, and interacted with the young people as a participant in the formal *Brimbank LIVE* program, my positioning as a researcher throughout the various stages of the research process is further discussed. This is specifically explained and elaborated on through details of how my positioning connected me to the radio work and processes, the accounted differences and biases that emerged through the work, and the reflexive practices I engaged in. Finally, narrative inquiry and forms of analysis are then presented with particular reference to how they are a powerful approach for examining experiences as well as understanding the ways through which personal and collective stories are formed. The step-by-step process used in my critical narrative analysis is then explicated, which illuminated particular sets of stories that encompassed distinct narratives found in the data.

### *Chapter 6: Narrating Structural and Symbolic Violence in Our Everyday Lives*

The findings and interpretation are presented over three chapters. In the first findings chapter, I convey the first narrative which pertains to the ways in which forms of structural and symbolic violence in our everyday lives were articulated by the young people of *Brimbank LIVE*. This narrative is explained through two subthemes. The first, *Naming Exclusion, Discrimination and Violence around Identity*, entailed references to how various social categories and identity positions were reported to be attached to negative stereotypes and framings, and how these



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dominant understandings elicit discrimination and exclusion, and also impact the ways we are included and move in spaces. The second subtheme, *Narrating of Impositions about our Brimbank Community*, illustrates the stories young people told regarding the structural and symbolic forms of violence we experience due to our connection to the Brimbank community and our residency in the area. These stories, as well as discussion about the structural adversities we face living in the LGA, convey how our diversity and circumstances form negative conceptions about the municipality which then conjures judgment and scrutiny by others. This chapter conveys not only how dominant stories circulate about our identities and affiliations with place, and how we experience forms of exclusion and discrimination, but also that we have a deep understanding and consciousness of these processes which we chose to speak and name through the radio program.

### ***Chapter 7: Speaking Back to and Resisting Dominant Narratives***

In this chapter, I present the second overarching narrative which reflects the many ways that young people of *Brimbank LIVE* challenged, resisted and countered dominant and violent narratives, and how they spoke back to these framings. The first subtheme, *Actively Challenging and Countering Dominant Framings*, illustrates how we used our radio shows to intentionally problematise particular dominant narratives and call out stereotypes about our identities and affiliation with place. The second subtheme, *Narrating Alternate Stories About Identity, Community, Place and Futures*, details the alternate stories young people told beyond the negative framings about our identities and place, as we shared how these aspects in our lives enrich and benefit us, and conjure pride and community, rather than function as perceived burdens. This subtheme also details how we resisted dominant narratives about our incapacabilities and presumed deficiencies as we spoke boldly and confidently about our interests, passions and future goals, thereby showing that we hold capacities and possibilities for the future.

### ***Chapter 8: Processes of Storytelling, Broadcasting, and Resonance Enabled through Radio***

The final findings chapter illustrates how members of the *Brimbank LIVE* team spoke about the vehicle of radio and the specific outcomes and processes it enabled. The first aspect of

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this narrative, *Radio as a Tool for Storytelling and Knowledge Production*, highlights how the tool of community radio was regarded as democratising as it gave the young people a platform to author and tell stories, which enabled them to produce knowledge about themselves. The second subtheme, *Resonance of Radio Practice for Youth*, reflects the resonance young people felt being in *Brimbank LIVE* and making radio. This subtheme reflects the young participants' accounts of how the process of radio-making was healing and validating for them, as well as how they gained skills and opportunities through their involvement in the radio program. The final subtheme, *Broadcasting and Archiving of Stories*, reflects discussion of the properties of radio-making. This was articulated by members of the team as they spoke of how the radio content was received by others, how broadcasting and archiving expanded this reach, and what this dissemination and sharing did in communicating perspectives and experiences about youth to those in the community and beyond.

### ***Chapter 9: Discussion, Contributions, Implications and Limitations***

In the final chapter of this thesis, I present a summary and discussion of the findings. I share the four key insights of the research and their implications and contributions to practice, theory and methodology. These pertain to the theorising of the self-determined stories curated and shared by young people from Brimbank, the approach and ways of working within the *Brimbank LIVE* setting, the utilisation and benefits of community radio as a tool and practice, as well as the methodological takeaways regarding the roles of researchers engaging with and alongside young people in responsive work. I conclude by presenting some limitations to the study and recommendations for future research.

### **Chapter 2: Exploring the Categorisations and Constructions of Young People**

Young people are a group that is heavily documented and reported on within the literature, and are an age category often discussed in public discourse (Fox & Fine, 2013). In this first literature review chapter, I draw on a wealth of research from community psychology, youth studies and community studies, as well as the grey literature of government and media reports in Australia, to examine how young people are constructed. This chapter begins by detailing how young people are categorised, conflated and stigmatised in light of their age, and the way that they experience forms of symbolic and structural violence through these constructions. It then moves to illustrate how social categories and structures of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and class in the lives of young people have been documented to further frame and conflate them in particular ways. The way that constructions of these categories also conjure, contribute and amplify forms of violence for young people from various walks of life are also highlighted. The final section of this chapter explicates both the impacts and adverse experiences that arise in light of the constructions of these categories and identity positions, particularly in relation to how these framings and forms of discrimination hinder the movement and treatment of young people in institutional and organisational spaces, as well as how these constructions conflate and conceal the diversity of young people's lives.

#### **Young People as Half-Citizens, At Risk and Problematised**

In light of their age, young people are often labelled as half-citizens, or citizens in waiting (Checkoway et al., 2003; Gibbs et al., 2013; Keast, 2020). Given these framings, young people are viewed as humans who are not fully formed, and their knowledge, competency and understanding of the world are often presumed to be lacking (Bertrand et al., 2020; Checkoway, 2017; Keast, 2020; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020). This is seen within systems and institutions, as young people are not afforded the same power and privilege as adults, and this often leads to barriers or limits in the capital that they possess (Bertrand et al., 2017; 2020). This way of thinking about youth leads to and explains the restrictions placed on young people, which constrain their mobility, autonomy and decision-making in their lives. Voting rights, the age of consent, the prohibition of drinking, and obtaining a driving licence are some examples of how

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age is used to restrict young people as well as justify youth's sense of naivety and incompetence (Corney et al., 2022; Shier et al., 2014). As young people's presumed incapable and inept nature is heavily focused on, they are painted as individuals who possess limited agency, strength and resilience, and subsequently need "saving" or protection (Baldrige, 2014; Bilbrough, 2018). This can also be conceptualised through young people being labelled as dependents who are "legitimately subject to the often arbitrary and invasive authority... who enforce rules with which the marginal must comply, and otherwise exercise power over the conditions of their lives" (Young, 2008, p. 42). This lens perpetuates a pathologising and condescending rhetoric which leads to young people being patronised, seen as something to fix, or labelled inferior, and through these processes also inhibits young people from being viewed as liberated and capable beings (Schofield et al., 2017; Tuck, 2009; Valencia, 2010). This also rationalises the power imbalance, limited rights and autonomy which subordinate youth, and underpins the assumption that their lives and decisions must be controlled and guided by adults (Bertrand et al., 2020; Checkoway, 2017; Dollinger, 2019; Mitchell, 2016; Shier et al., 2014; Valencia, 2010). These processes highlight how ideas about young people's demeanour and potential in light of their age not only perpetuate adverse treatment along with structural and symbolic violence, but also how discourses of paternalism, adultism, ageism as well as protectionist ideals reinforce and justify youth's subjugation (Bertrand et al., 2020; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Checkoway, 2017; Shier et al., 2014).

Whilst these paternalistic ideas exist about young people as an age group, in the last couple of decades Australian youth in particular have additionally been considered as a "generation at risk" (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011; Chesters & Cuervo, 2019; Cuervo & Chesters, 2019; Cuervo & Wyn, 2016; McDonald et al., 2011; United Nations Youth Australia, 2019). In recent times, Australian youth have had to navigate several social and historical circumstances that past generations have not (Cuervo & Chesters, 2019; Price et al., 2011). These conditions include grappling with extreme pressure to perform well in educational and workspaces, the rise of youth unemployment, and being forced to endure poor quality working conditions or insecure work for an extended period of time (Chesters & Cuervo, 2019; Cuervo & Chesters, 2019; Price et al., 2011; Wyn et al., 2015). In addition to this, it is reported

that young people do not have sufficient time for themselves and others. This is said to compromise young people's support networks, disrupt their work/life balance and leave them with difficulties in maintaining good mental and physical health (Borland, 2014; Chesters & Cuervo, 2019). When young people are spoken about through these lenses, they are often viewed as passive and piteous recipients of these adverse conditions and circumstances (Belton, 2009; Johnson & Mendes, 2014). This feeds into the sense of inadequacy, naivety and incompetency attached to ideas of them being an 'at risk' population group, with many youth and adolescent studies in psychology telling specific stories about young people being victims of their conditions and internalising oppression (Fox & Fine, 2013). There is also a sense of blame and responsibility that is put on young people in light of such adverse framings. Although evidence shows that structural factors are the cause of the previously mentioned difficulties for youth, within the Australian context these conditions are often regarded and viewed to be prevalent due to young people's intrinsic weakness and ineptness, which furthers vulnerable framings and also deepens presumptions around young people's perceived incompetence (Cuervo & Wyn, 2016). This reflects how although young people are seen as at risk, vulnerable and in need of guidance, support and protection, particularly in unprecedented circumstances, young people are also often made to feel responsible for these occurrences (Suffla et al., 2014).

Young people can also be understood and spoken about in ways that regard them as 'problems' (Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Suffla et al., 2014). Narratives of young people being positioned as troublesome perpetrators in society are highly prevalent as reports indicate that the top two stereotypes that circulate about young people in the Australian media label them as either lazy and lacking resilience, or dangerous and criminal (Foundation for Young Australians, 2020). These stereotypes sit in line with problematised perceptions surrounding young people's disconnection from their community, and prevalent concerns about youth's deviation from traditional pathways through them dropping out of school or being linked to the youth justice system (De Witte et al., 2013; Malvaso et al., 2019). In light of these imposed constructions, reports show that young people are often asked to leave public spaces due to assumptions of delinquency or troublesome due to their age (Abello et al., 2016; Boese & Phillips, 2011; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014). This shows how social and historical conditions can mark and

position young people in ways that paint them to be problematic and undesirable members of society, and also illustrates the ways in which these not only frame young people unfavourably but can also lead to their exclusion and dismissal from spaces (Abello et al., 2016).

In addition to these adverse framings about young people, there is also a discourse which speaks to the particular factors, determinants and characteristics young people need to possess to avoid these constructions and be framed in more positive tones (Rogers & Way, 2016). Eurocentric and Westernised ideals of young people being compliant or high achieving, particularly within traditional systems, are said to enable young people to be painted as individuals who are resilient and can overcome or escape the prospect of falling into the former, problematised categories (Bilbrough, 2018; Rogers & Way, 2016; Ungar, 2001). These constructions place a value on young people's capacity to be productive, obedient and self-regulating within and through traditional pathways and spaces. Furthermore, a form of selfhood that represents and reinforces a neoliberal way of thinking and entrepreneurial mindset is also said to position young people as economically productive citizens and deem their progression as 'successful' (Kelly, 2006). As these pathways and positions are perceived to facilitate the evasion of young people from being seen as incompetent or as problems, these individualised and self-focused framings often erase or sensationalise hardships experienced by young people, with an emphasis on their individual ability to overcome barriers despite adverse experiences often stemming from broader structural conditions (Bilbrough, 2018; Rose, 1996). Additionally, Watego (2018; 2021) states that productivity being viewed as an emancipatory pathway is not only problematic but a myth, as one simply cannot 'out-perform' forms of marginality and oppression. Such narratives also conjure up what Cottle (2000) labels as a 'burden of representation', where young people have a heightened responsibility to strive to be exemplary in order to avoid unfavourable framings and evade contributing to any negative perceptions about their age group. This shows that although positive and glorified stories may exist about young people, such stories may have an underlying assumption and inference that young people must be productive, self-sufficient and compliant through adversity and the violence they face in order to be seen through a favourable lens (Bilbrough, 2018).

### **Social Categories and Intersections of Youth**

As particular framings are often reported in light of young people's age, these constructions and experiences can be further complicated when additional categories and identity positions intersect in young people's lives (Baak, 2019; Fox & Fine, 2013). Whilst there are an expansive number of social categories that shape young people's identities and worlds, this section draws upon the particular social categories and characteristics that are frequently linked to and used to describe young people within the Australian context, pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and socioeconomic status. It aims to distil how young people's personal characteristics, attributes and facets can conjure as well as amplify stereotypes surrounding young people's abilities, potential and vulnerabilities, and how this can evoke specific processes of exclusion and discrimination which exacerbate perceived marginality for young people (Abello et al., 2016; Sonn et al., 2021).

Within the Australian context, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds are often othered based on their ethnic and racial affiliations, as the backdrop of whiteness is embedded in the colonial discourse of race within Australia (Hage, 2012). For those who do not fit the dominant category of whiteness, processes of racialisation and ethnicisation may take place, thereby highlighting the distinctions between those who fulfil and embody the normative and majority identity, and racial minorities who do not fit the mould of the dominant group (Chaudhary, 2015; Farver et al., 2007; Schech & Haggis, 2001). These processes tend to group and mark those outside of the dominant white boundaries based on their racial and ethnic differences (Kelly & Greene, 2010; Green et al., 2007). Young people who through these processes become racialised and ethnicised are often labelled as 'YPoC' (Young People of Colour), 'BIPOC' (Black Indigenous, People of Colour), or 'CALD' (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) young people (Wyn et al., 2018). As such terms are used to describe young people based on their perceived 'otherness' around their race and ethnicity, they also act as labels that categorise young people and attach them to particular narratives (Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Wahlquist, 2018). For example, commercial television, radio and print media commonly paint young people who are racially and ethnically diverse as troublesome or problematic (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Wahlquist, 2018). Young

people who are racialised and ethnicised are also affiliated with labels of delinquency, as assumptions and stereotypes circulate about them being linked to gang culture, local crimes, and violence within their communities (Baak, 2019; Hage, 2012; Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Majavu, 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Nelson et al., 2011; Windle, 2008). This framing is common, as scholars report that research, particularly in the social science context, continues to render Black, Indigenous and other racialised young people as ‘at risk’ and represent them as people with a deficit (Wright & Merritt, 2020).

These exaggerated stereotypes and assumptions may also lead to specific processes of discrimination and exclusion as reports convey that racial or ethnic-based discrimination for these young people is commonly experienced, particularly in institutional and community settings (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Markus, 2020; Wyn et al., 2018; United Nations Youth Australia, 2019). Such experiences can take place through racial slurs and derogatory comments that are frequently subjected towards young people from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds within public spaces (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Wyn et al., 2018). They can also be seen through young people being racially profiled and surveilled in community and institutional realms (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014). It is important to note that this also happens at disproportionate levels as Victoria Police Law Enforcement data shows that racially diverse young people are 2.5 times more likely to be questioned and searched by police within Melbourne than those who appear Anglo-Saxon (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Briggs & Yussuf, 2023; Poynting et al., 2003; Winant, 2004; Wyn et al., 2018). Despite young people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds being overrepresented when it comes to their involvement in crime and violence, these ideologies about young people and their affiliated racial and ethnic affiliations become promoted and legitimised through the mainstream media, and these problematised framings become normalised and pervasive (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Butt, 2018). This conveys the ways that unfavourable and negative framings exist in reference to young people’s race and ethnicity, and how racism and discrimination in light of one’s race and ethnicity may diminish, tarnish and blacklist young people in their day-to-day lives; reflecting the symbolic violence that these young people experience and navigate (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Wyn et al., 2018).



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Although many of these experiences may be relevant to and can be experienced by all racialised and ethnicised young people, due to racial hierarchies and power differentials between majority and minority groups, as well as the different proximities individuals have to their race and ethnicity, these experiences of discrimination and stereotypes may form in specific ways and at varying degrees (Ahmed, 2014; Bhatia, 2018; Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Nelson et al., 2011; Poynting & Briskman, 2018). For example, South Sudanese young people in Australia are known to be racialised for their Blackness and grapple with specific stereotypes that associate them with violence, criminality and anti-social behaviour. Reports of discrimination from these diasporic groups are commonly seen through racial profiling and vilification, racial slurs and microaggressions (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Valencia, 2010). These experiences and stereotypes are vastly different for Australian young people from Southeast Asian backgrounds who endure assumptions surrounding their lack of English proficiency, the subjecting of the ‘perpetual foreigner stereotype’, as well as heightened experiences of xenophobia and public displays of anti-Asian sentiments, predominantly occurring through the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee & Waters, 2021; Markus, 2020; Thai et al., 2020). This shows that despite being perceived and homogenised through the labels of ‘YPoC’ or ‘CALD’ youth, young people in these non-dominant categories are stereotyped differently and endure variously diverse experiences in relation to their racial and ethnic affiliations and backgrounds.

As young people’s ethnic and racial identities are constructed and documented in particular ways, with reports frequently reflecting how these framings conjure stereotypes and discriminatory experiences for them, Australian young people are also affiliated with other identity positions and social categories that impact how they are framed and understood. Gender and sexuality are constructs that are recognised to play a part in the way that society perceives youth and the particular experiences they have (Mitchell, 2016). According to national surveys and accounts, 41.5% of young people from Victoria, Australia report unfair treatment due to their gender, whilst also having to navigate gender norms, expectations and unfavourable stereotypes (Hall et al., 2019; Tiller et al., 2020). This is evident through reports of young males grappling with traditional gender stereotypes which they feel compelled to adhere to in order to

be deemed ‘strong’, ‘masculine’ and ‘dominant’ (Motro & Ellis, 2017; Ward & Grower, 2020; Rice et al., 2018b). Although outdated, breaking away from these notions and attributes can be seen to lead to disparaging treatment of young males in traditional and conservative spaces (Peguero & Williams, 2013; Motro & Ellis, 2017; Pascoe, 2011). These rigid expectations are also said to condone and lead to socially destructive behaviours of aggression and toxic masculinity for young males, which can impact the way they present themselves and interact with others (Stubbs et al., 2019). Such notions can also be reflected in reports of young males being less likely to seek professional help for their mental health, or being more likely to take unhealthy risks and engage in violence (Mitchell, 2016; The Men’s Project & Flood; 2018). With ideas already circulating about young people being misguided, reckless and troublesome, these reports about young males may amplify and heighten their susceptibility to these framings (Mitchell, 2016; The Men’s Project & Flood; 2018).

In comparison to their male peers, young women are often constructed and understood to be subservient or lacking self-confidence (Shamna, 2018). According to Mitchell (2016), young women are reported to be disproportionately vulnerable to a range of adverse outcomes including insecure and inadequate paid work and poor mental health. Young women are also most likely to be exposed to gender-based violence such as sexual harassment, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, and discrimination in the workplace (Stubbs et al., 2019). Whilst these experiences may occur for all young people, young women being more likely to have these experience is reported to lead to them being painted through a vulnerable lens and conflated as passive (Stubbs et al., 2019). For young people who are gender fluid, non-binary or transgender, erasure of their gender identity can take place as gender exploration and transitions can often be disrespected or dismissed, as well as questioned and contested (Smith et al., 2014; Thurston & Allan, 2018). This is also common in relation to young people’s sexuality, as young people’s expression of their gender and sexuality is often scrutinised, particularly when this exploration occurs beyond heteronormative and binary thinking (O’Sullivan, S., 2015; Smith et al., 2014). This is prevalent within the Australian context, as scepticism of gender diverse and queer youth often occurs in public discourse and mainstream media commentary with debates around young people’s capacity and maturity to make decisions about their own gender and sexuality (Hill et al., 2021;

Mitchell, 2016; Strauss et al., 2022; Tiller et al., 2020). This not only delegitimises one's gender and queerness, which in itself is damaging, but it amplifies pathologising narratives for young people who are gender-diverse and queer as it reinforces ideas that they are naive and incapable of affirming and expressing their gender and sexual identity (Sinclair-Palm, 2017; Tiller et al., 2020). Violence occurring through lack of access and visibility, erasure and exclusion are also reported for gender-diverse and queer youth (Hill et al., 2021). This is seen through the imposition of a two-gender system and heteronormative ideologies which is harmful yet extensively prevalent in school curriculum, or in the prohibiting of LGBTQI+ youth from being able to engage with their partners in public spaces (Rissel et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2022; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014; UN Youth Australia, 2020). Discrimination for gender-diverse and queer young people is also reported through family rejection, gender-policing, isolation and being misgendered (Abello et al., 2016; Kosciw et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2022; Tiller et al., 2020). In light of these experiences, young people who identify outside of the gender binary and who are queer are often labelled to be at risk of being harmed by others or themselves (Sinclair-Palm, 2017; Smith et al., 2014). This is emphasised as LGBTQI+ young people are also reported to be more likely to attempt suicide, experience mental health disorders and engage in self-harm compared to their peers (Bariola et al., 2015; Rosenstreich, 2013). These experiences and susceptibilities elicit at-risk framings of these young people, as well as form and reproduce stories that often hyper-focus on their perceived damage and adversity (Fine & Cross, 2016; Smith et al., 2014; Tuck, 2009).

In addition to personal identity positions that may ignite and amplify particular framings and experiences for young people, other social categories such as social, political and economic status also frame young people in particular ways (Appadurai, 2004; Tiller et al., 2020). As particular suburbs and neighbourhoods are characterised by low health, wealth and independence, young people residing in such areas are regarded as being exposed to a range of vulnerabilities and hardships (Shinn & McCormack, 2017; Tiller et al., 2020). According to local government reports, those living in low socioeconomic status (SES) areas are more likely to experience trauma, adverse events in childhood and domestic violence in the home (Brimbank City Council, 2019c). They are also presumed to have higher levels of emotional and behavioural

difficulties as well as lower levels of wellbeing compared to young people living elsewhere (Ivancic, 2014; Santiago et al., 2011; 2014). Additionally, young people from low SES neighbourhoods are said to be more likely than young people from higher SES areas to enter pathways that deviate from traditionally perceived trajectories (Malvaso et al., 2019). Pathways that are perceived as common for young people from low SES areas are dropping out of school, being connected to child protection spaces, or having experiences in the youth justice system (Malvaso et al., 2019).

The vulnerabilities and circumstances present within these particular geographic areas may also conjure the marking and judgement of these young people through postcode discrimination as well as suburb or neighbourhood stigma (Kelaher et al., 2010; Tiller et al., 2020). These forms of discrimination are reported not only to blacklist and paint youth as deficient, but they can also result in a myriad of direct and indirect processes that work to hinder young people (Bevan, 2015; Hall et al., 2019; Tiller et al., 2020). For example, within lower SES areas and districts, educational advocacy and encouragement are reportedly low as young people can often be labelled ‘lacking’ or presumed likely to achieve lower attainments in education, and therefore are not guided or advocated for in seeking success or their desired outcomes (Millado, 2020; Tiller et al., 2020). For young people, these unstable waves of support and diminished views of their potential lead to feelings of ineffectiveness and hinder their self-image (Dandy et al., 2015; Gentrup et al., 2020; Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010). Furthermore, within educational and institutional spaces, young people from low SES backgrounds are also expected to be more likely to have to deal with bullying, and are presumed to be less likely to engage in community and civic initiatives through participation and volunteering (Tiller et al., 2020). This shows that although young people from lower socioeconomic areas are more exposed to these experiences and circumstances, these are used to paint them in a diminished and deficit light, to position them as incapable of thriving in spaces of education and success, and to justify perceptions around their impeded abilities. In addition to these framings, systems also work to reproduce disadvantage for young people, as low SES schools are conveyed to deliver limited and inadequate curriculums (Reay, 2018). This hindrance is also evident in the facilities and capital granted to low SES communities, as young people within such areas have limited resources and

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access to leisure and recreational opportunities (Bok, 2010). This sheds light on how a lack of resources, opportunities and support to reach potential exacerbates and reinforces the cycle of structural and symbolic violence for young people from low SES areas. Additionally, it represents how “structural injustice moves under the skin of privileged and marginalized individuals” through circuits of adverse consequences, which often ‘stick’ and subsequently consume ideas about these groups of young people (Fine & Ruglis, 2008, p. 228).

To conclude, this section shows the various social categories and circumstances that are drawn upon to speak about and document young people. It distils how constructions about these social categories and circumstances manifest and function in particularly distinct ways, as young people from various migrant and refugee backgrounds are reported to grapple with particular constructions and experiences that differ from those who are gender diverse or queer, and these are also distinct from young people who come from ‘disadvantaged’ and low SES areas. These understandings about these social categories also reflect how young people are negatively stereotyped and further stigmatised in light of these affiliations, as they contribute to constructions and stories that focus on them being troublesome or at-risk, going through hardship, and experiencing discrimination. Furthermore, it reflects the ways the dominant constructions of these categories can be seen to tarnish notions around young people’s potential, capabilities and good-will, as well as justifying young people’s subjugation through perceived ideas of them being incapable and unable to make decisions. As the analysis shows the ways that these constructions can shape how young people and their identities are understood, it also reinforces how multiple social categories may be active and prevalent in the lives of young people. Given this, it reflects how one’s age and identity positions may intersect and produce specific stereotypes and framings which then amplify and exacerbate the experiences they have moving through their worlds.

### **Impacts and Implications of Categorising and Constructing Young People**

In and of themselves, the conflating and adverse constructions and stories about young people’s age, their various identity positions and characteristics, as well as the discrimination, treatment and exclusion they experience in light of these, are reflective of the forms of symbolic

and structural violence that young people face. In addition, these framings and processes have further implications that exacerbate and amplify this violence. This section details how such processes of stereotyping, exclusion and discrimination are conveyed in the literature to affect the ways that young people connect, engage and participate in their everyday spaces. This section also addresses the issue of these dominant framings and stories about young people being constructed without young people's input. Due to this, it details how these framings and stories disrupt and conflate the way that young people should be viewed and understood, and how young people's multifaceted and complex lives are not accurately acknowledged or illuminated through these constructions.

As dominant stories about young people produce conflating stereotypes and elicit harmful processes of exclusion and discrimination, these are said to impact how young people engage and interact in institutional and local spaces. For example, young people who experience discrimination or exclusion are reported to be more likely to have a diminished sense of confidence and self-esteem in social settings, and feel disempowered and disconnected from them (Elias et al., 2021; Markus, 2018). In the Australian context, it was found that 64% of young people who experience forms of social exclusion or discrimination avoid local and community spaces due to them anticipating a recurrence of these processes or re-traumatisation within these realms (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014). This ambivalence is also found in reports of young people feeling uncomfortable and unsafe in integrating with and engaging in spaces, as well as their voluntary withdrawal from various realms due to fears of being disrespected, judged or surveilled (Brimbank City Council, 2023; PHIDU, 2014). This is reported to be especially the case for young people who are othered and placed on the margins as a result of their characteristics and identity positions, as they are reported to lack trust and a feeling of safety (Ivancic et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2019; Tiller et al., 2020), be less likely to experience place-based belonging and autonomy (Kamp et al., 2017; Wyn et al., 2018), and feel reluctant to take refuge or participate in institutional and public places (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Sonn et al., 2018). This documented hesitancy and avoidance of these settings, as well as young people's lack of participation and contribution within them, is not to be mistaken for young people's diminished interest and passion for connecting or a presumed sense of apathy

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(Botchwey et al., 2019). Farthing (2010) states that young people's perceived rejection of participation and engagement may be a response to faulty institutions or spaces, the agendas that these realms hold, and young people's experiences within them, rather than to participatory engagement itself. This demonstrates how imposed framings about young people's lives, demeanours and potential, as well as the adverse experiences and processes of exclusion and discrimination they encounter, do not just exist in a vacuum, but circulate and impact how young people are treated and included in institutional and community spaces, which can in turn lead to them withdrawing from these settings (Botchwey et al., 2019; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020). In addition, ambivalence surrounding these realms may also limit young people's access to the opportunities and resources these settings hold as well as the potential they may bring for enabling young people's social wellbeing and sense of community (Bilbrough, 2018; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Foundation for Young Australians, 2020; Sonn et al., 2021). This reflects how young people's experiences of structural and symbolic violence influence the relationship young people have with institutional and community spaces, and how the detachment and withdrawal itself can also magnify and add to these violent and adverse outcomes.

In addition to young people's connection to and participation in spaces being hindered as a result of conflating framings and adverse experiences, researchers have argued that problematic impacts of dominant constructions also lie in young people being excluded and silenced from processes of telling stories about themselves (Fox & Fine, 2013). Although young people's lives are constantly spoken about and debated in the literature as well as through public and political discourses, stories about youth are not always presented and told by the young people themselves (Foundation for Young Australians, 2020). Fox & Fine (2013) convey this when they state that "there is no other group that has been systematically researched and written about without their consent, wisdom, outrage or their right to re-present" (p. 321). The absence of young people's voices is prevalent as a large proportion of young people are not quoted or able to re-present stories about their lives within community spaces or on public platforms such as the media (Foundation for Young Australians, 2020; Notley et al., 2020). Instead, the majoritarian stories and narratives composed about young people are often told and controlled by those outside of the

youth experience (Fricker, 2007; Hill, 2006; Murriss, 2013). While young people are often spoken for and written about as the objects of inquiry (Malherbe et al., 2017), adults speaking on behalf of young people is said to be more harmful than the absence of young people's stories altogether (Bilbrough, 2018). This is because it may deny young people opportunities and access to speak for themselves which contributes to and reproduces symbolic and epistemic forms of violence for them (Bilbrough, 2018; Foundation for Young Australians, 2020). Adults telling young people's stories without including their voices and perspectives also reinforces power imbalances and hierarchies that perpetuate the notion that certain groups have the right to define the experiences and identities of others (Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Malherbe et al., 2017). In reference to the Indigenous communities' stories, but holding similar sentiments, Alexis Wright (2016) details the harm that a lack of control in telling one's story has:

When it comes to how our stories are being told, supposedly on our behalf, or for our interest or supposed good, it has never been a level playing field. We do not get much of a chance to say what is right or wrong about the stories told on our behalf—which stories are told or how they are told. It just happens, and we try to deal with the fallout (para. 5)

Furthermore, Bell, L. A. (2019) speaks of how these processes of dominant groups constructing stories enables them to be seen in a favourable light in relation to others, whilst also forming stories that support the status quo by marginalising others. The exerting of epistemic power to tell young people's stories not only enables adults to control society's understandings about youth and reproduce deficit stories about them, but continues to normalise adults as the knowers and subsequently positions young people as sub-knowers (Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Malherbe et al., 2017).

Contested and problematised constructions also impact young people as their exclusion from telling stories about themselves can lead to stereotypes which represent conflated or exaggerated social constructions about them (Hall et al., 2019). Such stories often label and paint young people through one-dimensional identities, particularly in light of their affiliated social categories such as race and gender (Gharabaghi & Anderson-Nathe, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2010). Additionally, this categorising not only positions young people to be seen through limiting ideas



based on their age and characteristics, but this conflation more often than not homogenises youth in subordinate and negative ways (Agung-Igusti et al., 2021). Young (2008) suggests that oppression and marginalisation occur to people when they are classified in groups, particularly when others assign and impose markers on them, and shows how this can lead to them being excluded and mistreated. Likewise, Tuck (2009) claims that there is a hyper-focus on the adversity and oppression of communities, and that stories and research about communities unintentionally, or in some cases intentionally, lead to portrayals of them being broken and filled with despair, which may not represent them truthfully. For young people, this is seen in the frequent documentation and dissemination of their pain, loss, suffering, disadvantage, deficiency and troubled nature, which are often the stories that define them in dominant constructions about their lives (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2018; Gharabaghi & Anderson-Nathe, 2018; Tuck, 2009). Teo's (2010) view is that when academic literature and media continue to associate psychological deficit and risk with marginalised bodies, particularly in the context of youth, this can perpetuate epistemological violence. Given this, researchers are encouraged to consider the long-term impacts of doing research that may be devaluing and disempowering for young people, and may paint and reinforce one-dimensional notions of their lives (Tuck, 2009).

These types of stories not only conjure inaccurate and misrepresented framings that homogenise young people through distorted ideas about their age and affiliated positionings, but the over-fixation on these conflated and limited constructions is also problematic as they obliterate the alternative stories young people may carry (Mitchell, 2019; Windle, 2008). Hammack (2008) conveys that whilst youth's identities are often presumed and documented as a burden that leads to experiences of discrimination or prejudice, particularly for those who are marginalised, they can also be active assets that provide a sense of pride and connection, initiate solidarity and belonging, or motivate youth to take action and advocate for social change (Hope, 2019; McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2017; Mitchell, 2016; Pacey et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2022; Vizenor, 2008). This is seen through literature that alludes to how young people who are racialised and racially vilified also experience Black joy and reclamation (Steele & Lu, 2018; Tanksley, 2019). It is also documented in raced, queer and gender expansive youth engaging in activism (Fine et al., 2018), or how young people from low SES areas prosper and have stories of

resilience and resistance despite their perceived deficiencies (Bok, 2010; Quadros et al., 2021). Hammack (2008) speaks about the alternate ways in which identities can be understood and experienced, and other scholars write about how such concepts should be conceptualised as complex, bringing forth both burdens and benefits in people's lives (Gordon, 1997). Gonzalez et al. (2014) document that people have stories about loss, suffering, pain, and destruction, "but there are also stories of survival. Stories about resilience. Stories about pride... stories about healing" (p. 32). For this reason, the range of stories of young people's lives need to be told and brought to the surface. As dominant and majoritarian stories reflect black-and-white thinking that oftentimes omits the complexities and multifacetedness of young people's lives, they often fail to acknowledge how young people may have an amalgamation of stories in their lives (Avraamidou, 2020; Collins, 2000a; 2000b; Wilkins, 2012).

Dominant framings and constructions may also not account for the different ways identities intersect and fluctuate, or the diverse proximities young people have to their characteristics and facets as one's identity positions may be integral in the lives of some young people, but for others these same affiliations may not function as prominently or may merely be used as labels to describe them (Avraamidou, 2020; Gibson & Macleod, 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2014; Sonn et al., 2022). Scholars further suggest that conflating people based on categories should be avoided and instead of being seen as members of groups, people should be able to form their lives free from stereotypes or group norms (O'Sullivan, S., 2015; Young, 2008). The result may be that young people may have stories to tell about their identities as well as their lives beyond the social categories they are affiliated with. Gordon (1997) conceptualises this as complex personhood, where lives are complicated, layered and multifaceted, and people should have the right to have and affirm their complex personhood (O'Sullivan, S., 2023). In the discipline of community psychology, Rappaport (2000) emphasises that researchers and practitioners have a role and responsibility in supporting processes for turning tales of terror into joy, in documenting communities through their multifaceted and complex natures, as well as in suspending harmful impositions and conflating notions (Foundation for Young Australians, 2020; García-Ramírez et al., 2014; Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

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In conclusion, this chapter reflects the ways in which young people are commonly spoken about and constructed, as well as the adverse experiences they endure as a result of these impositions, to highlight the forms of structural and symbolic violence they face. It details how young peoples' age subjects them to particular stereotypes and assumptions about their lives, as well as age-based forms of discrimination and exclusion. Social categorisations and facets, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and SES, are also discussed in this chapter to show how these produce particular sets of meaning about young people's lives. As the chapter gives rise to the specific and conflating stereotypes that are formed due to these categories intersecting with young people's age, it also illustrates how these constructions convey ideas about youth's hindered autonomy, maturity and capabilities as well as their troublesome and at-risk nature. In addition to these imposed framings reflecting forms of structural and symbolic violence, violence is also unveiled through the discrimination and exclusion young people experience as a result of these affiliations and stereotypes. The impacts of these constructions and adverse experiences are then detailed through discussion of young people's hindered comfortability and ambivalence in participating and engaging in institutional and community spaces. This too is reflective of the forms of violence that manifest in young people's everyday lives as their withdrawal and hesitancy limits their access to resources and opportunities that these realms provide. Additionally, although a plethora of stories exist about young people, young people are often left out of processes in forming stories about themselves in the dominant discourse. Given this, these documented stories about young people told by others often misrepresent and oversimplify young people's identities, experiences and lives, scarcely represent young people positively and accurately, and fail to capture what may lie beyond these conflations, such as young people's nuanced and rich identities, their realities or potential, and the unique and multifaceted experiences they carry.

### **Chapter 3: Young People Responding to Structural and Symbolic Violence**

The previous chapter detailed the ways that young people experience structural and symbolic violence arising from the imposition of conflating constructions and stereotypes about their social categories, their limited opportunities for rectifying or remedying these framings in the dominant contexts, and the processes of discrimination and exclusion which diminish young people's movement and participation in local and institutional spaces. Just as these limiting constructions and experiences of violence have been documented, there are also responses and approaches written about which can be used to address and counter such forms of violence. I begin this chapter by conveying the importance of young people being involved in collaborating and leading the practices and processes to address and respond to these forms of violence, and how this manifests through community-engaged and participatory approaches. The values, assumptions, principles and benefits of these approaches are reviewed and distilled to show how they are well suited for centralising groups who are subordinately positioned and rendered invisible, such as young people, and for calling on their knowledge.

In addition to documenting the ideal ways of working with young people, the practices adopted to engage in this responsive work are also emphasised. Using examples drawn from the literature, I illustrate how meaning-making practices such as storytelling can enable young people to create and carve meaning about their identities and experiences in their own, self-determined ways. I explain how young people articulating their stories enables them not only to produce stories from below, but to disrupt dominant framings and lead the knowledge production, which helps in responding to the structural and symbolic violence in their lives. I will then discuss and give examples of the ways that meaning-making practices have been elevated through the use of creative modalities and mediums. After demonstrating how creative vehicles can strengthen and amplify the voices and stories of young people, I will then focus on detailing the creative practice and tool that is community radio. Community radio has been well documented in the literature as an appropriate responsive tool, and it is the creative vehicle utilised for the project researched in this thesis.

### **Community-Engaged Approaches**

Arguments have been made around the need for communities to be included and engaged in work that enables them to address and respond to structural and symbolic forms of violence such as marginalisation, social exclusion and oppression (Bettencourt, 2020; Collins et al., 2018; Lazarus et al., 2015; Mawn et al., 2015; Sonn & Baker, 2016; Suffla et al., 2014; Torre & Fine, 2013). The premise of community-engaged approaches is that communities have the deepest and truest understanding of their own experiences and lives, and therefore they hold critical knowledge that may lead to distinct and ideal ways of understanding, responding to and preventing the violence they experience, as well as contributing to processes which may enhance their lives (Minkler et al., 2003). Community-engaged ways of working are guided by sets of principles that include communities working and collaborating with practitioners and researchers, as well as an orientation towards action and social transformation for the benefit of the community (Miao et al., 2011). Strengthening and sustaining community initiatives is a key value of this work as well as sharing a common vision, creating an inclusive realm to engage in planning and implementation, nurturing cooperation, building leadership and community capacity, and forging an environment for social learning (Miao et al., 2011). Haapanen and Christens (2021) state that various communities within particular social and political contexts may have specific needs, resources and support that they require through these processes (Seedat, 2012). Therefore, determining the diverse ways that community needs can be compensated and accounted for, balancing this against the needs of the other communities and social actors in the space, and creating the appropriate dynamics for collaboration are key in such approaches (Haapanen & Christens, 2021). Furthermore, as community-engaged work should fit the needs and capacities of the community, it should also be consistent in its application and maintenance to sustain the responsive work (Drahota et al., 2016; Haapanen & Christens, 2021).

Community-engaged approaches are often used in contexts with communities that are marked as vulnerable or marginal, such as young people (Evans, 2007; Fletcher 2015; Fox & Fine, 2013; Ginwright, 2011; Oetzel, 2022; Iwasaki et al., 2014; Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011; Wong et al., 2010). Giving young people opportunities to be involved and make decisions about major issues in their lives has been conceptualised as a fundamental strategy for the

prevention and response to forms of youth violence (Evans, 2007; Iwasaki et al., 2014; Morrel-Samuels et al., 2016; Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011; Wong et al., 2010; Zeldin, 2004). Youth-oriented initiatives are also said to be more successful in engaging young people and addressing their circumstances than approaches set in adult realms, as they cater to what young people actually want and need (Bettencourt, 2020; Brennan et al., 2022). Furthermore, they enable better outcomes in addressing and responding to the forms of violence they face (Brennan et al., 2022; Dolan & Brennan, 2016; Zeldin et al., 2000). Scholars have conveyed the opinion that young people have the right to critique and contest ideals that perpetuate blame onto them in regard to social problems, as well as to be involved in spheres, initiatives and programs to expand and shift their social conditions and cultural representations (Fine & Ruglis, 2009). Whilst including young people is reported to be beneficial in making effective change, young people also hold the desire to engage, and want to play a role in forging spaces and practices of their own that may help them to speak in addressing the issues they face (Chaskin, 2009; Langhout & Thomas, 2010; Yardley, 2011). It is documented that young people feel a stronger sense of community and place in contexts where they have control, influence and a voice, and through their engagement in these approaches the possibilities of empowerment and liberation can be raised (Evans, 2007; Zeldin, 2004). In light of this, community psychologists in particular have argued for the creation of avenues that give youth a voice to engage in critical dialogue and opportunities to work with and alongside adults, practitioners and researchers in processes and practices that address harmful conditions in their community (Evans, 2007; Langhout & Thomas, 2010; Richards-Schuster & Dobbie, 2011; Seedat, 2012; Wong et al., 2010).

Whilst these approaches are ideal for addressing issues and creating realms of difference, such approaches also help to shift, challenge and mitigate the pervasiveness of power imbalances and hierarchies that exclude, silence and marginalise young people in traditional contexts (Bloomer et al., 2022; Haapanen & Christens, 2021). This occurs as such approaches support the inclusion of input and voice of youth, and enhance their control and agency in the formulation of concepts and decision-making processes (Abraczinskas & Zarrett, 2020; Collins et al., 2018; Nation et al., 2011; O'Brien & Moules, 2007; Ozer et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2021; Wallerstein et al., 2019). Scholars state that valuing young people's knowledge and recognising them as

experts is also symbolic as it resists deficit-based thinking and research around them and their capabilities. Instead, these approaches position young people as ‘community resources’ as well as contributing citizens who have integral skills, strengths and ideas, thereby focusing on the possibilities, potential and value that young people can bring to spaces and their processes (Chou et al., 2015; Cosgrove et al., 2023; Suffla et al., 2014; White, 2016; Young-Bruehl, 2012; Zeldin, 2004). This reflects how such approaches not only enable response and resistance to forms of violence but how they may also humanise and reframe ideas about young people, positioning them not as subjects in light of their circumstances or potential violence, but as people who have agency, skills and knowledge that actively contribute to addressing, responding to and challenging the violence imposed on them.

Community-engaged approaches take place on different levels and can be enacted for different purposes (Cornish et al., 2023; Hart, 2008; Seedat, 2012). Frameworks and continuums are conceptualised to understand these varying encapsulations which are distinguished by the different degrees of community knowledge, agency control and ownership (Bowen et al., 2010; Hart, 2008; Hayes et al., 2012; Lazarus et al., 2015). These range from consultation, where input and advice from community informs researchers or practitioners in their decision-making and practices, to collaborative engagement that increases community involvement through opportunities for community decision-making and leadership (Hayes et al., 2012; Lazarus et al., 2015). For example, Mawn et al. (2015) showcase community consultation through documenting the work of young people invited to engage in a working group to inform better youth mental health methods and research (Hamilton et al., 2004). Bringing their own diverse experiences of mental health, young people engaged in a working group to discuss research priorities around youth mental health with academics and clinicians, provided feedback and collaborated on ideas with them, and delivered workshops to researchers and clinicians (Mawn et al., 2015). The young people involved in this initiative were able to identify optimal ways of working in regard to youth mental health that were often overlooked by adult researchers, and suggested research tools that they felt were ideal and accessible to their age bracket. Mawn et al. (2015) found that in addition to reshaping the landscape of mental health services for youth, the young people also reported that the opportunity to voice their concerns had fostered a sense of confidence and self-

esteem. This reflects how these approaches of consulting and engaging can conjure youth-oriented ideas, methods and responses, and also hold the potential for youth betterment and empowerment (Mawn et al., 2015).

Community-engaged practices can also be implemented through processes of collaboration and partnership (Hayes et al., 2012). Ansloos et al. (2022) give examples of this through their work with Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, Canada. Young people worked in partnership with the researchers to name and identify the structural challenges faced by Indigenous youth in securing housing, which were highlighted to be racial, colonial, and economic barriers. They also worked to suggest strategies for attaining houses and re-shaping housing precarity such as implementing human rights-based approaches to homelessness, strengthening public services, and addressing cultural and socioeconomic safety issues (Ansloos et al., 2022). This work reiterates the inherent value in young people working in partnerships and collaborations, especially to gain insight into tackling the structural problems youth face and finding ways to best address them (Suffla et al., 2014). Dutta et al. (2016) speak of how collaborating and “partnering with individuals and communities ‘on the margins’ and with whom we seek to generate knowledge ‘from the bottom up’ can enable the understanding of their experiences of violence and the contestation of their oppression whilst also ‘pressing for transformative change’” (p. 12). Furthermore, when young people are involved in this kind of collaborative inquiry, where they orchestrate, lead and govern their own realms and initiatives for doing things differently, it reinforces how conditions of injustice produced and designed to privilege and oppress, “are ultimately challengeable and thus changeable” (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 3) and how young people can be part of this process of reimagining.

### **Participatory Approaches**

Seen by Lazarus et al. (2015) as a critical enactment of community psychology, participatory approaches are often drawn upon in research contexts to address the complex issues of young people who are not only marginalised because of their age, but who also experience forms of structural and symbolic violence through a myriad of intersections (Fox & Fine, 2013; Torre & Fine, 2011). Whilst community-engaged approaches include the community and



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recognise their expertise and knowledge, participatory approaches encompass these elements but also further involve constant, direct, embedded engagement with community (Cornish et al., 2023; Fals-Borda, 1987). Participatory approaches in research contexts have evolved from the work of activists, who are eminently concerned with experiential knowledge and empowering marginalised peoples to embark on collective action for social justice in relation to their lives (Freire, 1970; Fals-Borda, 1987). As they recognise that traditional and academic research often neglects the experiences and perspectives of marginalised communities, which is believed to be crucial for understanding their realities (Fals-Borda, 1987), participatory approaches are a way of working that actively centres community and embeds this throughout the various stages of documenting and decision-making in practices and initiatives. This is said to enable the community members to work towards addressing and challenging the injustices in their own lives (Fine et al., 2021; Lazarus et al., 2015), as well as support their engagement in transformative action and systemic and institutional changes that hold the potential for advancing social justice (Camarota & Fine, 2008; Lazarus et al., 2015).

In addition to community control, ownership and self-determination being viewed as the pre-eminent values of participatory approaches (Bowen et al., 2010; Hayes et al., 2012), Cornish et al. (2023) suggest that there are four main principles for participatory work. The first is that no issues or solution to the issues communities face should be decided without valuing community experience, or without the full and direct participation of the community themselves, embodying the notion of “nothing on us, without us” (Fine et al., 2021, p. 345). The second and third principles reflect how participatory work should generate new knowledge and enable transformative process, as it aims to establish empowering sites as well as relationships through its course. This aligns with Fals-Borda and Rahman’s reflection that the basic ideology of participatory action research is that those who are on the margins should progressively transform their environment through their own praxis, but that “others may play a catalytic and supportive role” in addressing and responding with them to these unjust arrangements (1991, p. 13). Young people engaging and participating in action and social-justice oriented practices with adults reflects Anzaldúa’s (1987) notion of *nos/otras* [us (nos) and other women (otras)]. This notion is seen and adopted in work where differently powered people who have different tasks come

together and interact within a contact zone, “reckoning with power and imagining new possibilities” (Evans & Prilleltensky 2007; Fox & Fine, 2013; Huygens, 2011; Torre, 2009; Torre & Ayala, 2009). This also points to how relationality as well as privilege and power are vital in participatory approaches, and how these can be expressed, transformed and used to promote community empowerment (Sonn et al., 2023; Suffla & Seedat, 2014). The fourth principle of participatory work is said to be embedded in power being drawn from the diverse sets of knowledge, expertise and capacities of a community, as well as empowering the critical dialogue within the community. Fine et al. (2021) emphasise this as they state that participatory approaches are not just a methodology that include community in research contexts but they entail an epistemological project around how we come to better know and understand knowledge, and how we orient towards action and justice.

Participatory approaches can manifest through community-based participatory research (CBPR), community participatory action research (CPAR), community organising approaches, or participatory action research (PAR) work (Cornish et al., 2023; Fine & Torre, 2019; Haapanen & Christens, 2021). As participatory approaches insist that constant engagement with community is imperative, these can best be pursued by researchers adopting ethnographic positionings, place-based ways of working, or accompaniment (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Cornish et al., 2023; Fine & Torre, 2019; King et al., 2015; Watkins, 2021). Whilst young people are centred through this approach, researchers can do work with them by combining their skills with the knowledge of the community and engaging in the practices and activities along with the young people. This draws upon what Harding (1993) calls ‘strong objectivity’, gained through deep and active participation (Fine, 2016). Oetzel (2022) states that through this process the transformation of trust, partnership and synergy between communities and researchers or practitioners may be repaired and strengthened, which in turn can lead to mutual gain for both communities and researchers, long-term partnership, as well as capacity building and empowerment on an individual and collective level (Christens & Speer, 2011; 2015; Padilla-Petry & Miño- Puigcercós, 2022; Morrel-Samuels et al., 2016). Furthermore, Kelly (1990) states that the enactment of communities as equal and collaborative partners in such processes is seen as the epitome of community.

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In Fox and Fine's (2013) documentation of participatory work in the context of the Polling for Justice (PFJ) project, forty "young researchers" were sampled. These young people were those who are traditionally underrepresented, overlooked and hyper-surveilled in literature, as well as denied recognition as political actors and producers of critical knowledge, such as LGBTQI youth, youth from low incomes, and youth of colour. In the project, the young people were joined by a mix of adult researchers, academics, community organisers, public health officials, and community lawyers from across New York City. The purpose of the work was for the youth and adult researchers to examine the impact of neo-liberal public policies that impacted young people by documenting the structures and ideologies of oppression they experience, whilst also challenging the dominant construction of young people being the 'problem'. Using a YPAR and youth-organising approach, the research collective cultivated a space of shared respect and dialogue to gather various forms of youth knowledge and construct a survey that could produce both theoretical and provocative generalisability within and across communities of young people in different contexts. The young researchers then collected and disseminated data which would provide and spark larger discussions about the contextual issues faced by youth (Fox & Fine, 2013).

Through young researchers being positioned as experts, working not only to develop initiatives, make decisions and collaborate, but also to lead and participate in the practice, Fox and Fine's (2013) example shows how participatory approaches can support work that seeks to understand how power differentials persist in systems and engage in activities to disrupt them (Seedat, 2012, p. 490; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007). This initiative also shows how participatory approaches and engaging with young people can help challenge structural and symbolic forms of injustice and violence, and provide new ways of working with and addressing youth issues. It also highlights how academia, social movements, research and advocacy — often thought to be mutually exclusive — become intertwined through these approaches (Fine, 2013). From this it can be seen how community-engaged and participatory approaches are underpinned by including and collaborating with youth, and how these approaches enable young people to participate in and lead practices that showcase their perspectives and address their needs and

issues, which benefits not only the research process and its outcomes, but also those who are engaged within them (King et al., 2015; Suffla et al., 2014; Tajima, 2021).

### **Storytelling and Meaning-Making Practices**

Whilst approaches to engaging with community are important, the types of activities and practices that are called on in these contexts are also vital in responding to forms of structural and symbolic violence. Meaning-making is conceptualised as a process whereby individuals and communities construct, interpret and make sense of their experiences, identities or phenomena through diverse forms of stories, language and art (Prilleltensky, 2014). Meaning-making can take shape through storytelling, as such methods facilitate the constructing and reclaiming of knowledge, provide avenues, processes and platforms to support people's efforts to resist and talk back to harmful and mainstream stories of their lives, and produce products that contribute to counterhegemonic scholarship (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017; Riessman & Quinney, 2005). As storytelling reflects an activity and method that ignites "critical, participatory, and socially transformative praxis" (Sonn et al., 2013, p. 295) and provides opportunities for community to articulate their own experiences and have their voices amplified whilst being positioned as agents in the process, these practices are particularly helpful for groups such as young people who may be excluded from dominant forms of knowledge production and who often have stories told for and about them (Parfitt, 2019; Sonn et al., 2013; Torre & Fine, 2011). Drawing from disciplines such as sociology, youth studies and community psychology, this section explicates examples of meaning-making and storytelling documented in the literature as a way for young people to construct and represent their experiences, navigate and respond to forms of violence they face, as well as forge self-determined stories about their identities and social worlds (McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017; Riessman & Quinney, 2005).

In the field of sociology, Andersen (2015) analysed the process through which young people in treatment facilities constructed stories about their drug-using pasts and recovery journeys. Using an ethnographic framework, the researcher collected data by working alongside the young participants in their spaces - in their individual treatment sessions, group therapy, team meetings, meal-times, and recreational activities (e.g. sports) - to document how young people

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engaged in storytelling and meaning-making around their circumstances of drug use and treatment. Stories emerged about how young people conceptualised their past when using drugs, their experiences of being in treatment facilities, as well as their hope for the future. The process conveyed how young people's voices can be amplified and validated through storytelling, and how young people are social actors who can engage in constructing their own meanings about their lives. Given that others often imposed a distorted and harmful meaning onto them in relation to their experiences, Anderson's (2015) documentation showed not just how storytelling enables young people to create authentic and genuine stories about their lives, but how it is also "a creative and potentially empowering act" for them to engage in forming such meaning (Agung-Igusti et al., 2021; Dutta et al., 2016; Hessler & Lambert, 2017; O'Neill, 1994, p. 95).

Scholars in community psychology document not only how communities create stories through storytelling, but also the ways they draw upon a multitude of cultural and symbolic mechanisms and resources to carve their own meanings which challenge and counter limiting ideas about their ethnic, racial and religious identities and communities (see Dutta et al., 2016; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; 2015; Sonn et al., 2013). For example, Sirin and Fine (2007) demonstrate how Muslim American youth have been affected by global and local conflict in the aftermath of 9/11, and how the larger systems of power, privilege, inequality and broader discourses intersect and shape their everyday lived experiences (Sirin & Fine, 2007; Weis & Fine, 2012). In their work Sirin and Fine (2007) also illustrated that, even with these external impositions, young people strategically draw upon their own strategies and resources, using social and cultural understandings shaped by historical processes, positions of power and patterns of privilege, to articulate and construct meaning about their identities. Through young people asserting who they were as hyphenated selves, they were able to form as well as re-form ideas about their identities by contesting and rejecting limiting categories imposed on them, and complicating dominant framings and subjectivities in order to affirm meaning about themselves (Hernandez & Sonn, 2019; Jakubowicz et al., 2014; Kabir, 2014; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Sonn et al., 2022a). This again shows that young people are not passive, but hold and draw upon forms of wealth and knowledge to construct and negotiate meaning, as well as exercise agency in creating and articulating their identities (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Furthermore, as stories

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are unevenly produced and distributed in the dominant discourse due to colonisation, racism and ongoing asymmetries of power, communities engaging in work to create meaning in their own ways becomes a powerful way for them to assert their own stories in the face of the grand narratives and dominant framings (Sonn et al., 2015; Duncan et al., 2014; Sonn et al., 2013).

When meaning and stories about one's experiences and identity are constructed by community drawing upon multiple resources and problematising the majoritarian stories in the process, counterstories arise. Counterstories are stories that construct identities and understandings grounded in community and cultural histories, and which oppose dominant and majoritarian accounts (Agung-Igusti et al., 2021; Sium & Ritskes, 2013). In following young people from migrant and Indigenous backgrounds in the Australian context, Sonn et al. (2014) documented how young people engaged in creating stories about their experiences of negotiating identity and belonging. Through the storytelling process, young people constructed what it's like to be a racialised and ethnicised individual in Australia, as well as what it means to be 'Australian' in a time of perceived multiculturalism. This meaning-making activity was said to enable the group to insert their own stories into the broader discourse, and to reimagine and make visible the ongoing dynamics of exclusion and racialisation which can often be silenced in dominant narratives. This illustrates how young people challenge dominant, conflating and contradictory messages, and how, through storytelling, they develop, strengthen and illustrate a critical understanding of their social conditions (Freire, 1970). Scholars also suggest that through the means of meaning-making and storytelling communities are able to engage in critical examination and reflection on their experiences, and that their awareness and recognition of the patterns surrounding their inequality, discrimination and oppression can also increase (Fine et al., 2021; Suffla et al., 2014; Sonn et al., 2014; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012). This shows how storytelling does not just enable meaning-making, but how it is a critical methodology and vehicle for resistance that can be employed to trouble the colonality of categorisations and symbolic violence that circulate through dominant stories (Sonn et al., 2013). It reveals the hidden or less obvious stories that sustain the current "democratic project" (Drumm, 2013), and can be used as "an important tool for disrupting dynamics of oppression" (Sonn et al., 2013, p. 295; Karabanow & Naylor, 2015).

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These processes can also provide ways to construct meaning beyond perceived ‘damage’ and in light of dominant and concealing categorisations, as storytelling can enable new ways of knowing, being, and reframing one’s self-identity (Fine, 2013). Scholars speak of how we need to view constructs such as identity and subjectivities, as well as people, more fluidly, and storytelling as a meaning-making method enables subjective and complex stories to emerge from the narrative retellings of individuals (Rappaport, 1995). These meanings enable us to see their multidimensional and nuanced identities and give rise to a better understanding of the multiple and intersecting ways that people’s lives exist (Gordon, 1997). Additionally, being able to freely speak about one’s experiences and perspectives through storytelling practices can also enable the construction of a positive group identity for members of the community (Agung-Igusti et al., 2021; Dutta et al., 2016; Hessler & Lambert, 2017; O’Neill, 1994). The use of methods such as storytelling can unveil and speak back to narratives of oppression, displacement and violence, and lead on to more comprehensive and complex stories and understandings of communities lives and identities, which can also help to reclaim and imagine new individual and collective identities (Duncan et al., 2014; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017; Melo, 2023; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Sonn et al., 2021; Sonn et al., 2022b). Stories can also form cultural products and can document, preserve and record cultural heritage and memory about community life and identity, which can contribute to more inclusive, more diverse historical records about the community (Dutta et al., 2022; Ghosh et al., 2006; Quayle & Sonn, 2019; Sobande, 2020; Sonn et al., 2013).

The processes of engaging in storytelling can themselves also contribute to and represent forms of action, countering and resistance beyond the stories themselves (Torre et al., 2001). In the Polling for Justice (PFJ) project work conducted with young people in New York City (Fox & Fine, 2013), the research was felt to create a counterstory to the mainstream narratives that often silence youth and situate them on the margins through discourses of disengagement and risk (Bell, L. A., 2010; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017). Through the research process, the value of narrative resistance for emancipatory goals was highlighted, as the young people actively collected survey responses and shared life stories to make “structural causes visible; private experiences public; acquiescence unthinkable; resistance imperative’ (Fox & Fine, 2013,

p. 329). This example demonstrates how community-driven conceptions of identity and subjectivities can enable the emergence of counter narratives, and how young people came together in solidarity to embark on challenging dominant narratives and constructing versions of themselves, while collectively engaging in action for social justice and mobilising change (Bruner, 1996; Fox & Fine, 2013; Freire, 1970). Furthermore, this work shows how forming stories can be a community and connective practice; voicing history and experience through individual and personal accounts also allows community to organise their own projects of remembering, reclaiming and giving testimony to injustices of the past collectively and collaboratively (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 34; Mankoskwi & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1995; 2000; Sonn et al., 2013; Sonn et al., 2014; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). Furthermore, as Hessler and Lambert (2017) point out, “storytellers recognize one another as peers as they move through a shared creative struggle and culminating experience. The collaborative environment not only allows for the stories’ communicative power to be considered and improved, but for a deeper level of communion to take place.” (Hessler & Lambert, 2017, pp. 26–27). Thus meaning-making and carving stories can forge collective narratives from individual stories, strengthen community and foster bonds of solidarity (Quayle & Sonn, 2019).

In centring communities and their stories through meaning-making processes, storying work also holds the potential and ability to challenge the power dynamics and forms of violence that exist in traditional modes of knowledge production (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Dutta et al., 2016; Drumm, 2013; Sonn et al., 2013; Stewart, 2019; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). Methodologies and approaches that support community to lead and be part of the process of articulating their experiences and corresponding world views disrupt ideological and epistemic forms of violence (Denny-Smith et al., 2019; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; 2021). As young people are seen as subknowers and the control of knowledge production processes by adults can further oppress and marginalise them, practices that enable community-led knowledge are seen as a guiding paradigm that influences and democratises the creation of knowledge, unsettles the processes of paternalism, and challenges cultural and social understandings of who gets to be the knower (Aldana et al., 2021; Cosgrove et al., 2023; Fine, 2013; Suffla et al., 2014; White, 2016; Zeldin, 2004). Young people being able to control, carve and produce their own meanings about



their identities and worlds may not only counter and subvert the forms of symbolic violence that come from others speaking on their behalf, but may also disrupt negative constructions and reduce the stories that reinforce stereotypes (Bailey & Tilley, 2002; Sonn et al., 2013; White, 2016). Narrative inquiry supports the processes of meaning-making and storytelling as it allows researchers to support and grasp the meaning that communities place on their life experiences, and understand how they organise and communicate the many and multiple truths that might otherwise be unknown or silenced (Clandinin & Rosiek; 2007; Drumm, 2013; Glesne & Pugach, 2018; Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2002; Quayle, 2017; Sonn et al., 2013). Prilleltensky (2014) takes this further by suggesting that “meaning-making positions human beings as agents of personal and collective change” (p. 151) with the potential for action and social transformation in light of the stories and knowledge they produce (Fine et al., 2021). Thus, the process of meaning-making not only forges stories and counter stories in response to the forms of structural and symbolic violence, but engaging in the process of storytelling has the potential to change an individual’s position and give them the control and authority to create knowledge, which also contributes to responding to this violence.

In addition to how these storying processes can facilitate and support responses to forms of violence, the sites and realms where communities get to engage in these storying practices and speak about their authentic selves are also important (Case & Hunter, 2012; Torre et al., 2001). Scholars within community psychology convey that minoritised individuals and communities need non-oppressive spaces to participate in articulating oppression and responding and speaking back to symbolic and structural violence (Case & Hunter, 2012; Costa, 2022; Dutta et al., 2022; Fine & Torre, 2016; Karabanow & Naylor, 2015; Montero et al., 2017; Torre et al., 2001). Rappaport (1995) states that, as well as listening to community stories, “helping people to create places that value and support both their personal stories and their collective narratives is an empowering activity” (p. 805). Furthermore, Quayle & Sonn (2019) document that creating sites to engage in the practices and activities of storytelling can also be regarded as a “central strategy for decolonization” (p. 48). While taking part in narrating activities and spaces may promote participation and wellbeing, sites that centre community storytelling are also symbolic and political as they dispute dominant and neoliberal epistemes that position and maintain institutions

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as the sole or legitimate sites for knowledge production (Drumm, 2013; Dutta et al., 2023; Prilleltensky, 2014; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Rice et al., 2018a). These new realms for meaning-making, particularly for communities that are placed on the margins, have been conceptualised in the literature as alternative settings which are grounded in shared values of care, reciprocity and recognition for community truths, and act as home spaces for connection, healing and respite (Agung-Igusti & Sonn, 2022; Collins et al., 2018; Sánchez Ares & Lykes, 2016). Furthermore, radical spaces can emerge for young people when they are given the ability to govern settings and express themselves within them (de St Croix & Doherty, 2023; Fine et al., 2000). According to scholars, these types of settings not only allow young people to build spaces that fit their desires and produce new and authentic understandings about their lives, but can lead to outcomes, stories and expertise that those outside of the youth experience can learn from:

It is in these spaces that youth engage with a kind of deliberate agency, sometimes an urgency, in which reciprocity is assumed, mastery - of spirit, arts, the body, activism - is sought, voices can be heard, and differences can be articulated; deficit models are left at the door... Youth need spaces to work through the pains of oppressed identities... and to organise movements we can't even imagine (Weis & Fine, 2000, p. xii as quoted in Dimitriadis et al., 2009, p. 369).

As spaces where communities can engage in narrating their stories are important, barriers to gaining and maintaining such spaces are also apparent (Case & Hunter, 2012). Green (2013) states that “establishing such an inclusive and equitable space is not a static process, as it presents daily challenges for the youth participants” (p. 324). For the Colour Between The Lines (CBTL) project, institutional constraints were noted when it came to locating and preserving a site and setting for the collective’s storying work to be done (Sonn et al., 2021). Sonn et al. (2021) detail how the creative artists from racialised communities in the CBTL collective experienced systemic inequities and racial discrimination which constrained their ability to find and access spaces within which they could engage, create and produce. Additionally, when sites were made available, these were often governed by those outside of the collective, and often functioned on the outsider’s terms. These circumstances, where community did not have control over the space in which they engaged in their storytelling work, were said to discourage the

collective, disrupt their ways of working, and hinder control of their creative and subjective representations. Therefore, there is a need to focus on how to enable and enhance existing counter-spaces, support community in creating new ones, and sustain them in safe ways to facilitate young people as they engage in the processes of meaning-making within (Belton, 2013; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Lerner et al., 2009; Massey, 2013; Richards-Schuster & Pritzker, 2015; Maton, 2008).

In conclusion, this section of the chapter highlights and examples how communities engaging in meaning-making and storytelling are empowered to express, name and give meaning to their identities and experiences in their own ways, rather than those of outsiders. It also shows how such practices can help young people in shaping as well as challenging the stories about them, and how this can create meaning that counters narratives which veer from their realities. This section also shows how storytelling can disrupt existing systems of knowledge production and position young people as agents of meaning-making by enabling them to verbalise and forge alternative representations and stories, and uplift the multiple voices and knowledges that thrive in their communities.

### **Telling Stories through Creative Tools and Vehicles**

While forms of meaning-making, such as storytelling, are highlighted as a practice that carries the potential for resistance to dominant framings through processes of counter-storytelling as well as the creation of new and alternative understandings and narratives, there is a growing interest in modalities of meaning-making beyond traditional written or text-based forms (Baker et al., 2020; Greene, 1995; Halverson, 2013; Osei-Kofi, 2013; Suffla et al., 2014). Widely documented across a range of disciplines, creative methodologies are becoming exceedingly prevalent in the context of understanding people's life experiences, communities and identities, as well as their perspectives on complex societal issues and political matters (Bunn et al., 2020; Futch & Fine, 2014; Glaw et al., 2017; Keast & Sonn, 2020; López, 2022; Reavey, 2012; Walmsley, 2013, Sonn et al., 2018). Scholars have found that such vehicles are particularly useful for expanding on and discussing content based around "intercultural concepts and perceptions of nondominant groups" (Platt & Bobele, 2022, p. 240; Huss et al., 2015;

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Knowles & Cole, 2008). In light of this, creative methods are often used by young people to produce their own stories and narratives (Futch & Fine, 2014; Keast & Sonn, 2020; López, 2022). Whilst creative vehicles are commonly used in intentional and pre-planned processes of storytelling, they can also be summoned for storytelling in organic and non-premeditated ways, with communities simply come together to engage in creative processes that still result in powerful tellings and outcomes (Karabanow & Naylor, 2015; Malherbe, 2020). This section of the chapter conveys the benefits of varied creative tools and vehicles, how they enrich storytelling processes and the production of meaning, and how engagement with such methods can elicit and amplify benefits for the communities telling their stories, as well as for those who are consuming them.

Creative tools and vehicles are seen as helpful when engaging in storytelling processes as they are regarded to hold the ability to derive and express meaning, emotions and experiences that may not easily be communicated otherwise (Feen-Calligan et al., 2020; Kearney & Hyle, 2004). It is also suggested that they better encapsulate and highlight the complex nature of lived experience, as well as create stories that are more well-defined and tangible (Huss et al., 2015; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Creative vehicles have the ability to convey meaning that is messy and contradictory. They provide a sense of liberty, imagination, expansiveness and freedom in creation and delivery and can capture the intricacies of stories, social positionings and experiences (Futch & Fine, 2014; López, 2022). Creative activities and practices often position community as the creators and governors, which enables them to lead the process in selectively deciding on what will be included in the final products, and what is deemed important in the stories they create (Malherbe et al., 2017, p. 170). Robinson & Cambre (2013) further suggest that artistic methods can both inform activism and contain commitments to intervening and transforming power relations, while other scholars detail specifically how creative and artistic methods can be used by the community as a vehicle for acts of resistance (Melo, 2023). In addition to creative tools enabling communities to be epistemic agents by centring them and allowing them to express their perspectives, they are also documented to help challenge and question aspects of their social reality through critical and creative ways (Malherbe et al., 2017). This is also reflected in the tellings of Adolfo Albán Achinte (2017) who

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states that creativity and art are “a permanent reflexive act” that not only forms artistic objects, but expands visibility and opens spaces for silences and erased stories. Considering this, creativity and art can “radically reconstruct knowledge, power and being, and thus allowing for conditions where we can construct fairer societies” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 18). This demonstrates how creative and community-arts practices can ignite dialogue and imagination to strengthen individuals, groups and communities and help them to engage in their past, present and future, whilst enabling liberatory outcomes and challenging norms around what it means to know, how we come to know, what we know, and who can know (Karabanow & Naylor 2015; Osei-Kofi 2013; Suffla et al., 2014; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Creative ways of telling stories and making meaning also hold the potential for amplifying consciousness-raising and enabling those consuming the stories to see, hear and feel the community or themselves in the art created (Malherbe et al., 2017). For those doing the creating, they may go through a process of expression that can be cathartic and healing but also fun (Cosgrove et al., 2023; Keast & Sonn, 2020). Communities can also gain and build skills as well as confidence in using diverse tools and methods (Malherbe et al., 2017). This emphasises how the engagement of using creative tools and vehicles is deemed just as vital and symbolic as the stories and meanings produced in the process (Sonn et al., 2018).

The creative vehicles and methods used to support storytelling processes come in an array of styles, and can provide opportunities for community to capture and form stories and meaning in innovative and elevated ways (Costa, 2022; Fielding et al., 2019). For example, visual methods are often drawn upon in research contexts, as seen through the use of photography, photovoice or photo-elicitation (Reavey, 2012). This can take place through the use of pre-existing visual materials, through visual processes used to examine and explore phenomena, or through visual products created by participants to form narratives to translate their experience into knowledge (Banks, 2001; Pain, 2012; Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Cosgrove et al., 2023; Malherbe et al., 2017). These tools have been used for carving stories about young people’s subjectivities and futures (Keast & Sonn, 2020), for articulating their concerns, fears and perspectives about their communities (Suffla et al., 2014), as well as for exploring and asserting their racial, ethnic and gendered identities (Cosgrove et al., 2023). Embodied and

immersive practices such as theatre and filmmaking are also creative vehicles that have been called on to articulate community knowledge, stories and experiences (Malherbe & Everitt-Penhale, 2017; Sonn et al., 2018; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). This is displayed in the documentation of theatre-making being used to tell stories of youth from the African diaspora and to express their community awakenings, transformations, and the search for rootedness (Sonn et al., 2018). Similarly, scholars have also documented processes of young people engaging in filmmaking the phenomenological experiences of housing precarity which have given rise to stories about their feelings of community and safety, youth homelessness, and accounts of traumatic family pasts and exploitative street encounters (Karabanow & Naylor, 2015). As creative methodologies provide different ways to construct, produce and share stories, and afford specific platforms for delivering meaning about identities and experiences, in addition to visual and embodied tools, audio and linguistic tools are also commonly drawn upon to do this work (Cosgrove et al., 2023; Malherbe et al., 2017; Suffla et al., 2014). Community radio is an example of an audio and linguistic creative method, and is the specific vehicle used in the project of interest to this thesis. Given this, community radio will be discussed thoroughly in the next section, with examples to illustrate its benefits and use.

### ***Radio as a Creative Audio and Linguistic Vehicle***

Audio and linguistic methodologies and vehicles, such as radio, have a well-established history of providing a creative platform for community stories, and their use has become increasingly prevalent in recent times both for consumption and creation (Baker et al., 2020; Dowling & Miller, 2019; Foxwell, 2012; Laskar & Bhattacharyya, 2021; Rogers et al., 2020; Pavarala & Jena, 2020). Radio is described as a blend of audio techniques with art and narrative approaches, that empowers participants in their meaning-making as it uses and includes their voices in platforming and telling their stories (Baker et al., 2020; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Audio and sound in qualitative inquiry is theorised as a system of knowledge that is generative through resonance and is felt to have the potential for building an understanding around “how one is” and “what one knows” (Gershon, 2013, p. 258). The textures and tones of community voices heard and listened to through radio are considered to be carrying out disruptive and anti-colonial work, particularly when outsiders consume the sound and hear the voices of community

and the knowledge they carry (Robinson, 2020). Furthermore, Gallagher (2015) states that there is also potential for sonic affect from creative methods supporting the articulation of ideas and perspectives which can register feeling, memory and meaning, as well as spur relationality and connection. As community radio is the creative vehicle that was utilised to engage in meaning-making processes with young people in this current study, this section aims to distil the principles of community radio, the benefits it brings, and the ways community radio has been used by communities of young people in Australia as well as overseas as a specific tool, vehicle and practice. Through these examples, I argue that community radio holds the potential for storytelling and meaning-making about young people's social worlds, experiences, perspectives and identities.

Whilst mainstream forms of commercial radio broadcast to large numbers of listeners, community radio is a participatory vehicle for expression that is specifically created in and for local contexts by community members (CBAA, 2014; Meadows, 2009; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Its defining characteristic is that community members are involved in some or all aspects of community radio production, creation and broadcasting. It is a vehicle that enables communities to “tell their own diverse stories, to share experiences, and... to become active creators and contributors of media,” and it both relies on the community for resources and positions the community as a resource (Al-Hassan et al., 2011, p. 1). Through these properties, community radio is also a creative tool that naturally and inherently embeds and enables forms of community input, engagement and participation (CBAA, 2014; Meadows, 2009). Created and used by community groups who are generally isolated, misrepresented or economically, linguistically or politically marginalised, community-owned and controlled radio has been one of the most widespread avenues of the arts to contribute to liberation processes (Watkins & Shulman, 2008), and it is deemed the most appealing tool for participatory communication (CBAA, 2014; Dagron, 2001; Marchi, 2009). In light of these properties and capabilities, community radio as a vehicle is said to democratise communication as it seeks to level the hierarchies of power as well as give community the social capital and ability to express their thoughts, perspectives and opinions that they may not otherwise be able to share, or which are often silenced (Meadows, 2009). Community radio is also a beneficial vehicle and tool for

community as it provides better reach and is more accessible for community members, as it is creative practice that can be run and sustained with little initial investment (CBAA, 2014; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). Due to this, scholars state that even small-scale and precarious community radio spaces are able to make a difference for their users and listeners (Dagron, 2001; Good et al., 2021).

In the literature, community radio has been documented as a platform for various forms of knowledge and insight for various groups and communities (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In the Global South, communities have used community radio to speak about local issues and matters, or to speak back to the dominant ideas of a social and political nature (Dagron, 2001; Fombad & Jiyane, 2019; Laskar & Bhattacharyya, 2021). Furthermore, community radio has also been documented to facilitate the challenging of state-run, dominant and mainstream media, contribute to resistance against oppressive government and labour practices, provide a voice to those often silenced, and inspire grassroots movements (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In the Global North, community radio is documented as being used by communities who are not often seen or heard in dominant and mainstream spaces, or who may be disproportionately represented in those spaces, such as young people and Indigenous, migrant or refugee communities (Foxwell, 2012; Wilkinson, 2019). Watkins and Shulman (2008) speak of this when they state that radio amplifies cultural forms that have been erased or forbidden in mainstream cultural institutions, while also enabling communities to create and find a platform for meaning and counterstories. In recent times community radio has also been described as having become a “tool for self-empowerment and resistance during the COVID-19 pandemic” (Belik, 2021, p. 79). During and following this period, community radio has been used by communities to fight fake news (Laskar & Bhattacharyya, 2021) and to facilitate and supporting remote learning (Dwiana & Sutarno, 2023). Furthermore, in addition to the knowledge, stories and education that can be vocalised through conversation and dialogue, community radio can also facilitate the making and airing of local music, which has the potential to impact and illustrate cultural identity as well as foster community pride (Good et al., 2021). Other linguistic and creative forms of art, such as spoken word or rap, can also be given a platform on radio, which can help communities to articulate issues, counter-discourses, and lived experiences in artistic ways (Chiumbu & Munoriyarwa,



2023, p. 98; Van Zoonen, 2005). As a platform for these various forms of knowledge community, community radio is said to contribute to the sharing and strengthening of important community information and insights, and propel multiple styles and forms of meaning-making (Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Although used by many, community radio is especially utilised by young people, as the Morning Consult Pro (2020) report showed that the highest engagers with auditory methods and realms are those aged 18-22. Scholars state that community radio serves as a preferred medium for young people as it empowers and centres them, and provides them with a platform where they can create dialogue around issues of importance to them and their communities, an outcome which is often unattainable in the dominant and mainstream spaces for storymaking (Green, 2013; Gustafsson, 2013; Marchi, 2009; Podkalicka, 2009; Wagg, 2004). Glevarec (2005) posits that radio has emerged as an alternative creative media forum where young people can engage in trivial conversation in addition to leading commentary about social, political, cultural, and economic issues. This reflects how radio-making as a practice and realm can become a third space for learning, consciousness-raising and dialogue about a range of personal and political topics. Furthermore, it is the content produced by young people and published through these emerging broadcasters that has the potential to “eliminate(s) traditional stereotypes about youths and their challenges - by framing their own stories without an adult point-of-view” (Matsilele et al., 2023, pp. 126-127). An exemplification of community radio being used by young communities can be found in an ethnographic study that followed the KC LIVE station (Wilkinson, 2019). KC LIVE was a community radio space where young people shared their place-based experiences about being from the town of Knowsley in the United Kingdom (Wilkinson, 2019). Using radio as the vehicle, young people spoke to their experiences around place-based identity, their perceptions of being on the outer in other municipalities, as well as their belonging and community in their town. They dialogically discussed and aired their perspectives and experiences regarding the ways that they understand categories of ‘us and them’, and also about how they develop relationships across categorical differences (Wilkinson, 2019). In this study, radio was deemed a practice that not only facilitated meaningful encounters but encouraged listenership and connective learning that transcended cultural, class, ethnic and

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geographic boundaries for young people (Wilkinson, 2019). From this example and the stories it engendered, community radio was conveyed to build bridges for young people to form stories which help those outside understand their experiences (Meadows, 2009). This shows how radio making is not just a tool and practice for communities to create meaning, but how it also enables the projection and sharing of stories, which hold the potential to radically transform the perceptions of listeners (Copeland & De Moor, 2018; Khan et al., 2017).

Just as community radio is used for stories about place and community, personal stories are also shared using community radio (Green, 2013; Stewart, 2019). Ojwang (2017) presents a case study of urban youth in Nairobi, Kenya using radio-making as a way of reclaiming identity. Young people in Nairobi are said to bear “a heavy burden both as victims and perpetrators of crime, wanton sex trade and drug abuse” (Ojwang, 2017, p. 9). In their documentation, Ojwang (2017) describes how community and urban radio, that was managed, presented and targeted to young people, was used to redefine youth identity and possibilities by empowering them to express their knowledge and experiences through the radio. On their radio program, young people articulated their own perceptions and experiences of crime and community policing, in light of the ways they are dominantly constructed. The radio shows they produced exposed and illustrated the effects of drug use, and gave a platform for community health and human rights advocacy messages. The author talks about how the radio-making process not only enabled young people to speak their minds, reconstruct and reframe their identities and experiences, address the needs of young people in similar circumstances, and break down traditional patterns and harmful narratives imposed on them, but it also provided young people with opportunities and resources to engage in peace promotion work (Ojwang, 2017). Similarly, Green (2013) documented a case study of Black youth in a radio collective called, Youth Voices. The objective of this radio program was to “incorporate a human rights framework and encourage youth to examine their own lives and communities, recognizing the various forms of oppression that limit us all; then get that message across the air to their peers and families” (Green, 2013, p. 322). The documentation conveyed the ways that the community radio station and radio-making served to create opportunities for civic participation as well as the development of a strong sense of historical and cultural identity for African American adolescents. The radio content produced

was also said to encapsulate what Mahiri (2004) calls “street scripts” where young people deemed to “most likely to be written off as failures” (p. 45) may forge narratives about their complex lives and offer their own analysis of “being young, urban, and African American” (p. 19). Similarly Green (2013) stated that the young people in the Youth Voices program used radio “to assert their voice to more accurately reflect their lived realities and to act as agents of social justice” (p. 318), thereby showing how radio can be used to counter, disrupt and construct community-led ideas and stories of self and the world.

As identities can be constructed and dominant stories can be challenged through the vehicle of community radio, the practice has also been seen to promote and draw upon social and community change through the stories produced (Seedat 2014; Stewart, 2019). Stewart (2019) explored the importance of listening to and valuing the views and experiences of young and middle-aged people with disabilities who were involved in working and volunteering in the community radio space, as they documented how community radio processes can facilitate the construction of stories that may enlighten and shift ways of working. Through the research process, participants in the radio station contributed to a community radio documentary series called *It's The People's Radio*, giving their insight into what it means to be in the community radio space, as well as the barriers and facilitators of community radio work. Stories around exclusion and inclusion were shared, such as difficulties in accessibility and the need to increase participation and visibility of people with disabilities. As stories were articulated by participants, Stewart (2019) conveyed how personal storytelling formed an important role in empowerment processes, and how radio can support storytelling through amplifying and making lived experiences public, which made the participants feel liberated (Anderson & Bigby, 2017; Spurgeon, 2015). Furthermore, the content of *It's The People's Radio* contributed to shaping and forming a policy model for community radio stations and other organisations to strengthen participation of people with disabilities in the community radio sector, and to facilitate procedures that are inclusive and adhere to their needs. This shows how those who are not always included in conversations of change are able to carve their own representations and share important perspectives of their lives through radio. From this radio-making is seen to enable self-reconceptualisation, for when a community and its members engage through radio they are seen

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as people who have agency, capacity and valuable insight. Additionally, this example highlights how stories formed in the process can also act as important cultural resources in addressing issues and contributing to larger structural solutions that shape society as well as processes that impact the community.

The practice and process of community radio can also form outcomes beyond the stories they tell, particularly outcomes of connection and community. 3 Kool N Deadly (3KND), Melbourne's first Indigenous owned and managed radio station, is an example of how radio can create a collective through its practice (3KND, n.d.; Foxwell 2012; Meadows, 2009). In addition to sharing their personal and community stories about culture, politics and Treaty, and providing a platform for culturally relevant art and music, 3KND forges a connecting and affirming space for its members. Foxwell (2012) emphasises that whilst community radio in this context is used as a tool for 3KND hosts to share narratives within and beyond the Indigenous community, radio practices also enable them to construct safe contexts and sites for storytelling on their terms, which can foster a sense of belonging in contrast to the processes of exclusion and erasure they often face (Fielding et al., 2019). This shows how using community radio and building radio spaces enables groups who are often silenced to voice their truths, identities and perspectives, but also how such realms and practices can form to be a space for collaboration, community, companionship and respite (Rogers et al., 2020). This is emphasised as scholars state that community radio realms provide alternative settings for interaction and dialogue in addition to comfort, resistance, escapism and refuge that is distant from formal organisational or institutional sites of an embodied and physical nature (Edmonds et al., 2014; Fokides, 2017; Kelkar & Spinelli, 2016; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2020; Miño-Puigcercós et al., 2019; Toolis, 2017).

These benefits are particularly prominent in community radio spaces that exist virtually or that sit within digital contexts. Whilst digital and online pathways, as well as community-oriented spaces, can reproduce power imbalances and have issues of their own (Massey, 2013; Toolis & Hammack, 2015), it is suggested that they also open up other possibilities of how meaning-making and creative processes may take place, land and be engaged with, which can spur creative storytelling and narrating processes in an innovative and flexible nature (Harle et al., 2018; Rice et al., 2018a; Tzanavaris et al., 2021;). Scholars talk about how the use of digital

media and technologies can also enhance interaction when making community radio content (Bottomley, 2020; Edmonds et al., 2014; Matsilele et al., 2023). Moreover, content produced and shared through community radio can have an expanded life beyond the shows themselves, as radio content produced through digital means can be streamed, stored, archived and re-played on online platforms, spaces and applications (Bottomley, 2020). In the work of South African community radio stations Zibonele FM and Bush Radio, which are based on geographical communities of young people, Matsilele et al. (2023) documented how digital recorders, software and programs enabled the capturing and editing of radio content, and that digital mediums were used to broadcast and provide a platform for the content on air. They also illustrated how making the radio content available on online streaming platforms as well as through social media was seen to expand its reach and listenership.

Brailas (2021) furthers this by stating that storytelling through digital means can be advantageous as stories can be turned into digital artefacts, which “can be viewed, reviewed, shared face-to-face or online, performed and re-performed, modified, tinkered, tweaked, and fine-tuned” (p. 18). Using digital tools in the context of radio work with communities of youth is also said to be fitting, as young people use digital technology and media at an increasing pace and are suggested to have familiarity with and exposure to such tools (Choo et al., 2020; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2017). Young people in Australia strongly reflect this sentiment as reports indicate that Australian young people feel more comfortable and in control of practices that engage with virtual and digital resources (Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 2023; Cheded, 2021; Fu & Cook, 2021). This shows how community radio can be enhanced through the use of digital tools, mediums and platforms as it forms content that has the potential to disrupt conventional understandings and hierarchies of space, place, border and territory, and can help to transform the dissemination and expansion of knowledge, stories and outcomes (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2020; Matsilele et al., 2023; Tzanavaris et al., 2021; Vobič & Dahlgren, 2013).

### **Considerations and Critiques of Community-Engaged and Meaning-Making Approaches in the Literature**

The reviewed literature gives examples of collaborative ways of working with youth as well as of practices of creative meaning-making as better ways of understanding their identities and lives, and of bringing light to and responding to the forms of violence inflicted upon them. In light of the literature review, a number of criticisms, gaps and aspects for further exploration around community-engaged and meaning-making work have been identified. These pertain to the constrained and limited types of stories young people get to tell through the processes of meaning-making, questions as to who gets to document young people's stories in the literature, as well as the proximity and embeddedness of researchers in research involving meaning-making with youth. This section addresses these limitations, and highlights avenues to understand these processes and practices further and enhance ways to document and conduct meaning-making work with and alongside young people.

#### ***Enabling Expansive Stories through Meaning Making***

Due to programs and realms often being carved out for distinct groups, or researchers coming into spaces with a keen interest to explore particular aspects of their lives, much of the literature about young people engaging in meaning-making practices focuses on particular communities of youth who have shared characteristics, identities and lived experiences (Agung-Igusti & Sonn, 2021; Gatwiri & Moran, 2022; Maton, 2008; Ojwang, 2017; Sonn et al., 2013; Wilkinson, 2019). The hyper-focus on a community's specific experiences and identities is seen in storytelling work with groups of young migrants or diasporic communities whose documented stories are tethered to patterns and themes around racial violence and discrimination (Agung-Igusti & Sonn, 2021; Gatwiri & Moran, 2022; Sonn et al., 2013), or through stories about young people that are exclusively related to them living and navigating issues in particular spaces, contexts and neighbourhoods (Andersen, 2015; Suffla et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 2019). Although the documentation and focus of these types of stories are intentional and justifiably seek to understand particular histories, identities and experiences of youth, they undoubtedly do not reflect the only stories that young people have to offer. Despite being collectively grouped or

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sharing similar identities or experiences, not all young people come into creative spaces, programs or settings with the same stories to share, as young people have a plethora of interests, desires, experiences and identities they may want to narrate and tell about themselves (Agung-Igusti, 2021; Rappaport, 1987). Furthermore, being restricted in the type of meaning-making they may form can be conveyed as contributing to forms of structural and symbolic violence as it can hinder them from presenting the perspectives they may want to publicise, and may continue to perpetuate constrained and limiting narratives about their lives within the literature and public sphere (Agung-Igusti et al., 2021; Andersen, 2015; Rance et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a need to understand and document stories of young people that do not have set parameters or agenda for the meaning they make, and instead to enable and document storytelling processes that are flexible and promote diverse expression based on what young people want to tell about their lives. This will also enable a broader and more complex sense of who young people are to emerge in the stories they tell, which is important in understanding their diverse identities, experiences and life-worlds (Tuck, 2009).

### ***How We Come to Know Young People's Stories, and Who Gets to Tell Them through Research?***

As many researchers understand and provide accounts of young people engaging in storytelling sites and processes retrospectively or from a distance (Stewart, 1996), ethnographic studies provide methodological examples of how researchers can further support and engage with the expressive practices of youth (Andersen, 2015; Hughes, 2017; Lac & Fine, 2018). From these standpoints, scholars may adopt an observer or onlooker role, or become involved in practices and sites as a mentor, helper, overseer or 'critical friend' (Adler & Adler, 1987; Evans, 2015; Wilkinson, 2019). Whilst these enable engagement with young people in some capacity, these positions may not involve researchers taking an active role in core activities with and alongside young people, and only enable a peripheral position in understanding storying work, which subsequently shapes the documentation and analysis (Karabanow & Naylor, 2015; Marlow, 2018; Satchwell, 2020). As storytelling is an intimate and personal act, young people being documented, observed and watched by researchers as they engage in this work may potentially cause discomfort, increase power imbalances between young people and researchers,

and may even produce forms of harm (Adler & Adler, 1987; Teo, 2010). In light of this, calls have been made for researchers to be ‘part of the action’ (Fuller, 1999, p. 221) in processes of storytelling and meaning-making with young people (Banegas, 2022; Banks et al., 2017; Evans, 2016).

Arguments have also been made for researchers to “walk, swim, and row” with the community and “discover the spirit of their culture” (Ospina, 2008, p. 441) by further engaging, participating and accompanying communities in and through the processes they are part of (Fals-Borda, 1987; Sousa, 2022; Watkins, 2021). This thinking is derived from the concept of *vivencias* which reflects a type of embodiment and immersion with community, and involves the full experience and ‘living’ of processes, with all their possibilities, through direct participation with them (Glassman & Erdem, 2014; Sousa, 2022). In the context of storying, this may deepen understanding around how communities organise meaning, the context within which stories are made, as well as the motivations behind them, which are all important aspects that need to be further acknowledged in storytelling processes (Denzin, 1997; 2009; Maton, 2008). Scholars state that we need to focus on the process as well as the products of meaning-making, and so experiencing and embodying storytelling with and alongside community also brings consequent insight into the journeys and intricate ways used by communities to build and move through the processes of storying work and creating realms for meaning-making, as well as the hurdles and cracks they encounter (Banks et al., 2017; Harrell & Bond, 2006). Immersion in communities also gives us opportunities to experience work with community through collective being and doing, and to engage in practices of reciprocity (Glassman & Erdem, 2014). While it is acknowledged that research processes can be violent and that power dynamics between researchers and participants can never be entirely extricated, this proximity and immersion, in addition to the critical reflexivity of the researcher and ethics of care, furthers consideration and disturbance to the imbalances of power between researchers and young people, provides opportunities to form relationships and trust with young people, and conjures a more relational and people-centred notion for documenting community meaning-making (Fox & Fine, 2013; Watts & Flanagan, 2007; Horowitz, 2009; Glassman & Erdem, 2014; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013).



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In addition to the question of how researchers are positioned in these processes, much of the literature about young people engaging in meaning-making practices is more often than not reported and authored by those outside of the youth experience (Holland et al., 2010; Padilla-Petry & Miño-Puigcercós, 2022). Scholars have responded to this by providing opportunities for communities themselves to be involved in the processes of co-authoring and documenting their stories (Sonn et al., 2021). However, despite this, Vio Grossi (1982) emphasised that researchers working with a community have minimal impact when they themselves have little idea about the lived experiences and problems that communities face. Considering this, it has been further argued that researchers should not only be immersed and part of the action, but that researchers should ideally engage with and document research processes with and within their own communities (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Glassman & Erdem, 2014; Ortiz Torres, 2020; Yarbrough, 2020). Researchers who are positioned as insiders and share lived experiences are seen to hold a deeper sense of understanding, intimacy and care when working within their own community (Chavez, 2008; Rowberry, 2015). They may be embroiled in or have first-hand experiences of the same struggles, which enables better insight into the ways in which forms of violence can be productively challenged, as well as ways for the community to be better supported. Researchers who “do not simply walk away from the field at the end of the study” are also said to better contextualise the experiences of communities they belong to, as shared norms enable truer articulation and representation of experiences (Chavez, 2008; Kanuha, 2000; Rowberry, 2015; Summers, 2013; Yarbrough, 2020).

It is also suggested that researchers doing work with their own communities can help challenge the traditional extractive nature of research. For instance, Watkins (2021) states that “when accompanists come from ‘outside’, there is danger of acting out colonial patterns of ‘helping’ that culturally invade, depower, and disrespect those ‘inside’.” (p. 101). Furthermore, Sankofa et al. (2021) express that there is a “problematic history of excluding community voices, particularly those of people of color,” and that researchers from within can alleviate the exploitation of communities by outsiders (p. 2). This is also prevalent in the context of work with young people, as researchers outside of the youth experience may lack understanding of the present youth context and may potentially perpetuate notions of adultism or exert power

imbalances in research contexts that disrupt youth-oriented processes and the safety of young people (Bell, J., 2010; DeJong & Love, 2015).

### *The Messiness of Working with Community in Storytelling Processes*

Instead of the straightforward trajectories or polished outcomes often documented, there are calls that we as researchers must encapsulate and include the complex, non-linear, shifting and messy process that comes with engaging with community and meaning-making work (Brenner & Manice, 2011; Karabanow & Naylor, 2015; Luguetti et al., 2023; Reed et al., 2012; Thomas-Hughes, 2018). For example, community groups may have valid concerns about being ‘used’ in research contexts or have negative perceptions of working with organisations and academics as partners (Horowitz et al., 2009). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and note tensions that arise as well as what is needed to rectify and enhance connections (Luguetti et al., 2023). Engaging in practices with community may also call for shifting and adjusting in response to different contexts, conditions and circumstances, and adhering more to the various needs and dynamics of communities (Bussu et al., 2021; Banks et al., 2017). Furthermore, when working in partnership and collaboration with groups of young people, contact zones may form where people from various backgrounds, social identities and power come together (Pratt, 1991; Torre, 2009). This may conjure up specific forms of navigation and ways of working, especially when traditional ideologies that disregard young people as valid and contributing people in these processes are in circulation, or when institutional restraints emerge (Anderson, 2015; Luguetti et al., 2023). Similarly for storying work within creative contexts, there are hurdles to be overcome, as creative processes require time, specific resources and the procurement of funding which can be precarious and require effort to sustain (Caust, 2021; Ojwang, 2017).

Additionally, when working with young people telling their stories, the input and products the young people contribute may also challenge and erode adult roles and perspectives as well as institutional norms and cultures, which potentially may evoke conflict that can lead to the unsettling of processes as well as the undermining of support (Langhout & Thomas, 2010). Harrell and Bond (2006) and Summers (2013) suggest that in addition to documenting these ebbs and flows in community-engaged and storying work, researchers must also grow in their

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willingness to share their own stories of the vulnerabilities and personal hurdles that we may face in conducting research with diverse communities, which may over time shape and deepen our collective understanding of these approaches and practices.

In conclusion, this chapter examines and highlights examples from the literature on understanding, addressing and responding to the forms of violence that can take place for communities of youth. It emphasises how having community engage and actively participate in this work is particularly important, and how the processes of them telling their stories can contribute to this responsive work. The storytelling method is presented as a way for young people to articulate and respond to violence, and to form and shape new and re-signified meaning about their own lives. Storytelling is also a practice that serves to centre communities by disrupting harmful constructions, and enabling the renewing, reclaiming and voicing of their own meanings. These are relayed to rehumanise communities, as well as enable them to become re-powered through the process. The chapter details how creative vehicles and tools can support the processes of storytelling, and how radio in particular is a creative tool and practice that has been used in various fields to enable young people to control the processes of articulating stories about the injustices in their lives, and to engage in dialogue about their identities, perspectives and worlds. The chapter closes by suggesting the importance of meaning-making practices being open and flexible to the stories young people choose to tell. I also draw attention to the significance of researchers immersing themselves and engaging directly with young people in the practices of storytelling, and discuss how this work can be deepened when researchers are insiders to the communities and experiences of youth. Lastly, the pitfalls and benefits of documenting the messy and intricate processes which are undergone to forge the realms and practices needed for storytelling are also highlighted.

The next chapter looks in detail at the journey, process and context of the project that is the focus of this thesis. It describes a community-engaged approach of immersing and participating with and alongside young people in a youth-oriented radio program as a way for young people to respond to and articulate forms of structural and symbolic violence in their lives, and to create meaning from and beyond these experiences.

### **Chapter 4: Context and Formation of *Brimbank LIVE***

This chapter provides background to the place, circumstances and processes within which the program of interest, *Brimbank LIVE*, was produced and existed. To enable a clearer picture of this work, the chapter includes reflective quotes and descriptions about the SNH space and context as well as about the processes around the *Brimbank LIVE* program. These quotes come from the participants in this study, the young people of the *Brimbank LIVE* radio program and the adults who supported them in the program (BNH&CC unit coordinator, SNH team leader, and radio producer). I also draw upon the insights I gathered from the fieldwork that I engaged in within the SNH space and the *Brimbank LIVE* program. I begin this chapter by providing an overview of the municipality of Brimbank, with particular attention to the culturally and racially diverse demographics of the people who reside in the area, as well as to the social and economic conditions of the LGA. I then describe the BNH&CC unit in detail and explain its purpose in providing a setting and programs for community members in Brimbank, followed by discussion of the context of SNH, a BNH&CC location targeted particularly towards young people. The ways that young people of Brimbank as well as the young participants of this study have historically engaged with SNH are included to illustrate the ways in which the space has ambivalently and violently catered to them in the recent past. The chapter then goes on to detail the process BNH&CC staff used to address these issues and reimagine SNH by introducing policy that called for the promotion of youth-led initiatives and programs, taking on young people's ideas for the space, and implementing material and staff changes to create a youth-friendly atmosphere there.

The in-person youth program, *The House Program*, conceived in response to these conversations and shifts is then detailed with an explanation of how it enabled young people to build skills and engage in creative initiatives that reflected their interests. I then describe how COVID-19 forced the closure of *The House Program*, and look at the steps that the BNH&CC and SNH team then took to continue online engagement and programming that still adhered to the young people's interests. The program that is the subject of this study, *Brimbank LIVE*, was conceived from this necessary pivot. I illustrate the radio program from its initial proposal and through the phases the young people and I went through in forging the radio station and shows.

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To conclude the chapter, the mechanisms and strategies we adopted to bring this work to life as well as the hurdles we navigated with the help of the BNH&CC, SNH staff and the radio producer until its eventual closure are detailed.

### **Overview of Brimbank and BNH&CC Spaces**

The first section of this chapter provides a comprehensive introduction to the Brimbank LGA and its community spaces. I begin this section by delving into the historical background of Brimbank, its geographical and demographic context, and the social and wellbeing perspectives through which the locality is perceived. I then describe briefly the local neighbourhood houses and community centres located in Brimbank, with some detail about the history of BNH&CC and the process of policy commitments made to shift the ways in which the settings may better accommodate and empower young people in the Brimbank community (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). I then include details about SNH specifically, which is the BNH&CC location where the responsive work took place, and the unit that supported the *Brimbank LIVE* program, which is the program that forms the core of this thesis.

### ***History of Brimbank***

The City of Brimbank, as it is now colonially known, is a LGA situated within the Metropolitan zone of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (Brimbank City Council, 2021). Brimbank currently encompasses part of the Western and Northwestern suburbs of Melbourne and is the second largest municipality in Victoria's capital. The Kurung-Jang-Balluk and Marin-Balluk clans of the Wurundjeri people, as well as the Yalukit-Willam and Marpeang-Bulluk clans who form part of the larger Kulin Nation, are the traditional owners of the land on which Brimbank sits, and have been the custodians of the land for over 40,000 years before European settlement (PHIDU, 2014). European colonisation and settlement in the area is recorded as beginning in the 1830s, which brought a surge of English, Scottish and Irish migrants to Brimbank (PHIDU, 2014). A second wave of migration also saw migrants from other parts of Europe settle in the municipality, mostly from Italy and Spain (PHIDU, 2014). After World War II, migrants from Britain, Ukraine, Greece, Poland, Italy and Malta settled in the area. The 1970s saw the

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settlement of Vietnamese refugees and migrants, as well as other communities from East Asia and South Asia (PHIDU, 2014). During the 1990s, communities from the African diaspora began to arrive in the Brimbank area, particularly those from South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The waves of migration throughout Brimbank's history makes the area one of the most culturally diverse municipalities in both Victoria and Australia (PHIDU, 2014). Of Brimbank's population, 48.2% of residents were reported to be born overseas, with the most common birthplaces being Vietnam, India, the Philippines and Malta (Brimbank City Council, 2021b). This compares to the 35.7% born overseas across Melbourne as a whole. Over half of Brimbank's residents also speak a language other than English, with more than 160 different languages spoken in the Brimbank area (Brimbank City Council, 2021). Additionally, 70.3% of Brimbank residents reported having overseas-born parents (ABS, 2021). This reflects the diverse and growing migration patterns throughout Brimbank's history, and how the LGA is enriched and shaped by the settlement of migrant and refugee groups.

In addition to being the home to various migrant and refugee groups, the community of Brimbank experience many disadvantages and social challenges in relation to income, education and unemployment (Brimbank City Council, 2019b; 2021; PHIDU, 2014). This inequity occurs as a result of unjustifiable differences in opportunity, which stem from disparate access to the resources that optimise learning, development and economic capacity (Brimbank City Council, 2019b). These differences also significantly impact resident's social wellbeing (Brimbank City Council, 2021; PHIDU, 2014). In day-to-day life, socioeconomic disadvantage manifests itself in various ways that extend beyond the simple lack of access to the essentials of life such as shelter and adequate food because of poverty and low income. It can also be found in the lack of culturally appropriate services and safe environments for certain groups, and significant rates of social exclusion (Brimbank City Council, 2019a; 2019c). For many people within Brimbank, this disadvantage is said to influence their capacity for creating change, participating as citizens, and seeing opportunities for educational achievement and employment. It is also reported to make residents more vulnerable to a range of health and wellbeing difficulties (Brimbank City Council, 2021; PHIDU, 2014; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021). These patterns of cultural diversity and socioeconomic disadvantage are generally associated with the people of Brimbank, as people of

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Brimbank are heavily viewed and reported on in light of these conditions, patterns and circumstances.

### *Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses*

The first Neighbourhood House (NH) within Victoria was established in the 1970s. It aimed to specifically serve women who were seeking community-based education in order to return to study or work, or young mothers looking for a space and opportunity to gather and build relationships. In recent times, the high presence of elderly women in NH spaces can be attributed to this historical background. Given the benefits of such community-oriented places for women throughout history (Ollis et al., 2017), shifts and expansions have been made in both the demographics targeted and the services these spaces provide in aims to extend such benefits to the wider community. NHs in current times aim to be inclusive spaces that welcome all members of the community to connect, learn and contribute in their local community through social, educational, recreational and support activities, using a unique community development approach (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). NH programs and activities are offered at low or no cost, and consist of offerings in health, wellbeing, arts, sport and digital literacy.

Of the 401 NH locations in Victoria, 12 are located within Brimbank. BNH&CCs are separated into two categories, those that are run by the Brimbank council and spaces that are community managed (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). Both types, NHs and community centres, receive annual funding of \$30,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to support the provision of programs and activities intended to lead to community-strengthening outcomes (Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), 2016). The community managed locations in Brimbank are Duke Street Community House, St Albans Community Youth Club (the Tin Shed), Community Plus, Good Shepherd St Albans Community House, and Kororoit Creek Neighbourhood House. Council-run NHs managed by Brimbank City Council are Cairnlea Community Hub, Hunt Club Community and Arts Centre, West Sunshine Community Centre, Westvale Community Centre, Delahey Community Centre, Keilor Community Hub Program Spaces, and SNH.

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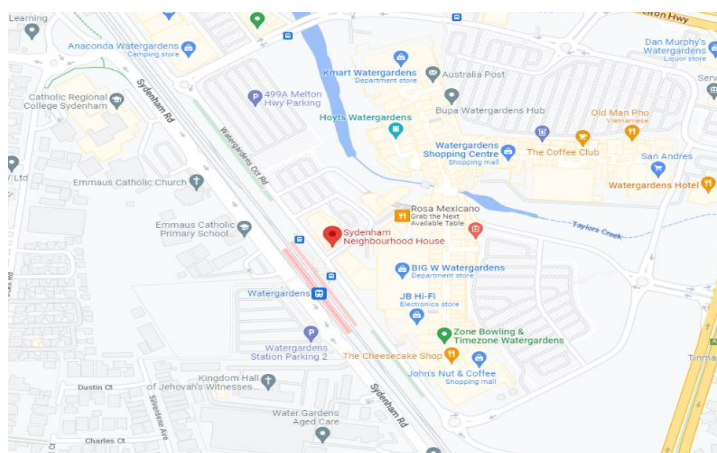
Whilst the BNH&CCs are open to all, each location generally aims to cater to a specific community group through its program delivery. These tailored classes and activities are generally designed to accommodate to particular age ranges or categories of individuals based on the demographics of the suburb in which the space is located, or the available facilities at each location (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). For example, Westvale Community Centre is aimed at older community members given their facilities of the men's shed and community garden, the Hunt Club functions primarily as an arts venue that offers creative and artistic classes and services, and SNH targets young people as the space is close to local schools and public transport.

### *Sydenham Neighbourhood House*

SNH is a BNH&CC space in the Brimbank suburb of Sydenham. The SNH space is considered a highly accessible location for young people. This is due to it being located in front of a major train and bus station, Watergardens Station, which many local young people pass and use to go to and from school and work. SNH is also located near primary and high schools, and is a neighbour to one of the largest shopping complexes in the suburb, Watergardens Shopping Centre. It is also located directly above Sydenham Library. Figure 1 depicts the SNH location and the surrounding area.

**Figure 1:**

*Map of SNH surroundings and area*





*Note:* Figure 1 retrieved from Brimbank City Council (2021). Accessible here

<https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/map/sydenham-neighbourhood-house>

Given its proximity to many spaces that young people spend time in or pass through, SNH has been regarded as an ideal space to reach young people (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). However, although large numbers of young people travel through the area and congregate in the spaces near SNH, it is reported that youth are disengaged from SNH (Brimbank City Council, 2023). Anecdotal evidence from young people in Brimbank suggests that they do not feel comfortable or trusted within local spaces (Brimbank City Council, 2023). This is reflected in reports of young people being surveilled in local spaces, and instances of them being viewed as problems and delinquents or assumed to be troublesome by staff and community members (Brimbank City Council, 2023). Given the racial and ethnic diversity of the Brimbank population, reports of unfavourable stereotypes and forms of violence being inflicted against community members, particularly young people, are common (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). This is reported to frequently occur in local community spaces, and historically has adversely affected their inclusion and treatment by community members and staff in these spaces (Brimbank City Council, 2019a).

As these distorted negative views of young people lead to ambivalence and deterrence, in the past deliberate measures had also been implemented to actively limit and hinder young individuals perceived as likely troublemakers from engaging in SNH. The BNH&CC unit coordinator, Sylvie, details what the SNH space was like for young people prior to the current team's involvement:

In the Sydenham Neighbourhood House space... past coordinators had ostensibly locked the door to young people and had made it very difficult for young people to access the space. Apparently... further back, there had been an after-school kind of hangout space that became 'unmanageable' [gestures quotation marks] for whatever reasons. It's long before my time, but it resulted in the door actually being locked after school and people had to knock on the door to be let in. And then there was a sort of relatively heavy-handed approach to surveillance of young people while they were there and an insistence

that they check in and leave their name and phone number and all these sorts of things. Needless to say, the young people turned their back on that space (SNH). But it was also apparent that the library downstairs was also experiencing its own issues and that they, too, seemed to have very problematic relationships with young people using the space after school and that there was a pretty high level of what I would term fairly unsafe kind of practices and behaviours going on in the library.

Furthermore, community members, especially older adults who had historically occupied the setting, were reported to have “*quite intense feelings of ownership*” over SNH, as well as set ideas of how the space should be used. According to BNH&CC and SNH staff “*a lot of older women working in those spaces, they had become their own little fiefdom... they sort of had all control over who came in and who didn't, and who got to do what where*”. The young people in this study shared what it was like sharing a space with other community members, claiming that despite efforts to build intergenerational ties and co-existence, they regularly felt judgment and disapproval: “*They [the older community members] just stare at you, and you can feel that they don't want you to be there*”. This general ownership of the space was also said to be reflected in the physical set-up and aura of the space, with young people of *Brimbank LIVE* claiming the SNH gave off “*age-care vibes*”. Furthermore, according to the current BNH&CC coordinator before they came into the space and started making changes, “*the staff at that point in time did not represent the community more broadly of Brimbank... (and that) they were largely Anglo or European*”. The new SNH team leader, Daniel, who came into the space as this research began, further explained that the barriers and issues that kept young people out of these spaces were very apparent to the young people: “*to be perfectly upfront here, to the people overseeing that space - it (SNH) was inclusive. But to those young people, the space was not inclusive*”. Given that young people in Brimbank are often reported as ‘disengaged’ and positioned as a ‘hard to reach’ group in the context of local participation (Brimbank City Council, 2019c), these insights highlight how young people had been purposefully deterred through exclusionary encounters in the SNH, and how the space had previously failed to cater to them.

### **Reimagining SNH for Young People**

This section illustrates how I came into the SNH as a researcher and how I familiarised myself with its offerings, staff and occupants. Drawing on my fieldwork experiences, I then explain and map the journey through the reimagining process for the SNH. This is done as I explain how the SNH staff and I adopted a relational approach for consulting and engaging with local young people to build connections, understand what they wanted from the space, and form programs and initiatives of interest to them. I also discuss the formation of policy that introduced and guided new ways of building youth-oriented and youth-led programs in the space.

### ***Gathering Community Feedback***

In February 2019, I began my research journey in association and partnership with BNH&CC (see Appendix A for research partnership letter and key deliverables). During the early stages of my research, I visited and spent time in the different NH locations to understand the program offerings and ways the sites were used. I also became acquainted with the staff in the unit as I engaged in meetings with the BNH&CC coordinator, Sylvie, as well as with youth workers. During initial conversations with the team, I became privy to the policy document being constructed in response to local government reports as well as to feedback from ongoing surveys and conversations with the Brimbank community that showed perceived gaps in Brimbank's response to social wellbeing, health and employment factors. The strategy and action plan aimed to identify currently overlooked needs in the community as well as particular groups who may be falling through the cracks when it came to receiving sufficient program delivery and facility access. It also aimed to indicate the actions needed to improve the BNH&CC spaces and program delivery for these groups (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). Since I came into the space during the drafting stages of the policy document, youth workers and I took to the streets and area around SNH to gather community feedback for the policy. In doing this, we chatted with young people to understand their experiences in the SNH space and ideas they had for the realm. We spoke to the few young people actually in the SNH and Sydenham library, but also approached young people who congregated near the Watergardens train station and bus stop, and

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in and around Watergardens Shopping Centre. This was crucial as we believed it was important to address not just the needs of those already using the SNH space, but also of those who did not.

Even though SNH staff promoted the space by displaying flyers on local notice boards, conversations with young people showed that there was a significant lack of awareness of SNH and its offerings. For those that did know of the space, many showed little interest in the programs available, and pointed out that the current SNH programs, such as homework help and resume writing, did not reflect their interests and needs. The feedback given was that these formal programs were what staff in the space believed young people should engage in, rather than programs that young people wanted for themselves. This reflected how SNH was characterised by adult-led agendas, and that activities and initiatives were not made to fit young people's interests. Young people mentioned that, besides formal programs, engaging in quiet time or studying was perceived as the only socially acceptable practice within the SNH. Furthermore, the young people reported that if they did not engage in quiet study or formal programs, they were often questioned, suspected of causing trouble, or accused of being disruptive. The youth people also reported that they would sometimes be asked to leave the space if they were not engaging in these strict agendas. In light of this, many young people we spoke to shared that they often chose to study at the food court in the local shopping centre, or simply refrained from using SNH to "*avoid being deemed doing the wrong thing*". This shows the ways that young people's mobility was limited, controlled and constrained in this space, and reinforces how youth are expected to be compliant within organisations and institutions or else they are labelled as 'problems' (Bilbrough, 2018; Rogers & Way, 2016).

In addition to the restrictions and issues within the space, young people spoke about what it was like outside and around SNH. They mentioned how they were often surveilled and watched by SNH staff and community members, particularly when they hung out in larger groups. Some young people also shared about their encounters when security and police were called to deal with them as they are often perceived by staff and community to be engaging in suspicious, gang-related and "*anti-social behaviour*". During one of the afternoons that I spent chatting to young people outside SNH, I witnessed this first-hand, as security and police were

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called out to inspect a group of young people nearby. In light of the feedback gathered from young people, the BNH&CC coordinator shared these reflections:

One of the things everybody was acutely aware of was that young people did not use these centres at all... These spaces were underutilised... Young people in Brimbank were missing out on this community resource and asset to drive their own learning and social connection... There was (also) certainly feedback that they didn't feel welcome and they felt kind of over surveilled when they were in those spaces and that they just weren't appropriate and interesting program opportunities for them... I just thought, well, this is ridiculous. These spaces need to be available after school. It's ideally placed. It's above the library. It's across the road from the station. It's near the shopping centre. It's ideally placed for young people to have a space to pursue either their own projects but also just to chill and socially connect... or do whatever they want to do.

While the sentiment was growing amongst the workers that young people should be able to take up the space and feel included in the SNH, Daniel, the SNH team leader who was newly appointed during this time, shared how he began his role by spending time in and around the SNH area speaking to young people in hope of understanding these barriers, as well as engaging with them on their own terms and “*on their levels*”. As a council worker, Daniel reflects on this period of engaging in conversations with young people:

When I started (as team leader) I spent about 6-8 weeks hanging out in the library, talking to young people, sitting out near the train station talking to young people... Sitting in the shopping centre, as well, talking to young people. They were probably thinking “Who is that fool?” you know (laughs). But I didn't come across as “Hey I'm a council employee, you need to listen to me” I came across as “Hey I work at council, this is what I do. I want to ask you if you know about SNH? Have you been upstairs? Do you know what we do?” About 85% of them hadn't been up there, and most of them didn't know what we were all about.

When engaging with the young people, Daniel recalled how conversations also indicated that they “*were looking for someone who could assist them by... listening to them and enabling them*”

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*to be the best they can be*". These interactions between the young people and workers were received positively, and contrasted previous engagements young people had had with council members. The young people of *Brimbank LIVE* recalled that they had never experienced community workers taking the time to chat and to get to know them in these ways, and that being approached and listened to was appreciated. This was also deemed pivotal given young people's general feelings of being excluded and unheard within institutional and community spaces (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; United Nations Youth Australia, 2019). One of the participants in this research explains:

(The leaders) engaging the community... instead of waiting till we come to them through maybe seeing a poster or an ad. They went out there and found us. And that's what I really admire about Daniel's approach... he literally walked downstairs to the train station and shops and spoke to young people... He said, "We need to find the people who aren't going to find us."

As SNH staff and I engaged with the local young people in ways that were received positively, we also asked them about their passions and ideas for future SNH programs that they wanted. They suggested more flexibility in using the space and proposed initiatives that would allow them to connect and hang out with others in the SNH space. They also spoke of their interests in music, poetry, dance, art and sport, and suggested programs that were artistically, creatively and dialogically based, with a specific focus on building their skills, sharing their experiences, and platforming their multifaceted identities through these programs. Daniel, the SNH team leader, elaborates:

One of the things that I heard a lot about is young people liking the opportunity to be involved in creative arts. Most of them were passionate about music, some of those were interested in dance. Some of them were really interested in the hip-hop culture and they were looking for something of that nature... Some of them were passionate about sport, mostly rugby and soccer. Some were also really keen to be involved, and be supported, to be the best version of themselves that they can be.

### *Implementation of Youth-Friendly Spaces and Initiatives*

In light of these initial conversations, the team began to roll out changes to improve the SNH setting and the delivery of its programs. First, physical changes were implemented to make the space more youth friendly. This was achieved through redesigning the area to create a more spacious feel and adding bean bags to the space. A large change was also seen in opening the space up to young people. We did this through holding sausage sizzles outside the SNH and providing young people with a free feed as a way to interact with them and welcome them into the space. We also invited all young people into the SNH space every Wednesday from 4pm - 6pm for *Chill and Chat*, which served as a drop-in session for young people to connect and hang out with others inside the SNH setting. Youth workers and I set up the space each week, and prepared food and snacks. For these sessions, the majority of the young people came directly from school, and spent time in the space socialising with friends and listening to music. In addition to organising the space, the youth workers and I also engaged with and got to know the young people at the *Chill and Chat* sessions.

As these drop-ins continued to take place in SNH, events that specifically catered to young people were also introduced, which I attended and helped prepare. Given young people's expressed interest in art and creative practices, one of the main initiatives launched was *Youth Out Loud*. This event functioned as an open mic space for young poets, singers, dancers and creatives to share their creative talents with an audience. Participants, audience members and I attending the first Youth Out Loud event in June 2019 is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:**

*Image from Youth Out Loud*



*Note:* Picture can be accessed here: <https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/map/sydenham-neighbourhood-house> (Brimbank City Council, 2021)

In addition to these youth-based initiatives, I also attended other events held by BNH&CC which featured the attendance and contributions of young people. One of these was the *Afro Fashion* show which showcased garments made by local and self-taught designers, modelled by local children and young people (see Figure 3a and Figure 3b). The *South Sudanese Mother's Impact Initiative* was another notable BNH&CC event I attended. Organised by Brimbank City Council and the South Sudanese Mother's Coalition, the event served as a space for mothers, children and families to come together and engage in dialogue about pressing issues affecting the South Sudanese community, such as mental wellbeing, family violence and intergenerational disconnect. When I attended these events, I was afforded opportunities to meet and connect with youth workers and BNH&CC staff members in other areas, as well as with the young people in the community who connected into these spaces.



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**Figure 3a.**

*The Afro Fashion show*



**Figure 3b.**

*Young people and children modelling at the Afro Fashion show.*



*Note:* These images are not published or publicly available, but are the property of Brimbank City Council ©

### *Launch of BNH&CC's Strategy and Action Plan*

In late November 2019, BNH&CC's strategy and action plan titled *A Time for Transformation* was officially launched (Brimbank City Council, 2019a). Drawing from local feedback and knowledge, and listening to how community wanted to approach issues that affect them, the policy identified significant challenges in the community and set BNH&CC's commitment to "act locally to create systemic change in social and economic equity" (Brimbank City Council, 2019). The policy contained five strategic goals to be addressed through the BNH&CC unit. These were:

1. Support Children and Families to Connect and Learn (early years – 8 years old)
2. Support Young People to Connect and Learn, with a focus on young people who experience structural discrimination
3. Create a Culture of Race Equity in everything we do
4. Build Intergenerational Connections
5. Build a Skilled and Proactive Workforce that represents the diversity of Brimbank's community
6. Monitor and Effectively Evaluate Programs and Participate in Social Research Projects

Although many of these goals are important and intertwined, the second goal, to support young people to connect and learn, particularly those who experience structural discrimination, became a focus for SNH. This focus was also important in light of the other identified challenges linked to young people, such as high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, the lack of youth engagement in local spaces, and threats to youth inclusion. Implementation of the policy goal related to connecting them to the SNH space, building co-designed and youth-led programs and projects that were creatively and culturally relevant to them, shaping youth's critical skills, and increasing community mentorship for them (Brimbank City Council, 2019c). Figure 4a, Figure 4b and Figure 4c depict moments from the official launch of the Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2024 in November 2019, which was hosted in the SNH space.

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**Figure 4a.**

*Image of BNH and SNH staff member speaking at the Strategy and Action Plan launch*



*Note:* This image was taken by me on a personal device.

**Figure 4b.**

*Image of a research colleague and I in attendance at the launch.*



*Note:* This image was taken on my personal device by a member of the community present at the launch.

**Figure 4c.**

*Image of young people from a local primary school doing a drumming performance at the launch.*



*Note:* This image is not published or publicly available, but is the property of Brimbank City Council ©

### ***The House! Program***

In response to the strategic goals, and as a result of actively listening to the conversations, feedback and interests communicated by young people, *The House Program* (also referred to as *The House!*) launched as a pilot program in February 2020. *The House Program* featured a series of synchronous classes for music production, songwriting, dance, spoken word, and poetry. The program was conceived as a creative space for young participants to connect, grow their artistic skills, and demonstrate their creative qualities. The art forms selected for the program were suggested by the young participants, and were flexible and adaptable so the young people were able to propose additional creative forms to feature in the program. *The House Program* classes were facilitated by young artists who had expertise and qualifications in the creative forms they taught. These young facilitators were connected to the area of Brimbank, or the West of Melbourne more generally, and were representative of the community's diverse heritages and backgrounds, with them identifying as Pasifika, Nigerian, South Sudanese, Ethiopian, Comorian and Tanzanian. Although *The House Program* ran every Monday and Wednesday afternoon from 4pm - 6pm, it did not replace the *Chill and Chat* program, as the SNH common space was

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still open to young people to relax and hang out in without needing to be part of the formal program. Young people were welcomed into *The House Program* to “*participate in recording music, making beats, lyric writing, learning dance routines... (but also have) a space for them to come to hang out and chill, and do whatever it is they want to do*”. For the program's rollout, SNH staff adopted standard communication methods, such as displaying flyers and posting on social media, but also approached young people around the area to personally and actively invite them to the program. In the excerpt below, Daniel conveys the initial buzz around *The House Program* when it first launched:

The first session happened on 13 January 2020. Our definition of success was “Hey we’re going to get 10 young people coming in”... We had 49 kids come in that day, and the Wednesday even more, and the following week was even more! I actually had to cry out for more staff to come out and resource it!

Figure 5 shows *The House Program* flyer which was posted on Instagram and Facebook, and handed out to young people in the area.

**Figure 5.**

*The House! Program flyer*



*Note:* The flyer of The House Program can be accessed here <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-N4EihhNam/> (The House, Brimbank, 2020)

Throughout *The House Program*, I spent time in the classes and SNH common area. Although I sat in all *The House Program*'s classes, I spent the majority of my time in the lyric writing and dance classes, as they had the most participants within them. In these classes, I interacted and chatted with participants during breaks and took field notes. I also spent a lot of time with the young folks who used the space to hang out. I had conversations with them and engaged with them in other activities such as playing cards or board games. From these discussions, I gathered that most of the young people came to the SNH straight after school or university/TAFE, whilst others who did not attend school or tertiary education came into *The House Program* after work or on their days off.

Young people in the current study spoke retrospectively of how *The House Program* was a space where they were able to gain “*direction*” and support for their passions in songwriting, rapping, music or dance. Others said that participation in the program introduced them to these interests, and that their passions in these fields were born from this initial engagement. They also spoke of how being in the SNH setting during this time, after its shifts, “*felt like home*” as they were able to partake and engage in initiatives that they wanted, as well as gather together and connect with other young people who shared similar interests. Some even identified that the space became a third place where they felt comfortable and were able to enter freely without needing to conform to formal programming or agendas that did not fit their needs, or without being surveilled in what they were doing. Many young people of *The House Program* also spoke about how the classes enabled them to learn and gain confidence in their creative abilities, and that they had interests in pursuing these creative forms, either professionally or as leisure pursuit. During these conversations, we were also able to talk about people's plans for the future, as some of the young people spoke about being in their final years of high school and their hopes of getting into tertiary education to pursue fields such as law and teaching. In light of these conversations, I shared tips on applying to universities, suggested seminars they could attend for more information, and recommended programs they could apply to assist them in these pathways. Others engaged with me about personal goals and events that they were looking



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forward to, such as travelling overseas or becoming parents. These interactions enabled me to make connections with young people in the space and understand the diverse and rich experiences and lives they had. The implications from this positioning and doing fieldwork during *The House Program*, as well as the associated ethical considerations taken into account, are further detailed in Chapter 5.

As young people engaged in *The House Program* classes, they also showcased their learnt and refined creative practices. The pictures below depict participants from the *The House Program* exhibiting and performing music and dance routines outside the SNH (Figure 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d).

**Figure 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d.**

*Images from The House Program performance*



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*Note:* Participants in *The House Program* performing outside of SNH in March 2020. Images can be accessed here <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-N4EihhNam/> (The House Brimbank, 2020).

### **Turning to *Brimbank LIVE***

This section details the transition of young people from their involvement in *The House Program* to collectively building the digital and youth-led space of *Brimbank LIVE* radio station. Given the group of young people had strong interests in forms of storytelling and meaning-making, particularly creative forms such as music, dance and poetry, when the COVID pandemic occurred the practice of radio provided them with a COVID-safe way to create through digital means and forms, and offered an alternative vehicle for them to engage in meaning-making. This section highlights how young people used technology and digital mediums, such as Zoom, Instagram, microphones and radio equipment, to train for and connect through the radio program. This section also illustrates the context of the radio program by depicting the processes of the team creating and making decisions about their radio shows, and the enablers and barriers they encountered in the radio program.

### ***Impact of COVID and Reconfiguration of Youth Programs***

Just as *The House Program* began to gain traction, in March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic became rampant around the world. In response to the pandemic, lockdowns and isolation requirements were introduced. COVID-19 lockdowns in Melbourne, Australia saw the closure of public spaces, such as parks, community settings and shopping centres, as well as institutions such as schools and universities (Miller & McGregor, 2021). Daniel, the SNH team leader, reflects on the enforcement of lockdown and what it was like for the young people not being able to attend or connect through *The House Program*:

There was a massive sense of loss, and the massive sense of loss was between January to March when we closed down. We had, give or take, 700 different attendees coming through that place (SNH), and it was a massive loss because they went from hanging outside the train station or library to then having a place where they could come to and be



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themselves and not be judged... The group were attached to the physical space which came with the ability to hang out with friends while engaging in various types of activities on offer.

As SNH and other community spaces closed, I kept in contact with Sylvie and Daniel, and offered them assistance. During this time, Sylvie and Daniel, along with youth and community workers in the BNH&CC, prepared COVID-19 relief packs and food supplies to aid the community, and offered reassurance and information about the pandemic. They also made efforts to contact BNH&CC community members. As the BNH&CC and SNH team reached out to young people through calls and email, they also put together youth check-in and mental health support spaces via Zoom. In the excerpt below, Sylvie recalls configuring ways to connect with community during this period, and highlights the barriers that were present during this process:

I think initially we did attempt to have some sort of check-in spaces and some kinds of mental health support spaces, but I don't know that that was all that successful... There was also real difficulties in terms of connectivity for lots of them, particularly when everybody was at home. That first lockdown where so many families did not have enough data, they did not have enough devices, they were sharing devices to continue education. So I think that played a role in it too in terms of structural disadvantage. It just wasn't the connectivity. But I do think as well, I think that first lockdown too, I think everybody was just so confused as well as to how to navigate online space and what that looks like and how that is safe or not safe. I think it was really confusing.

Taking this into account, Daniel recalled consulting with the young people. The main ideas that arose through these discussion were about enabling youth with access to connect digitally and trying to reformulate and adapt young people's passions and interests that had been showcased in *The House Program*. In light of this, he conveyed how the unit reached out to partners who were capable of assisting:

So, we sat down with these young people and spoke about the fact that now we weren't able to be together physically, what is it that they would like to do. A lot of the young people spoke about different types of initiatives and from talking about those, some

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suggestions were made about going online... I took down everything they were talking about and their suggestions and I reached out to some of my colleagues and external contractors from Making Media Australia, and shared some of those ideas with Henry. I invited Henry to meet with the young people, and so they spoke about their ideas and initiatives with him, and we were able to move forward with identifying what it was that they wanted to do, and how they wanted to do it.

These conversations led to a Zoom meeting that Sylvie, Daniel and I had with radio producer, Henry, who had connections to Daniel and had been in contact with BNH&CC prior to COVID-19. Henry worked for Making Media Australia, a company who are experts in live and on-demand video, radio and podcast production, and have worked in training, supporting and assisting communities in producing community radio. In the course of our discussion, the use of digital tools and platforms to support creativity and expression were proposed. The previous barriers around access to resources were also noted as vital in the re-formulation of a potential program.

### ***Brimbank LIVE Radio Program***

In light of young people's continued interest in creative expression, and in response to the general move to digital means in the face of the COVID lockdowns in Melbourne, the program of *Brimbank LIVE* emerged. The *Brimbank LIVE* program was a youth program, spawned through SNH, that catered to young people "*who worked, lived or played*" in the Brimbank community (Jayawardana, 2021). Through the program, the young participants were granted the platform and resources to create their own radio shows using digital technologies and tools. These radio shows were collated and featured on the *Brimbank LIVE* radio station, which was as a youth-driven radio station produced and presented by the young people within the *Brimbank LIVE* program and broadcast on Making Media's radio streaming platform, LIVE FM. In their radio shows, young people were able to voice and unpack experiences and issues important to them, and share their passions and interests. They were supported in planning and curating their radio shows by Henry from Making Media Australia and by Daniel from SNH.

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When the program began, there were 13 young people from Brimbank involved in *Brimbank LIVE*. Some of them were already involved in *The House Program*, while others joined through discovering the program on social media or by word of mouth. Since I hold similar identity positions to these young people through my race, age and connection to the Brimbank community, I also became a participant in the *Brimbank LIVE* program, as I engaged and took part in the practice of radio-making with my fellow participants. This allowed me to document the program and experience engagement in *Brimbank LIVE* not just as a researcher observing and accompanying the program, but as a young person from Brimbank who was immersed in and shared the experience of doing radio alongside the young team. Details about the young people from *Brimbank LIVE* who chose to be part of this research study, and the impact of my positioning as a participant in the program can be found in the Methods section of Chapter 5 below.

**Training, Tools and Resources.** Upon joining the radio program, we as a collective engaged in four two-hour sessions of formal commercial radio training with Henry, the radio producer, and the SNH team leader, Daniel. During the training sessions, which were conducted over Zoom, we learned the craft of live radio, the skills of hosting, and how to produce and plan radio content for our shows. This not only gave us professional expertise and an understanding of the technical elements of the radio craft, but also provided the opportunity to enhance our competency and efficiency in digital media and communication. As stated earlier in the chapter, while digital ways of connecting were the most practical amidst the pandemic, many families did not have access to sufficient data or devices. Therefore, those in the *Brimbank LIVE* program who were unable to connect virtually were granted access to engage in these training sessions and meetings in the SNH, using the centre's computers and internet. In the first training session, accessibility needs as well as different learning styles were also identified. To ensure all members of *Brimbank LIVE* could participate in training sessions seamlessly, Henry sought to cater for and tailor the training process to confidently and effectively engage everyone. He reflected on this in his interview:

After the first session I said to Daniel (SNH Team Leader), "It doesn't work with those two in there (Zoom training), I'm not saying kick them out, I'm saying I'll do it face to

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face with them”. And I literally set up a studio at Sydenham Neighbourhood House and I said to them “Guys we’re doing your session separately” ... I didn’t tell them that I was going to set up a studio with mixers and everything. I took it all there... I had banners and everything... and when they walked in, they were like “Omg look at all this!”

In addition to the makeshift studio at SNH, the young people were also granted studio time in the LIVE FM studio in Footscray, owned by Making Media, where we were able to engage in planning and producing our shows. As the adults moulded training to fit youth needs, they also ensured access through the pandemic as Sylvie and Daniel organised government-approved travel permits for the members of *Brimbank LIVE* to travel to SNH and the LIVE FM studio to engage in face-to-face training. This effort to deliver training in a way that was better suited and more comfortable was deemed important for these young people given their experiences in other institutional spaces where they were often made to feel inferior if they were not able to engage or grasp learning processes presented in set ways. In his interview, the team leader of SNH, Daniel, talks about this:

I also want to acknowledge that some of the young people, some were discouraged learners because of their experience of being discouraged in other spaces of learning, there was a lot of self-doubt, so we tailored the training to be on their level and also allowed them to do the training as they see fit.

Besides the initial training sessions provided, we were also encouraged to reach out to the radio producer to engage in further training or seek clarification throughout the program, which many of the young people, including myself, did. Constant engagement and check-ins were also initiated by the radio producer and SNH staff for young people to enable support, and the team also kept in regular communication through the *Brimbank LIVE* group chat which we started on Instagram. Furthermore, tangible tools and resources such as microphones, headsets and access to mixers and recording devices were also made available to the *Brimbank LIVE* participants courtesy of SNH and Making Media Australia. These were used to record and produce content for our radio shows. The *Brimbank LIVE* participants acknowledged that the resources provided to implement and produce our work were beneficial to the crafting of their radio shows, and that

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it was uncommon for adults in other spaces and programs to provide or even trust young people to use these:

They [adult mentors] spend so much money and effort in putting everything together. Like they bought a Mac computer for \$3,200, even though we just needed a little laptop. They bought speakers that we're using, the mics that we're using, the mixer... And they're even paying for a producer... Not many programs or people who run them would be like 'here have a \$32 hundred computer'...

This further demonstrates that the young people were not just left to their own devices in learning and understanding the processes of radio, nor were they expected to organise access to equipment on their own. Instead, this shows how they were always supported through the learning processes, with their different degrees of access to technology and different learning styles taken into account, and how they were able to gain access and be trusted with the tools needed through the program to enable them in their work.

**The Brimbank LIVE Format and Ways of Working.** The radio program and its practices were described by the adult mentors as a “*bottom-up*” approach with “*young people in the driver's seat*” and the mentors being the “*enablers*” in a youth-driven process. Henry explained the importance of this:

It (youth-led radio station) only works if it is youth centred. What I mean by that is young people driving the agenda. I provide the platform... But it only works if youth understand the platform and share what they're passionate about. Not what I tell them to do... They (youth) need to pick what they want out of this and there's no future to this if you tell them what to talk about.

Within this structure, the young people in the program were given the creative freedoms to customise and build our radio shows for the *Brimbank LIVE* program. Thus, young people had full creative control of the themes, guests, topics, questions and branding of their shows, as we planned to cover a range of genres and topics that were representative of and important to us. These topics ranged across stories and conversations about gender identity, cultural diversity,

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mental health, sport, local music, and community issues. For our radio shows, we reached out to community, national and international guests who would be interviewed and contribute to our radio conversations. We also wrote, produced and recorded our own music to be played on our shows, particularly for the music-based shows, as well as in the ad breaks. We also scouted and reached out to local artists and musicians on social media who would contribute their music to the station.

Besides the radio content, we also engaged in making structural decisions about the shows and the station. The *Brimbank LIVE* crew and I organised and decided how many shows we wanted to host and the hours of broadcast we wanted to do. The number of shows we committed to was based on our capacity, with some young people hosting one show, whilst others opted to host multiple shows through co-hosting in pairs or in groups. As part of my embeddedness in the program, I paired up with a fellow young person in the *Brimbank LIVE* team to create our own radio show as a duo, and we joined together with another member of the team for a second show. More details about the specific shows of *Brimbank LIVE* are given in Chapter 5. We also chose how to conduct our radio shows based on our capabilities and comfort, as we could pre-record our shows or broadcast them live. The team and I also made decisions about the promotion, marketing, etiquette and agendas of the *Brimbank LIVE* radio station. Team members were involved in designing visuals and promotional material, as well as deciding on the type of music and ads we would play on the station. We also had collective meetings about what language, terms and words would be off-limits on air, and held regular conversations about maintaining an inclusive, representative and culturally safe space. It was also through discussions as a team that we decided that the *Brimbank LIVE* station would launch with ‘*Brimbank LIVE* week’, a full week of broadcasting our initial shows before reconnecting and assessing the ways that we wanted to move forward with the station after the launch. As we were running as an official community radio station, by planning shows and making decisions about the broadcast, we were remunerated for the hours we put into planning and organising. As an official community radio station, we were also governed by The Community Radio Broadcasting Codes of Practice (CBAA, 2008). The codes, such as needing to promote diversity and community

participation as well as featuring Australian music (CBAA, 2008), were easily adhered to given they closely matched our own goals for the *Brimbank LIVE* station and shows.

**Launch and Broadcast of Brimbank LIVE.** After 2 months of intense planning and training, the youth-led digital radio station of *Brimbank LIVE* officially launched, broadcasting daily from Monday 6 July to Friday 10 July 2020. The young people had created nearly 30 hours of pre-recorded and live content which was broadcast through the LIVE FM app and webpage to reach community and global listeners. Figure 7 shows the flyer for the official launch week of Brimbank LIVE.

**Figure 7.**

*The official program for “Brimbank LIVE week”*



*Note:* From the official BNHs Intgram page (bccneighbourhoodhouses). Image can be accessed: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCKXN8WDAR8/> (Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses, 2020)

After the *Brimbank LIVE* week, where we broadcast daily, we as a group came together to discuss our experiences and agreed that based on our capacity, we would engage in our radio work to broadcast weekly for the rest of the year. Some members created new shows for this

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round of broadcasting, whilst others continued their original shows from the initial launch week. We also began recruiting new members for the station by creating Expression of Interest forms and distributing them online. The newcomers received training and the original members of the *Brimbank LIVE* team also helped to mentor them. *Brimbank LIVE* recommenced broadcasting with our new shows and new members in August 2020, airing every Friday until mid-December 2020. As the severity of the pandemic had increased and strict restrictions were in place during this time, all of our shows were planned and recorded online, and broadcast over Zoom. Figure 8 shows the updated programming for Brimbank LIVE during this time period.

**Figure 8.**

*Brimbank LIVE Programming August - December 2020*



TIME	Fridays
8-9am	THE SOUL DIVE with AD, Roshani & Lydia
9-11am	BRIMBANK LOCAL BEATS
11am	BRIMBANK LIFE
12-1pm	SACHA & SONYA FOR REAL with Sacha & Sonya
1-2pm	AFTERNOON TEA with Lauri & Amy
2-3pm	BRIMBANK LOCAL BEATS
3-4pm	THE KONNECT PODCAST with Mikhael
4-5pm	BRIMBANK LIFE
5-6pm	THE SPORTS HOUR with Max Hatzoglou

*Note:* From The Brimbank LIVE official Instagram page (brimbanklivefm). Image can be accessed at <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEoYVQwhWrc/> (Brimbank LIVE FM, 2020)

In the first couple of months of 2021, we continued to broadcast weekly. With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in Melbourne, we also sought opportunities for outside broadcasts, live events, and festivals. Some examples of events that the *Brimbank LIVE* team broadcast from were Westvale Community Centre's Harmony Day event and the African Music and Cultural



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Festival at the Immigration Museum. When we engaged in outside gigs, transport to and from these events and parking costs were covered by SNH and Making Media on top of our remuneration. Figure 9 depicts images taken at the outside broadcasts we conducted.

**Figure 9a and 9b.**

*Images from outside broadcasts of Brimbank LIVE*



*Note:* Images can be accessed <https://www.livefm.online/brimbank-live>

**Enabling Mechanisms and Hurdles for *Brimbank LIVE*.** The young people and adults who supported *Brimbank LIVE* also shared the ways in which the work of *Brimbank LIVE* was enabled or hindered for various reasons. The first and arguably most crucial enabler and the whole reason for the program and process being established was the COVID-19 pandemic, with the digitalisation and its online nature pushing us to connect and engage through radio-making. However, while creating online radio made this experience unique, both young people the adults involved in supporting *Brimbank LIVE* spoke of “*the cost of lockdown*.” Although the lockdowns were necessary for public health reasons, the young people and adults supporting the program stated that the pandemic often hindered the momentum of the program. Furthermore, the COVID-19 lockdowns were referred to as “*uncharted waters*” conjuring up “*other unprecedented pressures (which) came to light for the young people*”. Daniel gave examples of some of the ways that COVID-19 and the lockdowns adversely affected the young people personally and professionally, as they were “*dropping out of school to get a job to help their family pay rent, or... not coping with the effects of the pandemic and needing to pull out of the*

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*program.*” The young people also spoke of the strenuous nature of organising and planning their shows during the pandemic, and recounted how the adult mentors supported them through this time. One of the *Brimbank LIVE* members recalls:

Honestly, I’m grateful for Daniel, because at one point I was like “nah I’m not doing it (radio)” because I didn’t know if I would get everything in order for the launch date... He then called me, and he made sure I knew that I had people behind me helping me for support and everything.

Given the impacts of the pandemic, Daniel mentioned that he and the other mentors emphasised that young people could always take a break from the program if they ever needed time out, and they were able to re-enter when they wanted. In his interview, he described how he wanted to create “*a sense of feeling like [young people could say] “okay yes I may be experiencing this [hardship] now and I may need to pull out, but the door will always be open to come back.”*” This reflects the ways that mentors forged a space where young people did not feel pressured to continue, but instead felt a sense of place to which they would always be connected and where they would always be welcome. This also shows how in the implementation of youth-oriented approaches and practices it is important to consider the capacity of the young people as they too have busy and dynamic lives that must be respected and taken into account (Ansloos et al., 2022; Mawn et al., 2015; Morrel-Samuels et al., 2016; Suffla et al., 2014).

When recalling the constant reassurance and support received from the adults in the *Brimbank LIVE* space, the young participants highlighted the practical support provided - the extra time in the studio or getting one-on-one time with the radio producer - which assisted them in the process of setting up and running the radio station. Having the adults advocating for young people when the *Brimbank LIVE* radio station began gaining traction externally was also highly valued to help support the process. A key example of this was when external organisations were interested in having the young people engage in outside broadcasts and began proposing gigs, events and festivals for the team to host. Although the young people were paid for broadcasts on our *Brimbank LIVE* shows, when opportunities for broadcasts with external organisations arose, some of these proposed gigs were unpaid. The radio producer and SNH team leader transparently

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consulted with the young people as they informed them of these offers and explained the positives and negatives that came with doing radio work for free. In liaising with the organisations, Henry and Daniel noted that they always communicated the high skills of the young team to the interested organisations, and vouched for them as worthy of having their work compensated. Although we were always given the space to make our own decision about whether unpaid opportunities were to be taken, and indeed we would often turn down gigs that were not willing to pay us, this highlights the way that the adult mentors upheld and validated the young people's work. Moreover, when the *Brimbank LIVE* team wanted to do an occasional unpaid gig for exposure or to seize an exciting opportunity, Sylvie, Henry and Daniel organised remuneration from BNH&CC's, SNH's or Making Media's budget to ensure we were always compensated. In addition to advocating for the young people within the *Brimbank LIVE* process, Daniel also spoke about how supporting and helping the young people with hurdles or issues they encountered outside their radio work was just as important as the hurdles within the program:

Through building these relationships with young people, they came through with particular challenges they were experiencing, and my job was to be able to assist them as best as I can. It might have been homelessness, drug and alcohol issues... It was about working alongside them every step of the way, in radio and outside of it.

This reflects how the mentors' support did not have conditions or limits, and continued outside the realms of the program. One of the young people explains the benefits of having this unconditional support from mentors in the *Brimbank LIVE* program:

I think that having someone show you that they're invested and they care about your circumstance I think that's really powerful, even just the gesture, even if it's a momentary thing, and for that to be followed up with programs designed, that's all it takes, I think a short period of time under the right sort of guide really just changes people's trajectory and I've definitely seen that in my friends' lives and other people's lives ... there is power in that.

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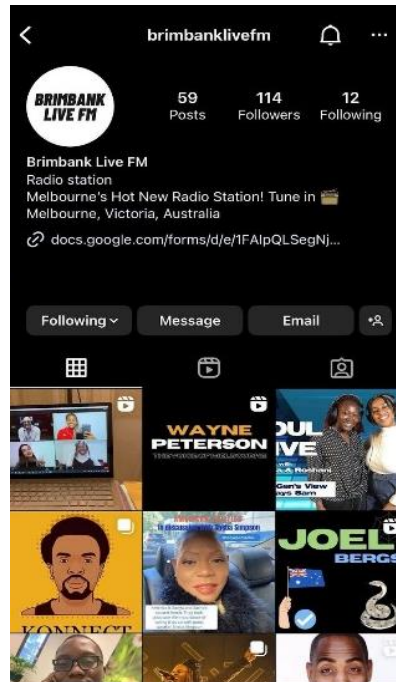
While adult mentorship enhanced and enabled the young people in their work, the limitations and barriers around marketing and exposure of the program were noted to hinder progress. In the context of radio work, the promotion of specific shows and advertising of particular content is said to be highly crucial in gaining a following (CBAA, 2008). In light of this, the BNH&CC unit actively promoted the space through their social media channels as well as the channels of *The House Program* (Instagram and Facebook); posting about specific shows, content and guests. However, there was very little targeted marketing through the official council social media channels or in the broader media. Although the broader council publications ran stories to promote the program, Henry points out how specific and constant exposure from larger bodies is important:

The whole council should be getting behind it (*Brimbank LIVE*) and be seeing this as a way to give the community experiences and a voice. But you can't just have one team leader or youth worker supporting it. It needs to be something that everyone has faith in... Unless the whole council gets behind it, is aware of it, and supports it... it will always be a battle.

In light of this, we along with the SNH team and Henry chose to do the advertising for the radio station ourselves. We used our personal social media accounts and created and managed an official *Brimbank LIVE* Instagram page to promote the station and advertise each radio show and its specific segments, as well as the guests that would be joining (see Figure 10). With the help of Henry, Daniel and Sylvie, we also contacted other promotional avenues outside the council, such as the local newspaper and organisations, who might help spread the word and inform others about *Brimbank LIVE* (see Figure 11).

**Figure 10.**

*The official Brimbank LIVE Instagram page*



*Note: From The Brimbank LIVE official Instagram page (brimbanklivefm). Page can be accessed at <https://www.instagram.com/brimbanklivefm/> (Brimbank LIVE FM, 2020)*

**Figure 11.**

*Excerpt of local newspaper article about Brimbank LIVE*

## Broadcasting young people's stories

We are excited to announce a Neighbourhood House program called Brimbank Live where young people will co-host live and pre-recorded radio shows for broadcasting on global online radio station LIVE FM during Brimbank Live Week, from 6-10 July 2020. The program provides a unique opportunity for young people to learn the breadth of skills required to work in commercial radio and to share their stories. There are 13 young people from diverse backgrounds involved in the program, and they are being trained in how to host and produce radio content, techniques to interview guests, script writing and production of voiceovers, as well as how to pitch and promote programs to target audiences. The program content focuses on the Brimbank region and includes the following topics, delivered from young people's perspectives and in a style accessible to both young people and broader audiences:

- Stories about high achievers across fields
- Showcases the arts; music, art, performing arts
- Community sport
- Education across all levels
- Business and careers
- Provides minorities and diverse cultures with an opportunity to tell their story
- Provides a platform for the discussion of important community hot topics and issues such as mental health, isolation, women's health, respect for women and gender equity, LGBTQI stories, inclusion, cultural diversity and youth issues.

You can listen to 'Brimbank Live Week' from **Monday 6 July to Friday 10 July 2020** online at [www.livefm.online](http://www.livefm.online) or on the LIVE FM app from the App Store or Google Play Store.

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*Note:* Brimbank and North West's Star Weekly, Printed 23rd of June 2020 (Star Weekly, 2020)

Reflecting on the promoting and marketing of the radio program, Henry stated that:

We didn't really have a promotional marketing team pushing this out. It was really left to ourselves... You guys (young people of *Brimbank LIVE*) did your best on your networks, but you can only do as much as you can given that you are putting so much time into your own content.

Similar to the promotional aspects, there were also notable hurdles surrounding financial support of the radio program. Daniel explains:

This is a program that is heavily funded by council NHs, and unfortunately we haven't received any funding yet, but ideally perhaps it'll be good to explore seeking funding for longer-term sustainability of the program.

In light of these financial pressures, the program participants as well as Henry, Daniel, Sylvie, were continuously applying for grants to gain resources for the program and enable payment for the *Brimbank LIVE* team members. External supports were cited as “*lifelines*” during the program's duration, with Daniel stating that “*we did get support from a philanthropical organisation which really provided continuation for Brimbank LIVE in 2021*”. Given the lack of funding, Sylvie, the BNH&CC unit coordinator, talked about the specific constraints that BNH&CC as a unit had in supporting programs financially, saying that *Brimbank LIVE* was a “*relatively expensive program by Brimbank standards*”. Furthermore, Sylvie stated that funding a program of this nature may be out of step with what the BNH&CC and council are commonly used to providing: “*I don't think that Council has a real understanding of what participatory arts projects cost when they're done well, and they're done safely*”. Responding to and navigating through these financial and promotional barriers as well as the contextual circumstances of COVID-19 was cited as a crucial and important aspect in trying to sustain the program and for “*making things work*”. Henry explains:

Of course, you love no parameters, you love a good budget, access to you guys all the time. But there were parameters because of COVID, because of budget... but...

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whenever I work with clients I always ask, what parameters have you got to work with? What are your pressure points? And we make sure I deliver around that... I embraced it and work out “how we can do it?”... you make it happen

Despite these efforts to maintain the radio space, the official program of *Brimbank LIVE* came to a close in late 2021. While occasional gigs still occur, and members of the team continue to apply their skills of hosting and facilitating in other events, broadcasts, and media spaces, the program of *Brimbank LIVE* no longer continues as a formal initiative of SNH.

In conclusion, this chapter conveys the context of the place, area and program of interest through my fieldwork and from the voices of young people and adult mentors of the radio program. The details of Brimbank as a municipality paints the picture of the community of young people who reside in the area and the encounters and experiences they face. The role of the BNH&CC and SNH in the context of Brimbank also depicts what it is like for young people in local spaces, and the forms of violence they face within them. The changes introduced in SNH, in efforts to better include and connect young people to the space, show how implementing policy as well as listening to young people’s ideas to engage and support processes they desire are important in re-imagining and transforming realms for them. The detailing of *The House Program* reflects the in-person program that was formed through this consultation with youth and in light of their creative interests. In the face of COVID-19, navigational efforts and continuous relational work with young people show the pathway that led to the curation of the radio program of interest, *Brimbank LIVE*. The detailing of *Brimbank LIVE* gives rise to the nature of the radio program, the ways of working within the setting and practice, and the peaks and troughs young team members experienced throughout the program’s duration. With the context of the radio program painted, the next chapter highlights the methodology and methods used to inform this research, as well as the process of data collection and analysis that led to and shaped the findings.

### **Chapter 5: Methodology and Methods**

This chapter begins by outlining the theoretical frameworks that have shaped my thinking and within which the research sits, and also looks at the methodological approaches that guided this work. The methods used to collect data are then illustrated, as well as details about the participants in the research study. As I held similar identity positions and connections to Brimbank as the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* and since I interacted with the young people as a participant myself in the formal program, the reflexive practices adopted throughout the various stages of the research are also acknowledged and discussed. Finally, narrative inquiry and its forms of analysis are presented as a powerful approach to examining experiences and understanding the ways that stories, both personal and collective, form. The process used for analysis of the data is then explained step by step, together with discussion of the ethical considerations, and the techniques and strategies used to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings.

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

This section describes and justifies drawing on the conceptual tools and frameworks of critical community psychology and intersectionality. I frame this work within critical community psychology as it provides a perspective for understanding, disrupting, resisting and undermining structures and symbols of violence and power, and supports approaches of engaging in research with and alongside communities. Enriching my thinking and approach is also intersectionality, a theoretical framework which shares a commitment to understanding the multiple and intersecting complexities of people through their identities and experiences. Intersectionality is useful as it provides a lens for examining the various ways youth identify, and the intersecting forms of violence they face in specific social contexts. With intersectionality framing this work and this work sitting within critical community psychology, a focus on multiple social identities, power dynamics, and contextualised understanding is supported, and there is a shared emphasis on social justice and community-level interventions which may aim to forge inclusive and culturally sensitive processes of enabling community voice and action through research.



### *Critical Community Psychology*

To understand critical community psychology, an understanding of the related discipline of community psychology is important. The field of community psychology emphasises and highlights an ecological perspective whereby individuals are influenced by multiple factors of their social, economic, cultural, and physical environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to community psychology understanding the complex interactions between individuals and their environments can lead to the promotion of positive change at multiple levels, as well as the valuing of diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability (Prilleltensky, 1997). Thus, prevention and social justice aspects are important to this field. This is particularly seen through a focus on identifying inequity, discrimination and oppression, as well as seeking protective factors through promoting access to resources and opportunities for all individuals and communities to enhance resilience and wellbeing (Prilleltensky, 1997). Community psychology practitioners and researchers work collaboratively with individuals and communities, seeking to involve community in all stages of research and intervention and to encourage shared decision-making and the development of interventions and responses that are culturally and contextually appropriate (Case et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2017). Through this, there is an emphasis on empowering individuals and communities to take control of their lives, and to address social and environmental matters through participation, collaboration, and community action (Rappaport, 1981; Zimmerman, 2000). Although community psychology critiques the individualistic limits of mainstream psychological approaches, scholars have argued that the dominant forms of community psychology still reflect a conservative and non-critical discipline (Evans et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2007). In their opinion, the discipline often draws upon ameliorative approaches for enacting change, and does little to dismantle the systems of a political and economic nature, which are seen as the fundamental cause of many social problems (Evans et al., 2017).

The related field of critical community psychology prefaces that it is not enough to just work with communities to promote social justice and equality. It emphasises the need to additionally examine the underlying power structures, power imbalances and social inequalities that are inherent in societies and reflected in communities, and to look for ways that these structures can be resisted and disrupted (Fisher et al., 2007; Kagan et al., 2019). It is a field that

promotes and facilitates the analysis of power, a critiquing of oppressive systems, and exposure of psychosocial and political systems that do harm to those in society. Furthermore, it is a field that takes a more critical and politically engaged stance toward understanding and addressing social issues, and works towards more equitable and just social systems (Evans et al., 2017). The intellectual roots of critical community psychology encompass critical theory, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, queer theory and feminist theory, with a focus on power, ideology and the role of language in constructing our social worlds and relationships (Evans et al., 2017). Critical community psychology is concerned with de-ideologising dominant understandings that uphold the status quo, and is grounded in transdisciplinary forms of knowledge seeking diversity and complexity over reductionism and homogeneity (Stark, 2019). A critical community psychology theoretical approach also seeks to draw on alternate as well as marginalised and subjugated epistemologies (Coimbra et al., 2012; Seedat & Suffla, 2017; Stark, 2019). Critical community psychology as an orientation was useful to this project as this work was interested in understanding and documenting the structural and symbolic forms of violence that manifest for young people in Brimbank, and in examining the power imbalances and social inequalities that sustain these forms of violence. A critical community psychology framework was also relevant since this work has a large interest in the processes used by young people to respond to these forms of violence. Additionally, critical community psychology is also interested in how alternative practices, knowledge and ways of working can be created, which aligns with my research aims of working in collaboration with young people and using creative modalities to tell their own stories, make meaning and knowledge, and name their personal experiences.

### *Intersectionality*

In addition to these relevant principles of critical community psychology, I am also interested in the complexities of young people's lives. Given this, I have drawn on intersectionality as a lens for this study. Intersectionality is an approach widely used in studies related to gender, ethnicity, race and social stratification to determine how people's lives are shaped by multiple and intersecting systems of categorisation (Crenshaw, 2017; Collins, 2000b; 2019). As a theory, intersectionality reminds us that people's lives cannot be explained by taking into account single, conflated and siloed categories of age, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality,

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and that categories are not fixed, they do not stagnate, nor are they simply additive components to people's lives. Instead, it acknowledges that human lives and identities are multidimensional and complex, and are shaped by various factors and social dynamics operating together which merge and exist in multifaceted ways. Scholars suggest that at the core of intersectional work we are not only interested in the attention it brings to multiple categories, but that intersectionality is also interested in power (Crenshaw, 1989). This is highlighted by Guan et al. (2021) who state that intersectionality as a way of thinking seeks to understand how “interlocking systems of power and oppression at the societal level influence the lived experiences of historically and socially marginalised groups” (p. 1). Crenshaw (1989) conveys how intersectionality enables the revealing of the power dynamics which underlie particular systems of oppression, and how broader systems of power, such as institutionalised ageism, racism or sexism, not only create but continue to perpetuate violent experiences for those on the margins. For Overstreet et al. (2020, p. 780):

Intersectionality at its core is about power - where power lies and how it functions, how power shifts in time and space, how systems of power (e.g., capitalism, heterosexism, racism, and sexism) are interlocking (e.g., racial capitalism, gendered racism) to affect the conditions of our lives, and how to dismantle systems of power in-service to new modes of thinking, being, living, and dreaming.

Thus, intersectionality can support work that aims to reveal how various systems of power operate and perpetuate inequality, and its use helps to better understand the complex power dynamics at play within the lives of communities as well as their various experiences and forms of oppression and violence.

As explained in *Chapter 2*, young people are often seen through just one lens or within conflated categorisations which often leads to them being homogenised and stereotyped as well as experiencing specific forms of discrimination and exclusion. Within the context of Brimbank, this is evident as young people are often labelled through distorted ideas and lenses of their race and perceived socioeconomic disadvantage. Furthermore, as detailed in *Chapter 3*, much of the literature around communities engaging in storytelling processes is often framed through specific

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lenses or pays close attention to stories and understandings of communities around a distinct phenomenon or based on a marginalised identity. Examples of this are seen in the use of a critical race lens to understand stories of race and racialisation of youth (Sonn et al., 2018), or feminist approaches and gender studies used to frame the documentation of youth creating sites and practices for storytelling about their gender (Cosgrove et al., 2023). While it is commonplace to acknowledge that experiences are not uniform or interchangeable for all identifying individuals (Colombo & Rebughini, 2022), seeing young people and understanding their stories through these specific frames does not allow for full representation of their expansiveness. Furthermore, it can be regarded as problematic to attempt the exploration of categorical experiences that do not bleed into others (O'Sullivan, S., 2015). This is because these attempts can further conflate and reduce complex human experiences which leads to the oversimplification of social categories, and even hinders our understanding of how individuals navigate multiple systems of power and privilege (Grzanka, 2018; Nash, 2008). Therefore, rather than focusing on siloed group experiences and stories about particular identities or documenting community through just one lens, a lens such as intersectionality, which makes visible the multiple identities and experiences of young people, is necessary in acknowledging that multiple facets are active in their lives and identities.

In light of this, an intersectional lens serves well as the theoretical basis for this study as it enables the understanding of young people's lives and identities both through the reproduction of their various categories as well as the possible intersections of them (Collins, 2000a; 2000b; Colombo & Rebughini, 2022). Acknowledging these multiple and combining categories may also permit the understanding of how different forms of marginalisation, oppression and privilege via systems and practices of power intersect and are manifest in their lives and emerge through their stories. This enables a broader focus on the various forms of structural and symbolic violence youth may experience in light of their multiple identities and their combinations, all of which is pertinent for this work. There are also epistemic and methodological dimensions to intersectionality which make particular epistemic approaches and methodologies more amenable to the production of different types of knowledge (Colombo & Rebughini, 2022; Rebughini, 2021; Wyatt et al., 2022). In light of this, intersectionality as a lens

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is also useful in guiding thinking around how young people draw upon various resources to build stories, and produce knowledge through storytelling in various ways.

As intersectionality sits under the umbrella of critical theory, it engages with work that embeds social justice movements and centres justice in its process, whilst also providing tools needed to resist the systems that shape them (Collins, 2019; Rice et al., 2019; Wyatt et al., 2022). Furthermore, this approach also “creates a space of agency – more or less wide – for the subjects” (Colombo & Rebughini, 2022, p. 223). This reflects how intersectional perspectives are ideally incorporated into this work when it comes to understanding identities and the stories that form in light of them, but how intersectional thinking is also exemplified through methods that authorise marginalised voices and centre experiences of groups to allow for their complexities to emerge (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Rice et al., 2019). Scholars state that researchers should adopt this framework particularly when working with communities on the margin and when engaging in collaborative and inclusive research practices that centre the power and oppression found in the lived experiences of these groups (Wyatt et al., 2022). A further encouragement is that researchers have a responsibility to take part in epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011) and engaging in ways of thinking that pay attention to challenging larger matrices of power and categories that have and will continue to shape us (Wyatt et al., 2022), which an intersectional lens allows.

### **Methodological Approaches**

The current study is underpinned by a qualitative research methodology and sits within a body of methodological approaches that fall under community-engaged and ethnographic approaches. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) write that the socially constructed nature of reality, as well as the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, shapes qualitative inquiry and understanding. Such community-engaged work has historically been impactful when engaging with economically and socially marginalised groups in communicating their stories and projecting their voices which would otherwise be silenced (Reyes Cruz, 2008; 2012). Scholars further support this when they say that community-engaged approaches give researchers the vehicle to articulate how we can collaborate in the process of our research, whilst also helping

address issues or agendas relating to the wellbeing of our study participants, listening to their voices, and incorporating their input into the research work (Case et al., 2014; Palmer et al., 2018). Community-engaged work has been seen to make structural, political and social workings visible, as well as to construct and provide a platform for personal and community narratives from the perspectives of community members (Ratelle, 2013; Uldam & McCurdy, 2013). Community-engaged approaches also attempt to “decolonize research and methods by reducing the traditional categories of researchers and the researched and positioning people who may not have academic degrees as ‘cultural experts’ over their neighbourhoods and social spaces” (Hardy, 2020 et al., p. 4).

Community-engaged research can be ethnographic in nature (Palmer et al., 2018) as it calls the researcher to reject disinterest and disengagement, and demands instead integration and closeness in proximity to people, activities and events of interest. Through this, the researcher becomes a part of their participants’ real world environment not just by engaging, but by actively working with community in doing and performing culture through tasks and practices, and by seeking to understand and make meaning out of what is happening on the ground, rather than looking at these as external elements out there to be objectively examined (Case et al., 2014; Kramer & Adams, 2017). Community-engaged praxis is predicated heavily on relational ethics and accompaniment, which are important considerations and ways of working for this research. The notion of psychosocial accompaniment is derived from the concept of accompaniment within liberation theology in Latin America, and has migrated into the liberatory forms of psychology as psychosocial accompaniment (Watkins, 2015). The decolonial concept of accompaniment prefixes an engagement in psychological research and practice that calls for researchers to work alongside and with marginalised people and communities. This may take place through participating and collaborating in ways of working, seeking to promote solidarity, building mutual respect and understanding, and working towards empowering processes for social justice (Watkins, 2015). Psychosocial accompaniment counters the “cultural invasion” (Freire, 2000) and requires shedding the professionalised role of expertise to which research and professional roles of practice are often oriented. Instead, it encourages researchers “to walk with those on the margins, to be with them and ‘to let go’” (Dennis et al., 1993, p. 21). Fernandez et

al. (2021) speak of how accompaniment is reflected in the process of creating relationships that have mutual accountability and is reached through meaningful, sustainable relationships and “coalitions of co-intentional solidarity” (p. 362). Furthermore, Case et al. (2014) describe how we can work for change alongside the participants we engage with, and how we have access and ability to then document the process of change that may occur.

This methodical framework is suited to this work given my embeddedness in the *Brimbank LIVE* program and my participation with the team in the co-creation of the site and radio-making process. I can draw upon this immersion through being in the space and having gone through the process of carving out the radio station and shows with them. It is also a relevant methodological approach given that I worked on the radio shows with the young people and told my own stories alongside theirs. Through this storytelling process within the radio program, we also built relationships and solidarity, whilst bringing light to our experiences of structural and symbolic violence as well as the stories of our identities. In light of the community-engaged approach adopted in this work, my positionality as a *Brimbank LIVE* team member and young person is discussed in the *Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices* section later on in this chapter, which sets out the techniques and strategies I used to ensure my positioning and engagement enhanced, rather than hindered, the work.

### **Methods**

#### ***Participants***

13 young people, including myself, were involved in the *Brimbank LIVE* program. All members of *Brimbank LIVE* were informed of this research, and 8 of the 13 young people in the program volunteered to take part in this study as key informants. Participants were aged from 15-26, and had diverse characteristics of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. One factor they all had in common was their connection to the LGA of Brimbank, as they were all connected to the Brimbank community either through spending time socialising, working, or living in the Brimbank area. Adult mentors consisted of the 3 adults from BNH&CC, SNH and Making Media Australia who were involved in supporting the young people of the *Brimbank*

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*LIVE* program. Table 1 provides demographic information about each of the young participants in the program.

Table 1

### *Participant Demographic Information – Young People*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Birthplace/Background</b>	<b>Education/Work</b>
Charlie	19	Male	Samoa/Pasifika	Production worker
Lee	15	Non-binary	Australia/Croatian	High school student
Matthew	18	Male	Australia/Macedonian & Greek	University student (Bachelor of Business and Arts)
Ally	26	Female	Egypt/South Sudanese	Bachelor of Communications/ Community consultant
Edward	17	Male	New Zealand/Samoan	Production worker
Mike	24	Male	Democratic Republic of the Congo/Congolese	Musician
Grace	18	Female	Australia/ Micronesian and Polynesian	High school student
Laila	24	Female	Australia/Ethiopian	University student (Bachelor of Behavioural Science)/ Creative



Table 2 provides participant vignettes for the young people, further illustrating their ethnic background, religion, their affiliation with Brimbank and the radio shows they hosted on *Brimbank LIVE*.

Table 2

### *Participant Vignettes – Young People*

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Charlie is a 19-year-old who identifies as male. He was born in Samoa and moved to Australia at a young age. Charlie lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and works as a production worker. He does not practice a religion himself but comes from a family who practises Christianity. On *Brimbank LIVE*, Charlie co-hosted the radio shows *The Hills* and *Real Talk*.

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Lee is 15 years old and identifies as non-binary and transgender. They were born in Australia to parents who were born in Australia and come from a Croatian and European background. Lee is a high school student, and also a singer/songwriter. They live in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. Lee co-hosted the radio shows *Local Music Hype* and *TAG: You're It*.

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Matthew is an 18-year-old who identifies as male. He was born in Australia to Macedonian and Greek parents. Matthew lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and is a university student who is studying a Bachelor of Business and Arts. On *Brimbank LIVE*, Matthew hosted *The Sports Hour*.

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Ally is a 26-year-old who identifies as female. She was born in Egypt to parents who are South Sudanese, and lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. She identifies as a Christian but does not practice her religion actively. She has completed her Bachelor of Communications degree and works in the community consultancy space. Ally hosted the *In The Know Show* and co-hosted the shows *Soul Dive*, *The RAD Experience* and *The Hard Lockdown Show*.

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Edward is a 17-year-old who identifies as male and was born in New Zealand. He lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, and is a production worker. Whilst Edward does not practise a

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religion, he comes from a Christian family. On *Brimbank LIVE*, Edward co-hosted the radio shows *The Hills* and *Real Talk*.

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Mike is a 24-year-old who identifies as male. He was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. Mike is a musician, song writer, and music producer. He has been a practising Christian but does not currently follow a religion. Mike hosted the radio shows *The Konnect Podcast* on *Brimbank LIVE* and *Music of COVID*.

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Grace is an 18-year-old female who was born in Australia, lives in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, and comes from a Micronesian and Polynesian background. She is a practising Catholic, and is a high school student. On *Brimbank LIVE*, Grace hosted the radio show *Truth*.

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Laila is a 24-year-old female who was born in Australia to Ethiopian parents. She is a practising Christian, and whilst she resides in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, Laila regularly participates in programs and spaces within the West of Melbourne. She is a university student studying her Bachelor of Behavioural Science, and is also a creative. On *Brimbank LIVE*, Laila hosted the radio show *Inspirational Creatives* and co-hosted *Soul Dive* and *The Hard Lockdown Show*.

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Table 3 provides demographic information for the adult mentors involved in the study.

Table 3

***Participant Demographic Information – Adult Mentors***

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<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Birthplace/Background</b>	<b>Role/Organisation</b>
Sylvie	Female	New Zealand	BNH&CC unit coordinator (Brimbank City Council)
Daniel	Male	Australia/Nigerian	SNH team leader (Brimbank City Council)
Henry	Male	Australia/Italian	Radio producer (Making Media Aus)

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Participant vignettes for the adult mentors are provided in Table 4. They convey information on the adult's roles, the work they did in the context of the *Brimbank LIVE* program, and within the broader reimagining of the SNH setting.

Table 4

### *Participant Vignettes - Adult Mentors*

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Sylvie was the BNH&CC unit coordinator during the time of *Brimbank LIVE*. Her role as BNH&CC unit coordinator was to provide leadership to the BNH&CCs and Brimbank Learning Futures at Brimbank City Council. Her work in this role involved creating spaces that supported communities to create self-determined futures and create systemic change at a local level. She also developed and led implementation of the policy in the Strategy and Action Plan, which saw programs rolled out that promoted youth-led and youth-driven spaces, with a focus on the creative vehicles and tools being used within them.

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Daniel was the SNH team leader during the time of *Brimbank LIVE*. Newly appointed in the role at the end of 2019, Daniel was brought onto the SNH team given his experience working in the government, private and not-for-profit sectors with community members from a variety of backgrounds and needs. He oversaw and supported both *The House Program* within the physical SNH, and was on the ground in working with and supporting young people in the *Brimbank LIVE* program.

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Henry is a radio producer who works for Making Media Australia. He supported the team of young people in *Brimbank LIVE* through training, technical support and procurement. Henry guided the young collective through the process of bringing their radio shows to life by also helping them to record, edit and broadcast their shows. With a background in radio as well as teaching and education, Henry also regularly works with various community groups and schools to help tell people's stories using audio and visual methods.

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### **Data Collection**

This section details the forms of data collection methods utilised in this research process. These methods pertain to participant observations in the SNH programs and initiatives, interviews with the young people and adults of *Brimbank LIVE*, focus groups with the radio team, as well as archival data of young people's radio shows. This section explains each of these methods through the journey of this work and in sequential order of its implementation.

Before detailing the methods used, I acknowledge that I began familiarising and connecting in the space of BNH&CC and SNH, and with the people involved in this work, before official data collection commenced. As described already in *Chapter 4*, between February 2019 and December 2019 I attended and assisted with the youth events and programs at SNH, helped gather feedback about young people's needs and wants for the space, and engaged in meetings with BNH&CC coordinators, team leaders and youth workers. I also spent time in the *Chill & Chat* program as well as *The House Program*. It is important to note that I played no official role in the proceedings of these mentioned programs, and I did not collect data during this time. Instead, this was a time of substantive theorising work (Wicker, 1989) where I familiarised and situated myself within SNH and the BNH&CC community, and immersed myself in place to learn and become aware of the context, rather than going in with set ideas. In this time, I also built connections and trust with the leadership team and young people, as well as an understanding of the daily processes and offerings of SNH in relation to youth.

### ***Participant Observations***

Ethics approval for this research was granted by Victoria University's Human Research Committee in January 2020 (see Appendix B). During the period January 2020 - March 2020, I attended SNH's *House Program* every week. I spent time in the space and sat in on the formal classes that the young people were attending. I had discussions with young people in *The House Program* classes about what led them to participate and engage in *The House Program*, what desires and intentions they had within the space, as well as what they felt would enhance their experiences in the program. Debriefing sessions with the team leaders and exchanges with the

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youth workers also took place during these visits. Fieldwork notes on these observations, interactions and conversations with the young people and staff were also taken.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced *The House Program* to cease in March 2020, the possible re-construction of programs and formulation of new offerings were deliberated upon in meetings and conversations with the SNH team and the BNH&CC coordinator. The radio producer was also part of these meetings as ideas of a digital and creative space began to take shape. In those meetings and conversations that I was involved in, I took notes. As I became involved in the radio program of *Brimbank LIVE* alongside the group of young people, I adopted a participant-observer role in the processes of the program. This meant working alongside the *Brimbank LIVE* team as we went through the radio training, made decisions about the radio station, and created our radio shows. Throughout this participation and collaboration, I also engaged closely with members of the team as I began devising shows with them. Given this, I spent time with the team and took part in their meetings and planning. With permission, I took fieldnotes on observations, conversations and important interactions that occurred in the process of curating *Brimbank LIVE*.

### *Interviews*

While we were still in the planning and curating phase of our radio station, I contacted all 13 young people involved in the *Brimbank LIVE* program via email to ask them about taking part in an individual interview and focus group for the purpose of this research. Although the young team knew of the research work prior to this invitation, within the email I re-stated the purpose and aims of the study, as well as the requirements for taking part in the subsequent data collection process by sending them the information to participant documents (See Appendix C, D and E). These documents also had information for the participants which detailed the purpose of the study, the research questions and possible risks of participation, and also included their assent and consent forms. 8 of the 13 young people expressed interested in participating in the research. For those young people who indicated their interest in participating in the interviews as well as discussing their experiences and perspectives in the focus groups, those who were over 18 years of age sent back signed consent forms, and those under 18 sent back signed assent forms along

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with signed consent forms from their parents. Interview schedules were also provided to the young people prior to the interviews to help them gain an idea of what types of questions they may be asked (See Appendix F). When all assent and consent forms were signed and returned, times and dates for the interviews were scheduled at the young people's convenience.

Interviews took place with eight participants of *Brimbank LIVE* during the period July 2020 - December 2020. Two participants requested to be interviewed together, whilst the other participants were interviewed individually. Due to the fluctuating nature of COVID-19 lockdowns, half of the interviews took place online using Zoom, and the other half of the interviews occurred face-to-face when COVID-19 restrictions eased, within private rooms at SNH. Online interviews were recorded using the video recording function on Zoom, and face-to-face interviews were recorded using the voice recording device on my phone. The interview agenda was split into five topic categories. In the opening section of the interviews, young people were asked introductory and demographic questions relating to their age, pronouns, area of residency and ethnic identity. The second set of questions focused on their experiences as young people in their communities. Questions such as "Can you describe your community" and "What are some things that would make your community better?" were used for this topic's discussion. The third section of questions was a conversation about what it was like for them in their everyday spaces and their future involvement in programs. Questions such as "What spaces in your community do you spend time in?" and "Why do you choose to engage or not engage in particular programs?" were asked. The fourth set of questions revolved around the young people's experiences within the *Brimbank LIVE* program. This was shaped by questions to the participants such as "What topics will your radio show explore?" and "What have you gained by being part of this program?" The last set of questions invited conversation around the young people's futures, and how programs and services in their community might support them in achieving their goals. Questions such as "Where do you see yourself in 5 years?" and "Do you feel the programs and services at NH help you in achieving your goals?" were asked. Hand-written notes were taken during each interview, as I jotted down initial thoughts and prominent notions that came up. After each interview, I referred young people to the provided list of available support services on their information to participant documents, and encouraged them to

contact services in light of any possible distress surrounding the matters discussed in the interview. Interviews lasted between 30 - 120 minutes. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim, and the transcript sent to participants. They were given two weeks to look over their transcripts and mark any details for omission that they did not want included in the research data.

### ***Focus Groups***

On 6 July 2020, the youth-led radio station of *Brimbank LIVE* officially launched. After the launch week was over, the first focus group took place over Zoom with discussion between seven study participants, the radio producer, the SNH team leader and myself. The focus group was used as an opportunity for the young people in the program to reflect on the initial broadcasting experience, both for the purposes of the study and for the future planning of the radio program. Willig (2013) says that focus groups can elicit a variety of views, allow participants to jointly construct meaning, and give participants an opportunity to develop ideas which are to be addressed through other methods. The focus group had no set questions but concerned itself with discussion and debriefing around the young people's experiences with the launch of the radio station and their respective shows. This was also an opportunity for the young people to discuss what changes they wanted to implement in the radio station and shows, as well as their availability and plans for broadcasting in the future. Questions posed during the focus group ranged from "What have you gained from the initial broadcast" to "What changes do we want to see moving forward with the program?" Young people also posed questions to the group during its duration. I also took notes of initial provocations and themes discussed for the purpose of the current study. The focus group ran for a total of 116 minutes, and was transcribed. The transcript was also sent to participants for reviewing.

Although the initial plan was to engage in a second interview with the young people individually, due to their availability and time I decided to conduct a second focus group with the team instead. In December 2020, following both the initial *Brimbank LIVE* week in July as well as the succeeding six months of weekly broadcasts, participants were emailed and asked for their availability for a second focus group. This focus group aimed to understand how the program had changed over its course, the outcomes and highlights that had been achieved, and how the

*Brimbank LIVE* program was to move forward in its future endeavours. This focus group took place in the LIVE FM Studio and included the discussion and perspectives from three research participants in the *Brimbank LIVE program*, the radio producer and the SNH team leader. The focus group was recorded using the voice recorder on my phone, and the notes taken were used for the purpose of this research as well as for program evaluation purposes. During this focus group, the young people were asked questions such as “What are some of the successes we’ve had through *Brimbank LIVE* over the last 6 months”, “What have been some of the barriers in the *Brimbank LIVE* program?” and “What are our plans for future broadcasting?” (see Appendix G for focus group questions). The focus group went for a total of 94 minutes and the recording was transcribed verbatim.

### ***Archival Data***

The radio show content produced by the young people, and which aired on *Brimbank LIVE*, was made available for public viewing on the *Brimbank LIVE* radio show’s official website (<https://www.livefm.online/brimbank-live>). The website features all of the radio shows of *Brimbank LIVE* in video and audio format, including the 12 radio shows which were hosted by the participants in the current study. Analysis of media forms and content, such as television and radio, is common, and is said to enrich the context of experiences already derived from traditional data collection methods such as interviews and focus groups (Pehlke, 2009). Therefore, the radio shows were used in this study as archival data, as parts of the radio shows were listened to, transcribed and analysed to gain a deeper understanding and insight into what stories, perspectives and topics the young people chose to share on their radio platform. Other forms of media and artefacts such as newspaper clippings of articles as well as pictures and posts from the radio show’s social media pages were also used to help inform the context and processes of the radio program. The young people’s radio shows that featured on *Brimbank LIVE* and were drawn upon for analysis are listed and described below in Table 5, with a description of each show, its radio hosts, and how long the show was on air across the duration of *Brimbank LIVE*.



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Table 5

### *Brimbank LIVE Shows*

<b>Show Name</b>	<b>Hosts</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Duration of Airtime*</b>
The Hills	Charlie and Edward	<i>The Hills</i> was a show that had a focus on music, and followed the host's discussion around writing their own songs and performing. The show also featured tracks written and recorded by Charlie and Edward, and included segments where they dissected the meanings and inspirations of their songs, such as family life, money struggles, and fitting in.	July 2020 - July 2020
The Sports Hour	Matthew	<i>The Sports Hour</i> was a show that focused on sport and the impact it had in the community and global sphere. On the show, Matthew discussed the latest sporting matches and events, analysed sporting figures, and interviewed local, national and international sporting guests.	July 2020 - December 2020
Truth	Grace	<i>Truth</i> was a <i>Brimbank LIVE</i> show that focused on music, youth issues, mental health and wellbeing. The radio show also featured local artists and community members who engaged in discussion with Grace, the host.	July 2020 - July 2020
The RAD Experience	Ally and myself	<i>The RAD Experience</i> was a show that focused on hot topics surrounding social justice, such as representation, colourism and youth engagement,	July 2020 - July 2020

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		and included discussion around these topics with community, national and international guests.	
Real Talk	Charlie, Edward and Daniel	<i>Real Talk</i> was a show that featured two of the young people of <i>Brimbank LIVE</i> , as well as the SNH team leader, Daniel. It was a show where the hosts spoke about their life experiences and growing up as young people who were often racialised. It also featured interviews with community guests.	July 2020 - July 2020
TAG: You're It	Lee	<i>TAG: You're It</i> was a show that focused on rising stars in the Australian drag scene. The show featured interviews with Australian drag stars as the host interviewed them about their lives, inspirations and their experiences in the drag scene.	July 2020 - July 2020
In the Know Show	Ally	The <i>In The Know Show</i> was a show that featured discussion of community issues, social justice and pop culture. It also featured community guests who engaged in these discussions with the host.	July 2020 - July 2020
Local Music Hype	Lee	<i>Local Music Hype</i> was a show that was hosted by Lee, as well as another participant of <i>Brimbank LIVE</i> who was not involved in the study. The show featured the hosts interviewing local musicians and artists about their music, life experiences and their music writing processes during the pandemic. The songs of these artists were also featured.	July 2020 - July 2020

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The Hard Lockdown Show	Laila, Ally and myself	<i>The Hard Lockdown Show</i> was a show that aimed to propel discussion and insight into Melbourne's lockdown on public housing towers. It featured interviews with residents of the public housing towers and volunteers.	July 2020
The Konnect Podcast	Mike	<i>The Konnect Podcast</i> was a show that featured creative, artistic and musical guests interviewed by Mike, the host.	July 2020 - March 2021
Inspirational Creatives	Laila	<i>Inspirational Creatives</i> was a show that featured interviews with creatives in the community that were a source of inspiration to the host, Laila. Guests included local musicians, actors, teachers and artists. The interviews had a specific focus on how creatives managed and thrived during the COVID lockdown period.	July 2020 - July 2020
Soul Dive	Laila, Ally and myself	<i>Soul Dive</i> was a show that aired discussion around issues of social justice, mental health and pop culture. Guests were also incorporated into the show and were interviewed by the hosts about the topics at hand.	August 2020 - March 2021
Music of COVID	Mike and myself	The <i>Music of COVID</i> show broadcast music that young people of <i>Brimbank LIVE</i> as well as local young artists from Brimbank wrote and created to push informative messaging about the pandemic. The show featured hosts, Mike and myself, interviewing the musicians and artists behind the	March 2021

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music about their creative process in creating these songs.

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\* The ‘July 2020-July 2020’ airtime date indicates the radio shows that were only on air for the initial *Brimbank LIVE* week. Whilst some participants only took part in the radio broadcasting process for the initial *Brimbank LIVE* week, hence the ceasing of their shows, others continued their participation in the *Brimbank LIVE* program, but created new shows for future broadcasting periods.

Drawing upon interviews, focus groups, and the radio data allowed for a deeper and wider understanding of the cultural setting, context, people and work of *Brimbank LIVE*. This enabled the research to be conducted as community-engaged research where a range of methods allow researchers to retain access and locate themselves in the research, and these methods also provide them opportunities to build trust and relationships with their participants through the process (Case et al., 2014; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Schensul & LeCompte, 2013; Willis, 2007). The nature and range of the methods used not only forges better quality of data, but enhances collaboration with community members, and therefore can intentionally or unconsciously increase the centralisation of the community’s points of view (Reyes Cruz, 2008; 2012; Reyes Cruz & Sonn, 2011; 2015).

### ***Interviews with Adult Mentors***

Interviews with the radio producer, the SNH team leader, and the BNH&CC unit coordinator occurred in the final months of 2021 and 2022. These took place to understand the role of adult mentors in regard to the program and the broader reimagining of SNH, from an organisational point of view. Their roles and insights in working with the young people as well as in supporting them in building the space and creating the radio station were also discussed. The radio producer, SNH team leader and BNH&CC unit coordinator were emailed individually and asked if they would be willing to be interviewed for the purpose of the research. Once interviews and times were agreed upon, they received documents which detailed the purpose of the study, research questions, possible risks of participation, and information about available support services (see Appendix H). These documents also included informed consent forms for

adults to sign. Interview questions were also provided prior to the interviews so they would have an idea of what types of questions they might be asked. Two interviews were conducted over Zoom and a third was conducted face-to-face at a local café. A large portion of the scheduled interview questions were consistent across all the interviews with adult mentors (see Appendix I), but each mentor had some tailored questions as their roles in the *Brimbank LIVE* process varied and they were at different proximities to the work. Some examples of the base questions that all three adult mentors were asked are “Tell me about your role in *Brimbank LIVE*?”, “Describe your relationship with the young people of *Brimbank LIVE*?”, and “What were some of the challenges that arose for young people in the building of the *Brimbank LIVE* space?” Interviews ranged in length from 35 - 57 minutes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were sent to the adult mentors. They were given two weeks to look over their responses, provide feedback and ask for any aspects of their interviews to be omitted from the study.

### **Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices**

Understanding the identity and experiences of the researcher as an individual and their position within the research process is an integral part of qualitative studies and narrative approaches, particularly those of a community-engaged nature (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Paris & Winn, 2013; Riessman, 1993; Summers, 2013; Williamson-Kefu, 2019). It helps to illuminate the insights they may have as well as the ways that they interact, shape and interpret the data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As Reed et al. (2012) state, “who we are, or who we are perceived to be, is often important to communities and the people with whom we work. This may be especially true in communities sceptical of research due to historical research-related abuse and misuse of data to harm or stigmatize already oppressed groups” (p. 23). In light of my personal identity positions and my connection to Brimbank, as well as my engagement and participation in the *Brimbank LIVE* program, implications inevitably arose which both strengthened the research and also came with the ability to hinder it. This section details the ethical considerations and reflexive practices adopted throughout the course of the research process, as well as the ways my immersion and positioning shaped the work. These aspects will be explained in the sequential order in which they were encountered starting from the ethical

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considerations and reflexive practices within the initial research phase of entering and familiarising myself in the SNH space, the engagement within the youth initiatives and *The House Program*, my participation in *Brimbank LIVE*, as well as the data collection process with the radio participants.

### ***Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices: SNH Fieldwork***

Firstly, during the initial stages of my research within the SNH space, I became privy to particular protocols and approaches that I was not previously aware of. For example, I discovered that in previous years of the service, SNH receptionists were notorious for locking the door of the building if they felt ‘threatened’ by an individual or group approaching the space, with most of these individuals and groups being young people. Learning this, I recall many visits to SNH’s study area during my high school years where I could see the SNH was open and receptionists were present, but as I caught their eye and walked to the door, I would often hear the doors lock. In addition to these learnings being startling, these previous encounters and experiences of being a young person in the space differed to the way my presence was received coming into the SNH and the broader BNH&CC as a researcher attached to a formal institution. This painted the picture of how power dynamics, social exclusion and different levels of treatment are at play in the SNH for particular groups and individuals, and how these processes are ambivalent and dependent on particular factors for young people, such as education and their proximity to a formal role or establishment. Furthermore, it also highlighted that doing work within one’s community and familiar spaces comes with the prospect of the researcher’s presence being reframed and re-positioned. As I too had my own exclusionary experiences within the space of interest, I acknowledged and reflected on them by keeping a reflexive journal during my research. I also drew upon these insights and shared them when needed (Case et al., 2014) particularly in the stages of working with the other young people on the radio program. This will be further explicated later in this section.

### ***Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices: Youth Initiatives and The House Program***

During the youth initiatives and events that I attended in 2019, and also during my engagement within *The House Program*, I engaged in an observational, yet interactive role.

Although I did not partake in the formal classes of *The House Program*, I sat in and oversaw how the classes progressed as well as engaged in casual chats with the young people in the program and hang-out space. Despite the valuable insights that the method can derive, participant-observer work holds ethical entanglements as it can be perceived as invasive and intimidating, and accentuate potential power imbalances, especially within youth spaces (Guest et al., 2013; Li, 2008). This was especially important to consider in the context of this work, as *The House Program* was publicised as a safe realm for young people who often experience mistrust and ambivalence in similar spaces. Therefore, rather than solely focusing on research-based agendas during my participant observations in *The House Program*, when interacting with the young people I engaged in conversations with them about my research but also about matters beyond my research, such as music and TV shows we watched. This was in addition to engaging in other activities with them, as already mentioned in Chapter 4, such as playing cards and board games. This was beneficial in building a feeling of comfort between the young people and me, enabling them to become acquainted with my presence in the space, and ensuring that I was not just extracting information with a narrow focus, but also promoting open dialogue and facilitating connections. To help this relationship building, I rarely took fieldwork notes in front of the young people. Instead note taking occurred in class breaks, in my car, or when I arrived home directly after visits to *The House Program* to avoid disruption to the young people's space and activities.

### ***Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices: Brimbank LIVE***

My positionality in this research increased and deepened through *Brimbank LIVE*, as being a participant in the program allowed me to document the *Brimbank LIVE* experience from the inside. This inside positioning meant that I had insight into the building, running and maintenance of this youth-oriented radio program as well as the intricate conversations and procedures that came with doing the radio work. Creating radio shows, themes and stories was also an important and intimate process, and being in the program meant that I was able to live and experience these processes with and alongside the other young participants. These insights helped fill the gaps as well as strengthen my illustration of the program's context. This proximity also allowed me to have open and constant conversations with participants, to gauge their

thoughts and gain their feedback regarding the research in an off-the-cuff and candid manner. Being a young person working with the team not only enriched my understanding of the radio process, but allowed me to build personal relationships with the other young people I was working with. Outside of radio-making, I spent time with the *Brimbank LIVE* team as we often went out for coffee and had team meals together. Fellow team members would also come into the research space I occupied at SNH and spent time hanging out and engaging in conversation with me. The immersion enabled an organic level of comfort, trust and safety with participants, which is pivotal to the relational craft of community work. Such engagement is also said to be of importance when working with those on the margins, especially in light of the justified mistrust and ambivalence that youth experience within spaces and with adults who often govern them (Fu, 2021; Kral, 2014; Stoker et al., 2018).

Naturally, the relationships forged and proximity to the young people prompted the sharing and exchanging of personal thoughts, information and perspectives between myself and participants regarding matters outside of the radio station and research process. As the content of these conversations were intimate and personal in nature, it was important that these sensitive details and exchanges did not find their way into the data. To prevent and avoid this, I only collected data during allocated and scheduled times, and only used data after approval was given by the young people. This ensured that I did not compromise the relationships and trust built with the young people, or jeopardise their privacy. Furthermore, despite knowing the research aims and processes, many young people commented on how they often forgot the research was even happening. This highlights how being engaged as an insider allowed me to blend into the proceedings of the program and this gave the young people the space to do their radio work without the research processes being disruptive. Although this was the case, I did also have a privileged position as a researcher affiliated with an institution of higher education conducting research in this space, and for me that was an important consideration (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). While the young people did not overtly express this to be a prominent factor or concern, I had to be wary of the ways that my presence as a researcher of the program could hinder, fracture or disrupt young people from authentically engaging in the process, especially in light of how involved and embedded I was in the program, as well as the power I had in telling their



stories. This meant that I was proactively transparent through the research procedures, and continued to inform them of the risks of the work while encouraging them to engage with me in representing their stories accurately.

### ***Researcher Positioning and Reflexive Practices: Data Collection***

During research interviews and focus groups, I chose to be active when discussing the various experiences and positionings that I shared with the young people. In feminist and community-based participatory projects, self-disclosure that illuminates similar experiences is encouraged as it can oil the wheels of the research process for the researcher (Yost & Chmielewski, 2013). It does this by building rapport and trust, which can help to level out the power imbalances often present between participants and researcher, and can also increase the quality of data gathered (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Saidin, 2016; Yost & Chmielewski, 2013). During the interviews and focus groups, I was able to connect with the stories shared about being a young person growing up in Brimbank, and particularly their experiences regarding the assumptions adults have about us, the ways we can often be undermined and exploited, and the navigations youth from the West often need to go through to minimise and overcome these framings. My racial and ethnic identity, as well as my experiences of being a third culture kid growing up in a country that my parents settled in, were also drawn upon in interviews and focus groups when it felt relevant to do so. This positioning meant that the experiences of other second-generation young people in the project had special resonance, and it allowed me to empathise with those who spoke of being placed on the margins due to their race and ethnicity. In these conversations, as well as on their radio shows, the young people particularly emphasised this commonality by using inclusive language and making statements such as “we as migrant children” or “people like us”. This was also seen in the ways they spoke of my positioning as a team member in the program, stating what “our” plans for the radio station were and talking about the shows and stories that “we” created. Through this, they acknowledged the personal ties we had, and my positioning as a young person participating in the program.

In the radio programs, I was also able to join in and share my own relevant experiences. While co-hosting shows alongside the other young people, my personal perspectives as well as

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my own experiences as a young woman of colour from the West of Melbourne were constantly drawn upon in discussions and conversations which went on air. This grounded and attached me to my work, as it became more than a research process, but a personal journey of being able to share and make public aspects of my own identity which can often be underrepresented or misunderstood. This was something I held in common with the other members of the program.

However, despite my connection to particular positions and to shared experiences, both as a young person and as a participant in the program, being an insider is said to exist on a continuum rather than being seen as a black and white dichotomy (Trowler, 2011). Wilkinson and Kitinger (2013) state that even though we may share similar experiences with our participants, we may not always be on the same grounds as them in every way, particularly in light of intersecting positionings (Collins, 2019; 2000b; Crenshaw, 1989; 2017). For example, despite connecting with participants when it came to their experiences of doing radio and growing up in Brimbank, as a cis young person I could not relate to their lived experience and stories of young people participants who were transgender, nor to the combination this positioning made with their experiences of being a young person from the West. This highlights that even when categorical experiences are similar, levels of experience may be different (Bhatia, 2018; Bhatia & Ram, 2009). This was again apparent as whilst I am a young person of Sri Lankan heritage, who has encountered discrimination due to my race, my experiences of being racialised are vastly different to the experiences of those participants who are from the African diaspora. Additionally, even though I was a member of the *Brimbank LIVE* team, and shared the experiences of training, putting shows together and making live radio, my particular experiences of these processes were unique to me and different from the others. In light of this, as I conducted interviews and focus groups, it was important to remember that my own experiences were not those of my participants, no matter how close or engaged I was to them, or how similar my personal accounts seemed. As Yost and Chmielewski (2013) explain, when doing insider research, the researcher's experience and voice often needs to be minimised to allow the stories from the participants to shine. Therefore, although I chimed in to build rapport and comfort with my participants, I refrained from writing over or conflating my experiences with theirs. Listening also became important during the data collection process, as I consciously turned to and was

guided by the young people's expertise when it came to their own lives. Chelsea Watego (2021) speaks extensively of how this can be done by recognising that as researchers we will never fully understand or experience the same things as others, and that there is importance in listening, learning and doing our best to use our positionality as researchers to "elevate and amplify the voices and experiences of others", whilst also recognising the privilege and power we have to do so. Another way in which Watego (2018) conceptualises this is that in our research we should not claim the position of 'knower' but instead through our work we must show how we come to know using the "politics of transparency and accountability around knowledge production as a kind of showing one's working, rather than trying to be 'the one'" (p. 5).

### **Data Analysis**

I begin this section by describing what stories and narratives are, and how they are conceptualised in the literature. This is followed by an illustration of the narrative forms of analysis which are the most appropriate when working with community stories and narratives. The type of narrative analysis used in this study, which contains thematic approaches to narrative as well as critical narrative analysis, is then explicated and justified. The step-by-step process undertaken to analyse the data collected in this research project is then detailed.

### ***Stories and Narratives***

Researchers sift through the experiences of participants, make choices regarding what is significant, and interpret what is being said in a meaningful context (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Through this, we as researchers craft histories from the lives and stories of our participants. As the current study is informed by community-engaged underpinnings, which adopt a cultural and contextual focus and aim to elevate community members and their voices through the work, an analysis approach that helps to facilitate and uphold these elements is key. Narrative approaches which allow this are commonly drawn upon in critical community psychology (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; Rappaport, 2000). Narrative inquiry and its methods seek to determine common themes or threads across experiences to show how people weave experiences into meaningful stories (Lieblich et al., 1998; Peterson, 2017). Stories are the

narrative retellings of individuals as they seek to organise experience, provide meaning to life events, and convey a sense of continuity, history, and the future (Mankowski & Rappaport, 1995; Rappaport, 1995). A narrative is inferred as a form of social practice in which individuals draw from a cultural repertoire of available stories larger than themselves, and assemble them into personal stories. This process can also be understood to enable identity and self-construction (Case & Hunter, 2012; Hammack, 2008; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). For scholars and practitioners in the field of psychology who work with communities and groups whose stories are excluded from the dominant cultural narratives, documenting and analysing these community's experiences and narratives are said to serve them as it enables their stories to be told and helps them to maintain their own sense of identity (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000).

There are different ways in which narratives are conceptualised, understood and defined, as well as diverse ways of thinking about how stories can shape and form narratives. Rappaport's (2000) framework of conceptualising narratives in community psychology speaks to personal stories, community narratives, and dominant cultural narratives. *Personal stories* are those that are idiosyncratic and represent one's own cognitive and social representation of events which are unique to the individual. *Community narratives* refer to the stories commonly told amongst groups of people, and which are shared through social interactions, rituals, texts and other forms of practice within community. They provide and establish group meaning and norms, as well as shape collective identities. Community narratives are often communicated about events that are commonly experienced by group members, and are central to their sense of collective or social identities. Whilst personal stories are our own, they can be negotiated in the context of community narratives, and community narratives can also be reshaped by people through their personal stories (Hammack, 2008). *Dominant cultural narratives* refer to stories that are communicated or reinforced by social and cultural institutions, such as mass media and spaces for education and political discourse. These narratives can be understood as stereotypes and have the capacity to shape community and individual stories. Mankowski and Rappaport (2000) state that in many cases, powerful people in a culture may be the ones to maintain the dominant cultural narratives about marginalised groups.

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Similar to Rappaport's (2000) framing of how personal stories are influenced by community and dominant cultural narratives, narrative is understood by Smith and Sparkes (2008) as "a form of social practice in which individuals draw from a cultural repertoire of available stories larger than themselves that they then assemble into personal stories" (p. 19). The stories resource perspective, discussed by Smith and Sparkes (2008) and situated within a narrative constructionist inquiry (Esin et al., 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2013), says that although stories are idiosyncratic and conceived as personal, they are thoroughly shaped by and intertwined with socio-cultural conventions. Given this, the stories resource perspective emphasises how social, cultural, and historical contexts and resources are drawn upon when individuals construct their narratives and interpret their lives. Employing personal and cultural resources to create and reconstruct stories over time reinforces the idea that individuals are active agents and that stories are not passive in their reflections and meaning-making. Rather it insinuates that personal experiences and cultural narratives are used as tools to enable the forming and negotiating of individual identities and social realities (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

Stories can also deconstruct values, assumptions, and beliefs to challenge taken-for-granted meanings, and re-form to emerge as counterstories (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). Bell, L. A. (2010) describes particular ways that these can flourish through stock stories, concealed stories, and resistance stories, particularly used in the context of inequities. *Stock stories* make up the collective stories that are told by the dominant group, passed on through literature and history, and that are prominent in the media. Such stories sustain inequitable structures. *Concealed stories* represent the many absent and contradictory stories that leak out from the margins, and that are often hidden by stock stories. They challenge the complacent and assumed normality of stock stories, as they offer different accounts, explanations or realities. *Resistance stories* may emerge from concealed stories and actively challenge stock stories that support and enable inequities. They validate the experiences of those who have been marginalised, but also have the capacity to instruct and educate, as well as prompt opportunities for participation and action. Lastly, *emerging/transforming stories* refer to new and standalone stories that challenge stock stories, but also extend and amplify concealed and resistance stories. They offer alternate

ways of being, subvert the norms and assumptions of the status quo, and also enable the imagining of new possibilities. Bell, L. A. (2019) considers the last three story types - concealed, resistance, and emerging/transforming stories - to be counterstories as they challenge and dismantle dominant and mainstream stories. Case and Hunter (2012) also formulate three types of narratives that represent how stories may speak to and challenge dominant stories. These are *oppression narratives* which affirm and privilege people's subjective experiences of oppression, *resistance narratives* that articulate the strength of individuals and their capability to overcome oppression, and *reimagined personal narratives* where individuals re-craft their individual identities that have been misrepresented through dominant cultural narratives. Case and Hunter (2012) state that these narratives can be elicited both as community and interpersonal narratives, and can strengthen community as well as foster solidarity amongst individuals.

### *Narrative Forms of Analysis*

Narrative analysis is often used in qualitative and community contexts to emphasise and give meaning to the lives and perspectives of participants through the stories and narratives that form (Cicognani et al., 2018; Quayle & Sonn, 2019). Often used in studies that focus on groups and communities that are decentred or placed on the margins, narrative analysis is explained as a "technique for understanding the myriad of ways in which groups respond to adversity" (Sonn & Fisher, 1998, p. 468). According to Riessman (2005), narrative analysis also provides a useful framework for understanding how people make sense of their experiences through storytelling. There are several ways of employing narrative analysis, which can be combined since they are not hierarchical, and used generally for analysis of the narration of personal experiences (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). There is *narrative thematic analysis*, which seeks to capture meaning and what is told, *structural analysis* which focuses not only on meaning but the way a story is told and how it is told, *interactional analysis* which is concerned with the co-construction of a story as well as the dialogical process between teller and listener, and *performative analysis* which is interested in how a narrative is performed (Riessman, 2005).

In addition, Rappaport (2000) refers to guidelines that may be used to enable an iterative process of narrative analysis. These are to familiarise oneself with the data; identify the structure

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and key themes from the narrative as well as the central message and meaning of the story; contextualise the narrative through the historical, political and personal context of the storytelling; arrange the narrative using techniques such as content, structural and discursive analysis; and finally interpret the data. Emerson and Frosh (2004) engage in a type of narrative analysis that is similar to this, but which highlights that a focus on power and criticality can also be used in narrative analysis. Their guidelines to conduct a critical form of narrative analysis are to collect the data; become familiar with the content and context of stories being told; identify the key themes and patterns through coding and labelling narratives that reflect key themes; examine the language, imagery and metaphors as well as the structure of narratives to identify how stories form and relate to the social and cultural contexts that they are procured in; interpret the data by making connections between key themes, content and structure as well as by paying attention to the ways that these may reflect and resist power; and finally write up the findings by detailing descriptions of the key themes and patterns that emerged from the data. Emerson and Frosh (2004) state that it is also vital that reflexive practice takes place during the process, with continued acknowledgment of the researcher's positionality, potential biases, and the way that their assumptions and values may come into play through the analysis process.

For paying attention to the social, historical and contextual aspects, as well as power bases, a mutually beneficial partnership of narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis is provided by critical narrative analysis (CNA). CNA is an approach that “allows us to learn how people create themselves in constant social interactions at both personal and institutional levels, and how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal everyday narratives” (Souto-Manning, 2014, pp. 162-163). Drawing on critical discourse approaches and combining it with narrative analysis, CNA allows us to learn how people create themselves at both personal and institutional levels, and how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal and everyday narratives (Souto-Manning, 2014). According to Souto-Manning (2014) “CNA allows for the critical analysis of narratives in the lifeworld - the everyday stories people tell and the personal resources that they bring - within the context of institutional discourses” (p. 163), thus paying attention to both micro (personal) and macro (institutional) resources to make sense of their experiences. Doing this work, which has a critical edge, can also enable the

deconstructing and challenging of normalised and taken-for-granted inequities in society, as well as monolithic and commonly accepted definitions (Souto-Manning, 2014; Teo, 2010).

### *The Current Study*

This study is interested in what stories young people produce and tell through the data, and therefore the thematic content of the narrative and the meanings that they construct are significant (Mankoswki & Rappaport, 2000). By collecting and examining their stories and inductively creating conceptual groupings of the data, narratives may form. This focus on the thematic content of narratives is often helpful for theorising across a number of cases or participants to find common elements of a thematic nature (Mankoswki & Rappaport, 2000). As there are arguments around the ambiguity and uniqueness of stories, thematic approaches to narrative enable us to encapsulate diverse stories and capture multiple layers of meaning, and also provide a common thread to understand how these stories are linked rather than conflated (Riessman 2005).

In drawing upon this type of analysis, Rappaport's (2000) and Smith and Sparkes' (2008) ideas around the conceptualising and forging of narratives also resonate for this study. Personal stories that are idiosyncratic and influenced by historical, social and political factors, as well as community narratives and dominant cultural narratives, are also the focus in this work. The cultural and social resources drawn upon by the young people tell stories about their lives, identities and subjectivities are also of interest, as well as the ways these are formed. Through this approach, the cultural repertoire of stories larger than themselves and the ways they are assembled into personal stories are also in focus, particularly as stories about young people are prevalent in the dominant discourse. This can also enable insight into how stories about young people's lives and identities are influenced and drawn up not just through one's experiences, but also to reflect the "socially situated production of identity" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 17). It is also relevant to this study to pay attention to how personal stories are not only shaped by these larger narratives and forged using micro and macro resources, but also how personal stories may contest and challenge the dominant cultural understandings. In this way Case and Hunter's (2012) sentiments about how young people's stories can speak back to dominant and taken-for-



granted framings, and how reimagined narratives may be forged through new stories, which transcend these dominant framings, resonate with my work

As a CNA approach is being used, Smith and Sparkes' (2008) and Rappaport's (2000) conception of narratives is said to fall in alignment with the use of this critical analysis method (Esin et al., 2014; Sparkes & Smith, 2013). CNA will support these approaches to narrative as it provides an understanding not just of how individuals make sense of their worlds by drawing on cultural and personal resources, but also of the societal and institutional contexts and power within which these stories are formed (Souto-Manning, 2014). In addition to this, narrative procedures call upon the role of the researcher to be active and reflexive as they make sense of participant stories and to work in collaboration with the research participants to ensure their stories are given authentic meaning (Hammack, 2008). This is especially important in the current study where community-engaged approaches have been summoned up through the research process which allowed me to work in close proximity with young people to understand their stories. The intimacy and closeness to the young people that came with my community-engaged approach, as well as my immersion in the radio program, deepened my understanding of the stories and experiences, as well as enabled practices for increasing credibility. These practices in furthering the quality of the research, along with the process of analysis, will be explicated in the next section.

### ***Data Analysis Process***

I began the analysis process by listening to the audio recordings of the interviews and focus groups. Following my initial listen, I began transcribing the interviews and focus groups, capturing every word verbatim. When I had finished the verbatim transcription, I listened to the audio recordings again, going over the transcripts and adding in missed words or phrases. I did this multiple times for each transcript to ensure that they were transcribed in their entirety. In addition to including what was said, I included fillers, false starts and non-verbal communication, such as laughter and pauses, as well as clarification of words and phrases in brackets. I also highlighted words and phrases that were unclear or that were inaudible so that participants could be clarified by participants during the transcript reviewing process. I then sent

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the interview transcripts to the respective participants and the focus group transcripts to everyone in the focus group to read over, clarify unclear words, and ask for details that they did not want part of the research to be omitted. This strategy is referred to as member checking (McKim, 2023). As consent is an ongoing process (Tolich & Tumilty, 2020), this was also an opportunity for me to ensure that participants were still comfortable with being part of the research process and having their data included in further analysis stages. Once the *Brimbank LIVE* participants had reviewed their interviews and focus group transcripts, I began reading and re-reading the transcripts repeatedly to build familiarity with the data (Crossley, 2007). As I read through the transcripts line-by-line, I made digital annotations on the margins of each transcript as well as highlighted words or phrases that were salient or relevant to the research questions (Cicognani et al., 2018; Riessman, 1993). As part of this preliminary coding, words and phrases such as ‘treated differently’, ‘left out’, ‘safe space’, and ‘community’ were noted while reading about the young people’s experiences in institutional and community spaces. Likewise, from the focus group discussions about *Brimbank LIVE*, words that prevailed constantly, such as ‘built confidence’, ‘skills’, and ‘using my voice’, were also jotted down.

As I made my way through the transcripts numerous times, combing the data for words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs that seemed relevant and important to the personal stories of young people, I began assigning particular aspects to a code or category by highlighting relevant or illustrative quotes and examples of each code in a different colour, following the process of open coding. Latent coding also took place as these phrases and quotes, along with their subsequent denotations, were further interpreted and marked through digital notes on the transcripts. This allowed a coding scheme to be developed, which saw annotations and explanations of particular words, sentences and phrases noted. As I re-read the transcripts again, I searched for statements that reflected the emerging categories which prevailed whilst staying open to possible new codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The notes taken during meetings and from observations in the process of building the digital space were also used to help fill in the gaps and give context to the individual experiences.

I then began the process of examining audio of the *Brimbank LIVE* shows. Although I listened to the shows when they first aired, and had some knowledge of each show’s content, I

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re-listened to the audio for each of the radio shows various times and read through the show's transcripts which were produced through Vimeo to further my familiarity with the data. This was important as my first listen to the shows had allowed me to understand and gain insight into the shows as a fellow radio host, but the re-listening enabled my positioning and lens as a researcher. In similar fashion to my approach to the interview and focus group transcripts, I noted and transcribed salient phrases, sentences and dialogue from the young people which reflected particular patterns or that related to the research questions. As I became familiar with the radio data, I highlighted specific quotes and phrases that had aired and I interpreted their meanings through latent coding, similar to the process engaged in for the young people's interviews and focus groups. I compiled these into show summaries for each *Brimbank LIVE* show, which helped me to understand each show and the dialogue shared within them in a much more detailed way.

Using the coding and annotated interpretations from the interviews and focus groups, as well as the archival data from their shows, I began to compile summaries for each young person. These summaries contained the overall perspectives and experiences of each participant as well as the main patterns from my interpretation of their interviews, focus group participation and their respective radio shows. As writing in ethnographic research is more of a filter than a mirror, gauging what stories and accounts should be retold and emphasised in the analysis is key in ensuring credibility (Case et al., 2014; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Therefore, each summary was then emailed to the young people to ensure that I had summarised each participant's perspectives, experiences and thoughts accurately. This enabled the authentication of my interpretation about each individual's personal responses and stories.

When individual summaries had been checked and feedback provided, I read over each participant's summary again, paying attention to how the particular codes and units of meaning linked to one another. I highlighted and coloured-coded particular stories that I had noticed for each participant, and then began looking at the colour-coded themes and units of meaning between participants, making note of the similarities and differences between their colour-coded units. By doing this, common stories amongst the participants began to surface, and after going back to the transcripts to make sure that these corresponded with the raw and coded data, I then

drew the main stories together into a master summary of the data and coding scheme. This was done in a Microsoft Word document, with the illustrative quotes and interpretations added in as comments. This process is commonly followed in qualitative research to understand the intricacies of the responses from each individual participant, but also to highlight how the participants' perspectives can be woven together collectively (Cicognani et al., 2018). By looking across transcripts and individual stories, key themes were identified across these stories. These themes could be understood and emerged as a narrative, whilst also maintaining the integrity of the complex and personal experience being expressed. While these units of meaning were being continuously reviewed and refined, the results were triangulated (Denzin, 2009; Patton, 1999), with the master document presented and discussed with my supervisory team to oversee the formulation of patterns and stories that were found.

The final summary of data organised the stories and experiences of the participants into overarching narratives, which aimed to represent how young people have varying experiences in their community due to their complex positions and identities, but also how as a collective there are common threads between their personal stories that can be constructed meaningfully. For example, in the data, experiences were shared of how processes of racial profiling and racism were prevalent in institutions and public spaces, which led to some of the young people experiencing discrimination and social exclusion. Other young people expressed how the lack of facilities such as gender-neutral toilets in these spaces reflected the erasure around their genders, which was a marker of exclusion and violence for them. These stories were organised under the theme *Narrating Structural and Symbolic Violence in our Everyday Lives* with key stories of how youth named and spoke of experiencing and navigating different forms of violence and exclusion in spaces, as well as the consequences of these encounters. These personal stories were also constructed and told in relation to dominant cultural narratives (Rappaport, 2000) as they referred to larger social and political influences, such as how institutions and media problematise gender exploration outside of the binary, or how experiences of being racialised are reinforced through the politicisation and over-policing of Black and Brown bodies. Another example was in the emergence of the narrative theme of *Speaking Back to and Resisting Dominant Narratives*. Through the data analysis, young people shared stories of how they actively countered and

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challenged the dominant framings, and also spoke of how the various social categories function as a complexity in their lives, rather than conflating and burdening them. These stories were identified as reflecting not only the way that dominant cultural narratives can be used as a resource in personal stories told, but also to show how the dominant narratives can be contested through the emergence of reimagined stories about individual identities and lives (Case & Hunter, 2012).

As with the process for the young people's interview and focus group data, analysis of the adult mentor's data took place by reading and coding their transcripts, with particular words, phrases and quotes being highlighted. Interpretations were also made in relation to these words, phrases and quotes, which were then collated into a summary for each mentor, with illustrative quotes. Notes and interpretations were made to indicate how perspectives and meanings might potentially fit into the narratives and themes formulated in the analysis of the young people's data, and to identify any new patterns and themes that might be present in the mentor's data. Keeping the distinction between data that belonged to the adult mentors and to the young people was deemed important, and therefore during this process of merging the data, I marked quotes in the overall summarisation of narratives to distinguish which belonged to the mentors and which belonged to the young people. I made the decision to have each mentor's experiences and stories, as well as their respective quotes, added to the summary of the young people's data, as young people's data was the main data that I chose to draw on to drive the research, and the adult mentor's data was secondary to the young people's perspectives. The adult reflections and quotes provided different layers and perspectives to particular stories and themes emerging from the young people's data, which enhanced interpretation and the stories being told. For example, within the *Processes of Storytelling, Broadcasting, and Resonance Enabled through Radio* theme, young people spoke about radio being a valuable tool and vehicle. As the stories for this were derived from the young people's data about their storytelling process and the resonance it had, the mentors spoke to similar effects but gave their insight as listeners and enablers of the young people doing this storying work, as they spoke of how it landed for them as mentors in the process.

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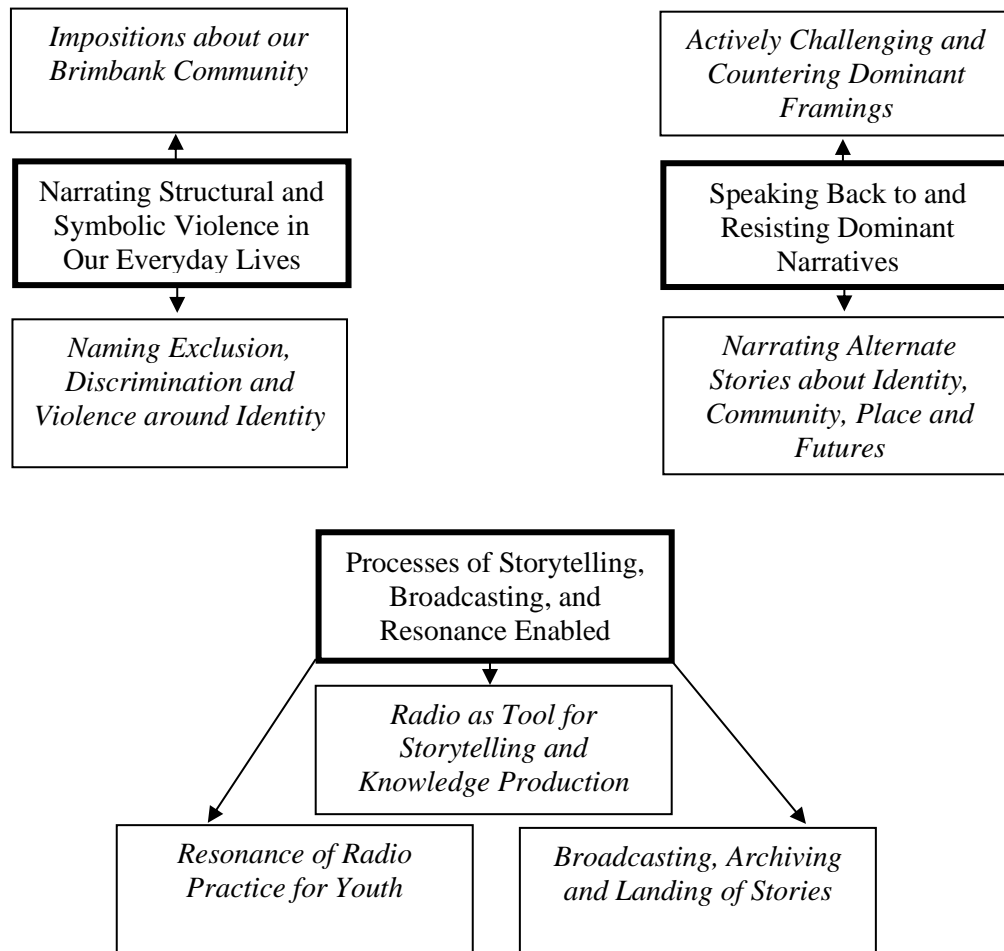
I adhered to reflexive practices, strategies and techniques throughout the analysis to ensure that decisions made in the analysis process continued to uphold the integrity of the stories and overall narratives found. During the process of familiarisation and preliminary interpretation, I engaged in journalling which allowed for the continuous monitoring of my own judgments, practices and experiences during the progression of analysis. As someone who did radio alongside the young people and who related to some of their stories and experiences, this was also done to acknowledge my own feelings and perspectives. Keeping close to the stories and experiences shared by youth was also achieved through member checking, as mentioned above, to enhance and help tell youth's stories accurately. This occurred during the formal stages mentioned, and also, given the community-engaged methodology adopted which allowed close proximity and relationships between the participants and me, through sporadic conversations with the young people. In adopting these practices, I drew upon the notions of the supportive voice of the researcher within the process of doing the analysis work (Chase, 2005). This did not erase me, but facilitated the process of rendering myself vulnerable in the text (O'Sullivan, D., 2015, p. 214), which helped to "undermine the myth of the invisible omniscient author" (Chase, 2005, p. 666). This also enabled me to stay close to and centre the perspectives of the young people through the investigation, whilst carefully using my own interpretations to guide and deepen their stories.

### *Identified Narratives and Themes*

The stories of young people and adult mentors as identified in the analysis process are organised into three broad narratives and sets of stories which contained a number of relevant subthemes. These have been organised and encapsulated in the mind-map below (Figure 12), and will be presented over the next three chapters with interpretation and illustrative quotes:

**Figure 12.**

*Identified Narratives and Themes*

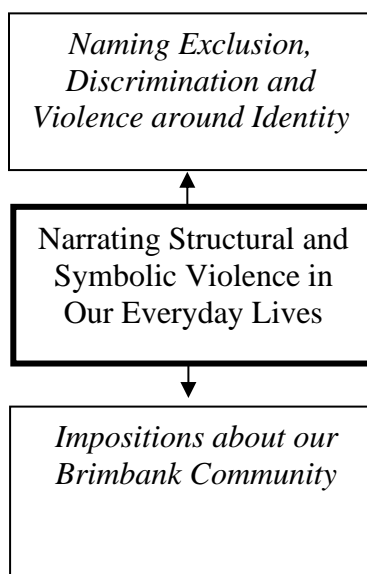


## Chapter 6: Narrating Structural and Symbolic Violence in Our Everyday Lives

This chapter presents the ways that concepts of structural and symbolic violence were spoken about by the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* through their interviews, in the focus groups as well as during the public broadcast of our *Brimbank LIVE* radio shows. This narrative entails references to how violent experiences are reinforced and justified by stereotypes and dominant narratives experienced in our everyday lives, how these conceptions influence the ways we are perceived and treated by others as we move through various spaces, and how the young people call on their awareness to navigate these framings. Two sub themes were identified that compose this narrative. The first, *Naming Exclusion, Discrimination and Violence around Identity*, encompasses the stories young people shared about being violently treated and discriminated against in regard to their personal identity positions and attributes, as well as the negative ways they are framed in light of affiliated identity positions. The second subtheme, *Narrating of Impositions about our Brimbank Community*, conveys stories of youth reflecting on unfavourable and damaging impositions about their community and place of residency, as well as their thoughts around these ideas. Figure 13 displays the broad narrative, with the organised and encapsulated subthemes.

**Figure 13.**

*Narrating Structural and Symbolic Violence in Our Everyday Lives*





### **Narratives of Exclusion, Discrimination and Violence around Identity**

Young people spoke to experiences of being discriminated against, excluded and poorly treated because of particular stereotypes and notions about the social categories they are affiliated with. As young people are viewed as ‘citizens in the making’ due to their age, young people spoke of how their age was often tainted with particular impositions. In her interview, Grace (18) conveyed how the marker of age is used to devalue their knowledge and inflict doubt on young people's capabilities:

I feel in general being a young person... You just feel like you don't have a say in some things because they (the outside world) see you as this young person who doesn't have experience or much knowledge... you kind of don't get to have a say...

In common with Grace (18), many of the *Brimbank LIVE* team spoke of how their age came with connotations of lacking consciousness about the world, and how it positioned them to feel like their contributions were undervalued. Additionally, this excerpt shows how negative associations and perceived constraints because of their youth also impact the ways young people see their own contributions, as they often feel their input is invalid. This reflects not only that age is a common marker in young people's lives used to negatively frame them, but also the ways that these impositions can be carried and internalised by young people. Overall, this highlights how notions circulate about young people having diminished capacities of knowing in light of their age (Bertrand et al., 2020; Checkoway, 2017; Keast, 2020; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020; Wahlquist, 2018; Windle, 2008), and this was also the case for the young people of *Brimbank LIVE*.

Whilst they spoke about their age, they also drew upon their experiences of how their age intersects with other identity positions in their lives. Race, which is typically used to frame young people in Melbourne's West (PHIDU, 2014; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021), was prominently recalled as an aspect that was used to speak about young people negatively, particularly when they were visibly affiliated with a racial category outside the dominant white culture. Similarly, the impact of affiliation with ethnicity was also mentioned, as well as the ways that these social categories are often conflated and misunderstood by others, and subject many of the young

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people to violence and discrimination. For example, in her interview, Ally (26) speaks of how her Blackness and South Sudanese background is constantly used to frame her and her community unfavourably. The quote below is an example, as she recalls the ways that discrimination against people from her diaspora have been exacerbated during the time of the COVID lockdowns in Melbourne:

Being South Sudanese... we're vilified in the media, we're vilified by politicians, we're a scapegoat for violence and all things that have to do with Black people. A couple of weeks ago they [media] said that South Sudanese people had a [illegal] house party, but it was actually a group of West Africans. So, they [dominant media] don't care, Black is Black, and Black could be anything to them.... It's a double-edged sword being a young South Sudanese person... The media only portrays the bad things... But I see them [South Sudanese community] doing a lot of great things.

Through this quote, Ally speaks of how the mainstream forms of communication perpetuate these racially motivated forms of violence, as people from the African diaspora who identify with and belong to different ethnic groups and communities are not only portrayed in a problematic way, but they are also constructed as a homogenous group. This shows the ways that bodies outside of the dominant white group are constantly perceived and conflated through race, and how these messages are reinforced by the media. As young people in this study detailed how they experienced forms of racial profiling and conflation, they also spoke of how these framings impacted their movement in their day-to-day lives and spaces. Mike (24), a Congolese-born member of the *Brimbank LIVE* team, spoke of his understanding of narratives about people from his racial category through his interview. He acknowledged that although he had only been in Australia for ten years, he was very aware of how particular categories of young people were watched and treated: “*I can see like a lot of African kids getting into trouble with the cops and shit, so (pauses)... so I just have to be mindful of that*”. This act of Mike being “*mindful*” reflects a sense of cautiousness and apprehensiveness that is carried by young people who are racialised. It also shows that even when they are not currently experiencing violence, they still have to consider these framings. These quotes speak of the ways that racial and diasporic categories are used to describe and conflate young people, and how these racial affiliations and identities led to

them being painted as problems and are used to weaponise, stereotype, and dehumanise young people in their daily lives. This mirrors reports of how young people from Brimbank are often targeted and othered through the lens of their racial and ethnic identities (Brimbank City Council, 2019b; Butt, 2018). Furthermore, this reflects the broader story of how dominant systems, structures and organisations in Australia, such as media and police, often racialise youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds and see them through these contaminated lenses around race within colonial contexts (Brimbank City Council, 2019; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014). In tandem with this, these stories also unsettle the majoritarian stories that position race and ethnicity as pervasive problems that function and code young people's everyday lives (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Winant, 2004; Wyn et al., 2018), as these stories instead show how it is the imposition by others of negative connotations around youth's racial and ethnic identities that impede and impact young people.

Whilst race was regularly mentioned as being used to categorise and describe young people, as well as tarnish and paint us in a negative light, youth also spoke of social categories and identities other than race and ethnicity that they are connected but are not always acknowledged in stories about them as young people from Brimbank. They spoke of how these identity positions and facets intersected and combined with our age, but also detailed how these social categories can be framed unfavourably and contribute to the symbolic violence experienced. For example, Charlie (19) talks about how his past actions and circumstances in conjunction with his Pasifika background were used to constrain and "*box*" him in:

I get pulled up just because I'm who I am, cos of what I did in the past and most people don't even care about what I'm doing now, they just see my record and think "You're still that person" ... I'm not even the worst one, but when you come from a background with all that shit, and you still get pulled up because of your past... It's hard to make a change when they won't let you. (Charlie, 19)

As Charlie (19) recalls his encounters with the police, he describes how his past experience of being in the youth justice system is used to assume his current behaviour and decisions in life to be anti-social. It also becomes clear how this stereotyping in light of his past experiences and

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conditions diminishes his progression towards rehabilitation, and leads to people perceiving him in negatively tainted ways. Through Charlie's (19) quote, he shows how these aspects and framings go beyond just race but instead how the combination of his race, ethnicity, youth and past affiliations contribute to the discrimination he faces.

Gender identity was also touched on by some of the young people, as they spoke of the gender-based stereotypes that they navigated which perpetuated negative ideas about them. For example, Ally (26) spoke of the historical stereotype of an 'angry Black women' in reference to her gender intersecting with her race, and the ways she had been assigned to this construction of being confrontational and aggressive in nature. Although this was not the way she saw herself, she spoke of how these ideas were imposed on her by others which led to prejudgement and inhibited the ways people interacted with her. Gender identities were also spoken about as being separate from race, particularly for young people who identified outside of the gender binary. In their interview, Lee (15), who identifies as transgender, spoke of how they navigate particularly constraining and conflating ideals about their gender identity, and also conveyed the violence perpetuated on them as a young person in light of their gender diversity. They recalled how this violence takes place through the misinformation and social lies that circulate about gender nonconformity in the dominant media, which has not only hindered their personal journey and process of gender-affirmation, but fuels tremendous and life-threatening consequences for many gender-diverse youth. Lee (15) explains:

Recently at the Royal Children's Hospital [RCH] they were applying to let 16 years old's to go top surgery, so turning female chest into male chest... It was going really well and I was going to be one of the first 16 year old's to get it and I was like "wow no more back problems, I can play sport". And then a newspaper decided to write a whole article about how RCH was participating in child abuse by allowing these kids to do that [get gender-affirming surgery], and it caused so many suicides like you don't even know, so because of that, it's taken back to the courts and slowed the whole process. I was meant to be getting top surgery next month, I was going to get it on my 16th birthday, and now it won't be available for about 2 years so I'm probably going to have to pay 10 grand [due to being over the age for it to be covered].

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In this quote, Lee (15) paints the picture of how gender expression outside of the binary intersecting with being a young person is often scrutinised, debated and critiqued within the dominant media outlets, and how young people associated with gender exploration and gender non-conformity become subjected to violence through these stories. In addition, what also becomes evident is the ways that paternalistic ideals are embedded in these mainstream framings. As Lee (15) recalled what particular media outlets believe to be true about gender exploration for youth, their story conveys how the dominant mainstream platforms reinforce the idea that young people do not have the capacity and cannot be trusted to make informed and significant decisions about their lives in relation to their gender, and that they must be restricted in determining what best fits their needs (Liebel, 2007). This demonstrates the ways that violence is perpetuated through framings around youth and gender, and how these ideas also dismiss young people's agency and autonomy which leads to them not being able to express who they are.

As larger systems, such as the media, perpetuate violence, Lee (15) shared how these violent experiences and constructions about their gender were also pervasive in everyday spaces as they spoke of how gender erasure was common in spaces of education:

There are some people that are um, try their best to ignore it or get rid of it [gender diversity], for example my school [laughs] which is part of the reason I moved, they're not very good at dealing with people for example who are trans um and like yeah, that was a bit of a difficult issue that we had to go through.

Furthermore, in relation to experiences of discrimination, examples of erasure as well as exclusion were also shared, particularly in reference to a lack of inclusivity. Below is a conversation between Lee (15) and me, as we spoke of how institutions, community centres and public spaces often fail to account for and cater to people in the gender diverse community. This occurs through language and facilities, and contributes to the violence they face in their day-to-day lives:

L: I'd say the bathrooms will be kind of handy, like having a bathroom that's accessible. Cos I know our community is very diverse and a lot of them aren't recognised... For example, I know a lot of non-binary in the West-side and I barely, in fact, I don't think

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I've ever come across a unisex bathroom that wasn't a disabled one. And it's trying to balance that, like you don't want to use a disabled one because you're taking up the space of someone who physically can't use another one, but the other two make you incredible uncomfortable and in some circumstances are dangerous to be using, so it makes it difficult.

R: Would you say most spaces don't have a gender-neutral toilet?

L: Yeah, most spaces... and a lot of things with language that can also be very... not so inclusive.

This lack of inclusivity not only shows how many spaces do not account for the needs of the gender diverse, but also how this lack of inclusivity perpetuates and sustains unsafe environments. Lee (15) elaborates on this in their schooling context:

We had been asking the school for a bathroom, which he's [principal of school] legally required to give us, for three years, and that's even before I came out... this year he was like "we finally did it"... And it turned out that the bathroom didn't have a lock which was one of the main issues with it. So I really needed to go so I said to the teacher "hey do you mind just watching the door?" and he's like "yeah of course" but she didn't watch the door and a teacher walked in on me with a bunch of students and that was a really fun experience.

To conclude, this subtheme highlights how the young people's stories expressed the ways they are treated in light of their identity positions and the dominant constructions about these positionings, and how these contribute to their experiences of symbolic violence. These stories reflect how racialisation and racism are prominent concerns for some of the young people, and contribute to forms of discrimination and stereotyping. In addition, the stories they share also touch on how young people's identity positions intersect and combine, as well as produce particular stereotypes and framings that exacerbate the forms of violence we experience. This is seen in the way that Charlie's (19) youth, race and experiences of being in the justice system amplify his unfavourable treatment and presumed delinquency, how race and gender intersect for

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Ally (26) to conjure particular framings and negative stereotypes about her demeanour, and how age and gender diversity were spoken of by Lee (15) as producing harmful discourse as well as sparking erasure, exclusion and the questioning and diminishing of youth's autonomy. These stories convey that forms of structural and symbolic violence exist and are experienced differently depending on our various identity positions and the social hierarchies within which these positionings sit, as well as on the combinations of these positionings with others. This reflects the ways that different levels of power and privilege are at play (Crenshaw, 2017). For example, young people's racial identities conjure ideas about them in the dominant discourse as being troublesome, problematic or involved in adverse occurrences, whilst gender diversity and its expression positions youth as at-risk, vulnerable or naive.

These stories also highlight that experiences of these forms of violence land differently for us as a collective, as they initiate responses of frustration around these limiting discourses, resentment due to our lives being scrutinised, or caution and apprehension in wanting to avoid or circumvent these stereotypes and impositions. Such stories about violence also contest siloed ways of thinking that tend to categorise us as a homogenised group based on our age or through local ideas that often conflate and problematise us through our race, while often leaving other facets of our lives unacknowledged in stories about us. This is seen in how the hyper-fixation on categorising young people from Brimbank by race hinders consideration of the gender diversity that exists in young people's lives, or how the privileged position of whiteness that some youth hold is not accounted for or documented and reported when thinking about race. Furthermore, this also reflects how focusing solely on youth's racial identities hinders the ability to understand the range of characteristics and social categories that make up our lives and identities as well as the varied forms of violence we experience. Through telling these, we assert diverse stories of structural and symbolic violence, that are neither straightforward nor uniform.

### **Impositions about our Brimbank Community**

As the young people spoke about their personal categories and identity positions and how constructions about them often perpetuate symbolic violence for them in their lives, conversations about the community of Brimbank as the location where we belong also arose,

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particularly in relation to how affiliation with place often conjures discrimination and stereotyping. In the individual interviews and collective focus groups, the young people spoke about the perceptions that existed about the Brimbank area, and acknowledged the ways that their community is often perceived negatively by others. Grace (18), who grew up in Brimbank, details how the West of Melbourne, and particularly the Brimbank area, has a particular reputation that is often imposed on her and the people who reside in the LGA:

The media manipulates things... I do sometimes see fights... but it's kinda sad how there's the reputation there, even though some people aren't like that... I'll have new people come into the school and they'll be like "my friends told me to bring safety, just in case" and I'm like [confused face] that's weird because I'm like fine?... It's always how we're seen.

In this excerpt, Grace (18) speaks of how "*we're seen*" and refers to the way that young people who come from Brimbank are perceived to be entangled in violence and crime, as well as being disengaged and delinquent (Brimbank City Council, 2019b; 2019c; PHIDU, 2014; Van Dyke & Calder, 2021). As she alludes to the negative stigma associated with youth from the area, she also reflects on the ways that these framings about Brimbank and the West are often raised and mentioned in our everyday lives and interactions. Grace (18) details how the West of Melbourne is often understood by others as disreputable and unsafe, and alludes to how these notions are often reinforced through public forums and outlets, with these characteristics notoriously being embedded in reports and public discourse about the area (PHIDU, 2014). Furthermore, while condemning such anti-social behaviour and conveying that these perceptions are "*weird*" and perplexing, she reflects on how these framings tie youth from Brimbank to a reputation that is hard to shake.

As the young people spoke of the framings of violence that are intertwined with the municipality of Brimbank, they also acknowledged that disadvantage is present and noticeable in the area. Lee (15) articulates this as they talk about their encounters and experiences of navigating these circumstances, which were reminders of the disadvantage that can be present in the municipality:



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I have multiple friends that I have to be careful of flushing their toilets because it's going to use too much water and they can't afford paying their bills, and that's because their families are abusive or use a lot of drugs and they don't have the money to look after things like bills and kids.

This quote paints a glimpse of what people in the Brimbank area may be experiencing because of low income and social and economic adversity, and the day-to-day realities these bring for some. It also gives a sense of the cognisance and compassion that young people possess when witnessing and encountering these circumstances. Other young people in the program spoke of how these situations were not just observed and experienced in other households, but how such circumstances were also prevalent in their own lives. For instance, some of the young people in *Brimbank LIVE* revealed in their interviews and on their radio shows how their families did not have a lot of money or financial support in their household, and how they grew up 'rough'. This demonstrates that the participants were conscious of the social, financial and economic barriers that may be present in their local areas and communities. They also conveyed how these barriers impacted on their lives and the lives of others they know, as well as the navigations adopted when living through such conditions. Although these circumstances were apparent in the community, the young people spoke of how these conditions were oftentimes overemphasised. In light of this, the *Brimbank LIVE* team members described how circumstances of disadvantage were at times automatically presumed for all youth in the West, and how such conditions often engulfed the perceptions around their lives.

They also spoke of how particular inferences around these circumstances seeped into ideas about our futures and abilities. Young people recalled how conditions of struggle and disadvantage were often viewed as deterrents that predetermined and tainted our futures, and automatically led us to entering problematic and undesirable pathways, such as dropping out of school, or becoming involved in delinquency. These beliefs discussed by the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* are similar to those highlighted in the literature, which shows that young people from lower SES areas have to weather low adult perceptions and expectations of finishing school or successfully tracking into adult life due to the economic and social conditions around them (Cuervo & Chesters, 2019, Millado, 2020). Furthermore, these ideas also came with impositions

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of being stagnant and stuck in such cycles of disadvantage. Laila (24) comments that in Brimbank *“I would also say a common theme with young people is um you know young people, some are caught in a rut”*. This shows not just how these subordinate impositions were inflicted on our abilities and capacities, but also how we were positioned as powerless in light of them, as we are seen to be incapable of breaking free, diverging and departing from these circumstances, and to lack the agency in altering our life and pathways. Furthermore, these shared comments also show that although these circumstances of disadvantage reflect larger societal discrepancies and inequities, young people become the scapegoats in relation to these matters, and are condemned, criticised and judged in light of them.

As we spoke of the particular social and economic conditions that are often associated with the area, we also acknowledged the ways that place intersects with the particular demographics of our community, and how the stereotypes associated with it exacerbated the discrimination and judgement. Since many of the residents of the Brimbank area are migrants, the young people shared their awareness of how our postcode is associated with particular ethnic groups, and how perceptions about these particular groups furthered the limiting and problematic ideas about our potential, our troubled nature, and our futures. Diminished beliefs about place are said to often become further exacerbated for low SES youth when they are culturally and racially diverse (Millado, 2020). This shows the way young people of Brimbank LIVE spoke of how our connection to place is tainted subordinately and leads to symbolically violent understandings about our lives and future, and how this can also combine with other characteristics and identity positions that intensify these experiences.

This act of reflecting on and naming the violence about being from our Brimbank community was not only done through dialogue and discussions on our radio shows, but also through the music that we broadcast. Many of the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* were songwriters, rappers and musicians, and crafted songs that they shared on their radio shows and broadcasts. They did this as they saw music writing as a form of expression to convey meaning about themselves. Charlie (19) supports this when he states that music for him is *“writing about real shit, like things we go through, about us and our lives and things going on around, not in this country but everywhere, like struggles. We write about struggles”*. In light of this reflection,

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*Brimbank LIVE* members Edward (17) and Charlie (19), who were also both rappers and songwriters, created a radio show called *The Hills*. The show's premise was to share songs and music they had written and recorded, as well as to dissect these songs to present the motivations and the meanings behind their lyrics. One of Edward (17) and Charlie's (19) songs, *Hold On*, was featured on their show and analysed through discussion by the co-hosts. In Edward's (17) rap verse in the song, as quoted below, there are references to his experiences growing up, and the navigations required in being from Brimbank:

We're just a couple of Poly brothers coming up from nothin',  
We're struggling and tumbling, but we're living for and givin'  
Never had no privileges started low from the beginnin'  
Holdin' on to faith because this world is full of sinners.  
Now listen when I tell you it ain't easy,  
you'll never know the struggles of sleeping in a jumper cos you're freezing'.  
Not enough beds, on the floor is where I'm sleeping,  
worn out shoes for the last month and now they tease me.  
Don't talk to me if you've never walked or caught a bus,  
waking up at 6 am knowing that you still have to rush.  
Quickly have our showers, water's on - lucky us,  
went to school struggled to learn, I was out of there by lunch.  
So I dropped out clean and started workin' at KFC,  
school didn't give me any good to feed the team,  
and so I chose to work instead to provide for family,  
this is a little message, we seek help, it's all we need.

This excerpt from the song reflects Edward's (17) struggle, from his perspective and using his words. Through the lyrics, he gives an account of his life's world and experiences. He recalls his hardships of being judged and misunderstood in light of his perceived disadvantage, and how he needed to drop out of school and find a job to support his mum and family with the rent. Edward (17) acknowledged on his show that although these lyrics reflect his own experiences, many people in his life and community go through similar challenges. Therefore,

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references to a broader collective are incorporated into his lyrics, as “we” is repeated when referring to the lived experiences in his song. Additionally, Edward (17) also alludes to the discrepancies that are apparent between his lived experiences conveyed in his rap and the dominant assumptions that often linger. For example, it is commonly assumed that young people departing from traditional pathways and systems are ‘dropkicks’ and ‘lazy’, but through his song lyrics Edward (17) speaks to this notion and sheds light on how his decision to leave school came out of sacrifice and support for his family. Overall, this subsection shows how the young people shared stories, both through dialogue and music, that reflected the suburb stigma and postcode discrimination they face, as well as the structural disadvantage and hardships in their community. Through these tellings, the young people conveyed how negative impressions and stereotypes disparage us, diminish expectations of our potential, and impose negative presumptions about our ability to act in prosocial ways. This highlights how forms of violence are not limited to the experience itself, but the way these framings and experiences manifest and poison perceptions about youth.

To conclude this chapter, the stories shared paint the ways that young people of *Brimbank LIVE* talk about and experience forms of violence through a variety of different processes, and in light of various identity positions and affiliations. The young people speak of holding identity positions and affiliations pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender, place and circumstance, and through their stories shared the dominant, constraining and limiting ideas that in circulation about these social categories. As they shared these framings, they spoke of how these ideas merge and combine with their age which perpetuate unique and exacerbated forms of violence and ostracism, and position them in unfavourable, at-risk and troublesome lights. They also speak of how these framings shape their experiences and conjure discrimination, exclusion and mistreatment in their everyday lives and spaces, which are experienced in distinct and varying ways. This collection of stories reflects how we as young people come into spaces conscious of the ways we are perceived and of the dominant framings that circulate about our lives in relation to our identities. These stories also demonstrate how we draw upon our social and political understandings, as well as dominant cultural narratives, to form our own personal stories about the structural and symbolic violence we experience (Rappaport, 2000; Smith &

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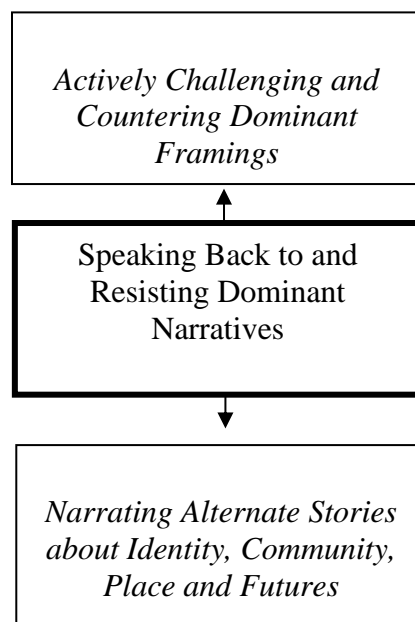
Sparkles, 2008). As we told these stories, we affirmed that they were not a product of what is dominantly contrived about our social categories and conditions, and that other people's accounts of our trauma do not make up who we really are. Instead, as we detailed these experiences of discrimination, exclusion and mistreatment, we constructed and shared our own versions and stories of what it is like to navigate and endure this violence, and thus owned and voiced these stories of structural and symbolic violence as our own.

### **Chapter 7: Speaking Back to and Resisting Dominant Narratives**

The previous chapter detailed how young people of *Brimbank LIVE* spoke about the ways we are conflated, particularly in light of social categories and circumstances, and the violence that this creates in our lives. This chapter presents the second overarching narrative, which reflects the ways that young people of *Brimbank LIVE* challenged, resisted and countered the dominant and violent framings, and the ways that they spoke back to these framings. This narrative encompasses two subthemes that reflect specific stories and ways through which we countered the dominant framings. The first, *Actively Challenging and Countering Dominant Framings*, reflects the stories shared of how we intentionally problematised specific dominant narratives and stereotypes, both through the dialogue in our interviews and focus groups and through our live broadcasts on our radio shows. The second subtheme, *Narrating Alternate Stories about Identity, Community, Place and Futures*, reflects shared stories which complicated dominant framings. These stories were shared through dialogue that projected positivity and celebration around our identities and affiliations of place as well as through how we spoke of the benefit and enrichment these provide us in our lives. This subtheme also reflects how young people shared stories of how they see themselves through their interests, passions and future goals, bypassing and speaking beyond identities. Through these collated stories, this narrative shows the ways that our personal categories and identities function and exist in our lives in complex ways, as well as how we hold capacities and possibilities for the future. Figure 14 displays the broad narrative theme that will be discussed in this chapter, as well as the related subthemes:

**Figure 14.**

*Speaking Back to and Resisting Dominant Narratives*



\*Dominant narratives about youth' in this analysis have been understood through the ways that the group perceive constructions that circulate about them as young people, particularly constructions pertaining to their lives and their capabilities. According to the young people in this study, these framings position youth as troubled or troublesome, problematic and at risk, as well as incapable and naive.

### **Actively Challenging and Countering Dominant Framings**

In their interviews and focus groups, the young people spoke frequently of how they wanted to defy conflating and negative ideas about our lives and “*flip the script*” in relation to these ways of thinking. In this first excerpt, Grace (18) refers to her age and how she wanted to counter ideas related to her youth. She spoke about how as a young person she had something to prove by being involved in the program and on the radio:

I want to show people [through radio] that even when you're young you're capable of many, many things, and I feel like I'll be a great example myself because knowing what type of person I am - shy, really scared to like step out and like do these things -I'm

really trying to push myself and show people that if I can step out and like do these things... then you can as well...

In this sharing, Grace (18) highlights that young people are aware of these imbalances between them and adults regarding how they are taken seriously and legitimised. She conveys the message that she wants to show people that despite our age we have competence and knowledge, as well as lives that are actively entangled in the wider social, economic, cultural and political realms. Through this passage, the ways that the radio setting became an important part of the process of unravelling perceptions are also evident, as it not only gave us a space to share knowledge and insight into our experiences and worlds in various ways, but our presence and participation in the space itself dismantles ideas that people our age are disengaged. This is made clear when Grace (18) claims that doing radio was a perfect opportunity to speak back against these stereotypes and limiting ideas about youth, and that vocalising our own meanings and experiences was a means to oppose these limiting ideas.

The young people aimed to counter ideas in relation to our youth, but also did this work in relation to other particular social categories that made up their identities. A key example of this was on the *Brimbank LIVE* show *Women of Brimbank*, which was hosted by Ally (26), Laila (24) and me (23). On our show, we chose to include a particular segment called *Myth-conceptions*, where we discussed a selection of misconceptions and myths that were common and often circulated about us as children of immigrants as well as individuals from racially diverse backgrounds. For example, the assumption that every racially and ethnically diverse individual must know one another was raised by Laila (24): "*Just because I'm Black, people assume I know every Black person to exist...* ". Another myth that I brought up on the segment was the stereotype that all Asians are academically gifted and have parents who force them into higher education pathways, with myself as the example: "*Just because I've followed an academic pathway it doesn't mean I've been pushed by my parents, or that I'm fulfilling expectations of me based on my ethnicity... It's my passion and what I want to do*". In addition, the hosts spoke about the assumption that all ethnic girls, particularly Black girls, have rhythm and know how to 'twerk'. Their discussion of this myth is given below:



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A: I have one, it's a bit silly, but I feel like everybody will resonate, or any Black girl ever... That all girls of colour, and black girls specifically can twerk... like I can barely dance (laughs)...

L: Obviously twerking is historically attached to Black women

A Yeah, but can we just be? I'm supposed to be representative of every Black person?

As we named particular generalisations that exist, and discussed them in ways that were humorous, light and fun, we also spoke of how whilst some stereotypes may not seem harmful, and at times can be perceived as favourable and positive (e.g. Black girls having rhythm, Asian people being academically smart), these still lead to limiting and predetermined assumptions about our lives. We highlighted on our radio show how this is problematic, as it may unravel and erase our own truths, motivations, struggles and triumphs that make up who we are. As we shared these myths, we also made reference to how these can lead to experiences of violence and constraint. The example below conveys a conversation we had on air about the stereotypes that specifically exist for Black women, and the ways in which compliments of 'being strong' can be problematic in inhibiting the expressing of emotions and being vulnerable:

R: That's another misconception, that women of colour, particularly Black women, are about confrontation and are strong, and that's the myth that needs to be debunked

L: Especially when you take a leap of faith to bring something up and you muster the courage to do that, it's taken as you just being confrontational

A: I feel strongly about this. There's this tweet I saw, and it says "Please stop calling Black women strong as a compliment. 'Strong' is why our mortality rate in medicine is high. 'Strong' is why our pain is not taken seriously. 'Strong' is why there is less empathy for us. 'Strong' is why we're put last in every movement because we can 'handle it'." Like, are we're not allowed to be vulnerable, we're not allowed to be vulnerable women because we're Black? We don't get the same space to be vulnerable...

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L: If you put us on a pedestal, you're elevating us as some sort of superhuman, and it's tricky because not everyone recognises what that does to Black women...

Whilst speaking of how stereotypes portray Black women as resilient and able to endure multiple forms of adversity without showing emotion, the radio hosts deconstructed the meanings behind these ideas and shared their frustrations and hurt at these conflating notions. In reference to Black women being portrayed and generalised as strong, the hosts also spoke about how this conflating notion is interconnected to the stereotype of the 'angry Black woman', as both are linked to the societal expectation that Black women must be tough and unemotional in order to survive in a racist and sexist society. As a Black woman, Ally (26) called this out and conveyed that in order to counter these ideas in our everyday life, others needed to see people for who they are instead of what they are constructed and stereotyped to be. In reference to this idea of being strong, confrontational and unemotional, Ally (26) said:

I'm just as fragile as any other woman, and don't assume, come speak to me and make decisions about me after that, and if you think I'm an angry Black woman after [speaking to me], cool... But don't assume... By not assuming you're allowing yourself an opportunity to learn!

This segment on our radio show emphasised how we as young people are aware of the specific stereotypes and discourses that exist about us and that we are conscious of the ways in which our bodies, identities and lives are spoken about and perceived, as well as of the subsequent and consequential violence that such perceptions about us may bring. Furthermore, through the construction and implementation of the *Myth-conception* segment, it shows how on our radio shows we not only spoke candidly about how these dominant stereotypes prevailed in our lives, but how we also actively named these misinformed ideas perpetuated in the dominant thinking and engaged in conversation to critically call them out. This was seen as we unpacked, corrected and informed listeners of how particular stereotypes were problematic and ignorant, and the ways that these constrained us and perpetuated violence in our lives.

Just as the young people called out harmful ways of thinking in regard to our identity positions and circumstances, so we also used radio to disrupt thinking around issues that were

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current in our communities and that bordered the social and political worlds. For example, Melbourne saw many lockdowns in light of COVID-19, but the harsh lockdown of nine public housing buildings became a prominent talking point and story, both nationwide and globally. The public housing lockdown saw migrant families from lower SES backgrounds fenced into their houses with no warning, and were not allowed to leave their homes for groceries, medicine, or exercise. This decision sat within the context of notions that painted many migrants and lower SES areas as disobedient and non-compliant with pandemic regulations, and ideas that positioned them as the culprits for the COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in the state (Briggs & Yussuf, 2023). In reference to the public housing lockdowns in Melbourne, Ally (26), Laila (24) and myself (23) came together to produce a radio show called *The Hard Lock Down Special*. The show set out to analyse, discuss and challenge the state government's decision in forcing public housing flats into lockdown. The host's aim was to shine a light on what the young people claimed "*was really going on*", such as police brutality and coercion along with disregard of cultural and religious needs. As we did this, our hopes were to call out mainstream media's broadcasts about the matter which we felt diluted the violence, classism and racism inflicted on the public housing residents, as well as perpetuated and condoned this unfair treatment.

On the show, we had conversations on air with one another, speaking candidly and justifying why we believed this lockdown reflected unfair treatment of these particular communities, especially given that other higher SES communities were not treated in the same way. To add context to the unfair treatment we believed was being imparted, we engaged in interviews with community members who were volunteering to help residents get packages of food and medication. Additionally, we played audio and footage that we collected from being on the ground at some of the public housing locations as we spoke to neighbouring families to understand the ways that residents were being silenced and neglected. On the show, we also gave a voice to those in the flats, as we dialled up and interviewed residents. In these aired conversations, residents spoke of the social lies being spread through the media about the lockdown, and expressed what it was like to be framed as 'problems' in the midst of the health crisis. Expressing frustration about the ways that migrant families were being painted, one of the residents interviewed stated that the *Brimbank LIVE* radio hosts were using their radio shows in a

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constructive way for the residents. They stated on air: “*You guys are our voice, because no one is doing anything for us. Thank you for using your platform*”.

*The Hard Lock Down Special* is an example of how the young people created an entire show that was dedicated to speaking back to the dominant media as well as to the framings that were expressed through it. In this example, the young people were not using their radio platform to speak out about wrongdoings and injustice in a general sense, but also to counter matters of violence occurring in real-time. Furthermore, this content shows how the young people not only recognised and spoke back to narratives that had a direct negative impact on them in their lives, but how they also held a sense of awareness around the ways that these dominant narratives violently and adversely impacted others. Through this show, we readily sought to challenge and call into question matters of injustice occurring in their wider communities.

Another example of youth speaking back to larger socio-political issues and countering the dominant ideas in circulation as well as the dominant media itself, was through discussion around the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that occurred in 2020. Many of the *Brimbank LIVE* radio hosts spoke about the movement in some form on their shows, whether it was through the music they wrote and aired, or the interviews they conducted. Dialogue around the protests in support of this movement was also particularly common. The young people detailed how the mainstream coverage of the BLM protests framed protesters as engaging in redundant practices by taking to the streets. Additionally, they spoke of how mainstream stories labelled the protestors as violent, and perpetuated the idea that protestors who were coming out to support the movement were spreading COVID. In light of these framings, Lee (15) counters:

Everything happening in America with BLM they’re talking about the riots and all of that and it’s such a biased opinion of it and if they’re actually looking to history - rioting and non-peaceful protests have been the most successful method in so many circumstances, like this time last year was the 50th anniversary of the stonewall riots and that is the whole reason that I have my rights... and I know so many other people who went to the protest who went and got tests and were COVID safe... no one I know has got it (COVID-19) from the protest...

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When the young people spoke of the misinformation that was being spread in regard to those who supported the BLM movement as well as the ways that dominant framings induced fear, panic and divide amongst the broader community, they refuted the mainstream media's coverage of the movement, and affirmed that their interpretations, as well as the interpretations of their communities, did not reflect these dominant sentiments. This is not only another example of their critique and disapproval of mainstream notions, but also illustrates how young people are strongly socially and politically oriented, and possess their own knowledge, perspectives and experiences about the world. Furthermore, it shows how the young people using the vehicle of community radio to do this work was also symbolic, as community radio was perceived by the young people as a platform that was distinctly in opposition to mainstream media. Lee (15) spoke of how community-based outlets such as community radio differ from the dominant vehicles and outlets, as community radio is an outlet that initiates discussion and airs perspectives that may not be present on mainstream platforms. In Lee's (15) opinion, such vehicles are helpful in getting youth's stories out and providing a counter to the dominant ideas and platforms:

The media is majorly failing a lot of people... there's so many circumstances where the media can be doing better and so I feel like circumstances like this [radio program] or like with the radio and stuff, how the little forms of media are kinda good because it gets more people's voices out. Because at the moment... [mainstream] media is only opinion and it's hardly fact.

This subtheme highlights the ways that we actively and critically challenged narratives reproduced in dominant media that do not reflect our truths and beliefs. During our radio work, the young people produced shows, segments and content that involved them calling out problematic majoritarian constructions, deconstructing and debunking misconceptions and stereotypes inflicted upon us, and critiquing unjust circumstances around us. By doing this, we amplified stories that are often concealed by the dominant media, contested the ways that dominant cultural narratives reinforce one-sided ideas about us and other broader communities, and attempted to subvert the status quo of thinking. In addition to this countering work, these stories show how our radio practice was ideal for engaging in these efforts. Whether it was

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through dedicated shows where we spoke back directly to the dominant framings, or in specifically created segments that we produced and broadcast, radio as a tool enabled us to call out dominant framings and ideas that are harmful. Furthermore, these shared examples illustrate how we not only countered dominant narratives in various ways, but also how we challenged and called out dominant media as an engine and vessel in producing these. As we shed light on its role and responsibility in the circulation and production of social lies, we exposed the ways that it can weaponise certain agendas as well as critiqued its accuracy in forging stories about us and our communities.

### **Narrating Alternate Stories about Identity, Community, Place and Futures**

While the young people referenced dominant and violent framings surrounding their identity positions and also critiqued and spoke back to them, this was not the only way in which the young people spoke about these social categories and positions. Much of the conversation in our interviews and focus groups as well as on our radio shows featured dialogue placing our identities in favourable and positive lights. For example, on *The RAD Experience* and *Soul DIVE* shows, hosts who identified as Black and Brown women showcased a range of topics including representation, colourism, and cultural appropriation, which were important current issues that were linked to our ethnic and racial identities and reflected forms of exclusion and discrimination. However, we also spoke about our ethnic and racial identities positively by speaking of our rich culture, history, food, and music. Through these conversations, we showed that our cultural and racial identities do not exclusively function in our lives as burdens, but that they also conjure up pride and meaning, as we celebrate and appreciate them through these particular practices and ties in our lives. Aspects of sexuality and gender were also commonly mentioned by young people with value and admiration, both through conversation in interviews as well as through the curation of segments and radio shows. For example, Lee (15) produced and hosted a radio show called *TAG: You're It*, which was dedicated to featuring and exhibiting local and international drag queens. On the show, Lee (15) engaged in discussion with guests and interviewed them about their journeys in becoming drag queens, about the Australian drag community, as well as about the queer community more broadly. In those episodes, we hear the way that Lee (15) and their guests speak about their identities and lives as LGBTQI-identifying

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people as well as the joy, expression and comfort associated with and experienced through these identity positions.

In addition to the young people showcasing conversations about the favourable aspects and affiliations of their identity positions and categories, they also spoke of how their social identities tethered them to connection and community. The young people talked about being part of various sites and groups that were forged from association with these attributes, and how their identities connected them to similar folk. This was recalled as they recounted their active engagement in church groups and queer spaces, or in Pasifika and African societies and associations. Lee (15) emphasised this in their interview, as they recalled being part of many formal and informal organisations that enabled them to connect with other trans, non-binary and queer youth. The excerpt below shows Lee (15) recounting the practices and energy in such spaces as well as the importance of these community connections:

I think just understanding how important it is to be in these [community] spaces, for young people to cope and feel welcome... I used to organise massive picnics, so like 70 plus young people... that was really amazing though, we always had them in the city at Birrarung Marr or Alexandra Gardens, um... and yeah that was monthly and that was absolutely amazing... We'd all catch up, everyone would bring food and picnic blankets and we'd sit together and it was amazing seeing all the people like me stuck at home with not a lot of freedom and feeling very um not feeling acceptance for themselves, feeling pretty shit... To go into these spaces and events and knowing that everyone there was going to be extremely accepting of who they were whether it was religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, background, anything.

As Lee (15) spoke of participating as well as facilitating these settings, they also made reference to the ways that these pockets for connection made a great impact on their life, expressing how engaging with similar people in a collective was “*fun*”, but also how such spaces have “*saved*” the mental health of many people. This example shows how social categories connect young people to community and that they see their identity positions as a way of forming connection and collaboration with others. It also conveys how the young people use

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their identity positions and attributes to actively seek out and build their own collectives of community in both formal and informal realms. This reflects how youth deeply value links to others like them and are eager to immerse themselves in social engagement with them, despite them often being framed as an age group that is disengaged from community (Brimbank City Council, 2023). This infers that young people's social identities can exist and function in constructive, positive and affirming ways.

In addition to their personal attributes and identity positions, the young people also spoke of the positive aspects of their area and community in Brimbank. As young people detailed how Brimbank is commonly associated with disadvantage and adversity in the first narrative, they also expressed how they see their communities favourably. For example, many of the young people spoke about the '*richness*' embedded in the Brimbank area through its diversity and people. Lee (15) explains this in reference to social and economic positionings, as they spoke in their interview about the class diversity in Brimbank which they perceive to be an enriching and interesting characteristic of the area:

I like that there's a lot of differences in terms of class. I know on my street personally we've got some houses which are like 3 stories, all European families like they have weddings at their houses, and on the same street we have places being raided for drugs and like flats that have trash all over the lawns. And it's like that's one whole street with all of that. So, I like that there's that, that difference.

As the social and economic positioning of Brimbank is often used to weaponise, belittle and paint Brimbank in a diminished light, such framings about one's place can often lead people from a community to feel shame in their association with the area (Hall et al., 2019; Tiller et al., 2020). However, these shared comments indicate that this is not the case for the young people of *Brimbank LIVE*, as they eagerly engaged in dialogue about their community's social and economic standing in an open, candid and positive way. In addition to variations in class, conversations also arose around ethnic and cultural diversity. Matthew (18), who is of Greek and Macedonian descent, expressed this in his interview as he named the ways that Brimbank is representative of a myriad of cultures and ethnicities:



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My community... it's really diverse... I think there's so many people from different backgrounds and not just different backgrounds but different backgrounds and age groups... [there's] elderly people... young families. So it's really diverse and I think the part that makes it most diverse is the ethnic backgrounds like African, Asian, Europeans... which it makes it pretty cool... it's really progressing... it's starting to become really like good sort of thing, like now it's starting to develop and find its feet... it's sort of finding its identity and flourish as a community... it's kind of um really starting to do special things.

This reflects how young people see the racial and cultural diversity associated with Brimbank as positive, even though these characteristics are traditionally used to weaken and undermine perceptions of the area and its people. Additionally, it emphasises how the young people are proud to belong to Brimbank along with the diversity of people and atmosphere that it harbours.

When the young people spoke of the characteristics that made Brimbank unique, they also reflected on what it was about Brimbank that kept them connected to the area and people. Laila (24), a member of *Brimbank LIVE* who lives in the Southeastern suburbs of Melbourne but who frequently spends time in the municipality by engaging in Brimbank projects and programs, offers this explanation in her interview:

I seem to be a lot more active in the Western suburbs than I am here [in the South East], and it's probably just because I'm African and find a lot of that in the Western suburbs, and I also do acting in the Western suburbs, I have family in the Western suburbs, I definitely think Brimbank was really feeling like being part of the community. And that's because I can see people like myself, there's a lot of activity in the community, I identify more so with the community in Brimbank I would say, than here [the Southeastern suburbs].

In this passage, Laila (24) talks specifically about how she is able to connect to her racial and cultural roots in Brimbank, and how these heritage ties are lacking in the area that she is from. She also explains how she feels a sense of community in the Brimbank area. This was a sentiment that was common among many of the *Brimbank LIVE* team, as conversations were had

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around how it was not just the community representation that made the Brimbank area feel like home, but that the young people were bonded to people in Brimbank through shared experiences. Grace (18) conveys this sentiment:

The bonds that people have, and to me it feels like family. You meet someone you get to know them, you get close. And I feel like the reason I say its family is because we [young people in Brimbank] all go through the same thing in this area. We all know what and how it feels like to be in the area, what it is...

This indicates that there is a shared affinity and sentiment felt amongst the young people of Brimbank. It also reflects how being connected to and living in the area grants us shared experiences, which come with a sense of solidarity, particularly in light of the area's reputation and the people within it being antagonised by that reputation.

As the young people spoke about how their identities and sense of place manifest in various ways, they also noted that they wanted to be seen as beings who are not constrained by their identity positions and attributes, but rather who also exist both in light of them and beyond them. For instance, on our radio broadcast of *Women of Brimbank*, the radio hosts had multiple discussions about the limiting perceptions and stereotypes that exist in our worlds. In light of these, we posed and answered the question on air "*What would we like others to know about us?*" Laila (24) commented:

I don't want to be looked at funny when I'm doing what people would assume a black women is not 'supposed to do'. If I'm not something that isn't considered to be black it doesn't make me any less black... I just want the freedom to be and to move, and to dabble in different spaces, I'm a person and have desires that a person would have... I don't want to be put into a box

Just as Laila (24) asserted how she did not want to be boxed in and conflated based on her identity positions, I too spoke about the need to let others exist beyond limits:

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Let people be who they want to be... I'm multifaceted, I've got different parts to me...  
Because I'm in a particular space of work or I do certain things, it does not limit me. ...  
So let me do me.

As we cemented and shared our personal perceptions of who we were, we reflected on how we seek to be seen simply as people who are not one-dimensional or defined by the misconceptions and stereotypes that exist about our identities. Furthermore, we asserted that we want to learn and grow on our own terms, and to speak about our identities and circumstances in our own ways, free from conflating and misguided notions and instead with awareness of the multiple facets that exist.

As we spoke of how we did not want to be constrained by the particular lenses of our personal categories, but rather that we are complex and want to exist in the light of and beyond these, young people also created space for discussion around topics that transcended these personal positions. For example, whilst many of the radio hosts who had strong ethnic and racial identities and spoke about cultural matters on their shows, these shows also featured a range of other topics such as financial literacy, body positivity and pop culture, which were aspects we were curious about and wanted to showcase. We also held space for shows, segments and conversations related to our interests and passions, pertaining to areas such as art, media, mental health, sport and music. This is illustrated through Matthew's (18) show called *The Sports Hour*. As a passionate sports fanatic and an involved member of his local cricket club, Matthew (18) hosted a show that recapped sports statistics from recent and current games in cricket, football, soccer and golf and also interviewed local, national and international sporting guests. When asked about his intentions in creating the show and choosing the specific topics he covered, Matthew (18) explained:

I wanted to do it [create the show] to get people's stories out there and show people how sport has helped them and how sport can bring people together and create a connection between people. So, I wanted to share stories about how people have played sport and how sport has been able to connect them with those around them. That's the main reason, and also why people should play sport, like obviously the physical and mental benefits

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from it and obviously you gain friendships and make friendships with people. Just to like to get good stories.

This quote shows how Matthew (18) saw sport as an integral part of his life, as well as his community, and how he yearned to share his passion for sport through radio. When the young people reflected on how they came up with the premise of their shows, it was posited that they wanted their shows to be an extension of themselves and reflect aspects important to them. Therefore, through the different shows, conversations and topics spoken about, they highlighted that who they were was not just a reflection of their identity positions, but also tied to their passions, interests and hobbies. These stories shared about their interests and passions emphasise the multiple ways young people choose to present themselves, and the multiple aspects and elements that exist and make up their lives.

In conjunction with dedicating shows, segments and conversations to these passions and interests, we also produced stories and content around our aspirations, goals and pursuits in these areas, as we spoke of engaging in careers of music, presenting, and sport, and set goals of going to university and expanding our capacities. With our identities and interests being integral aspects of who we are, we reflected on how we were motivated and defined through these future goals and the possibilities for following our passions. As Matthew (18) spoke about his show and the reasons why sport was important to him, he also conveyed the ways that his show's content and the radio process was connected to his future goals:

I'm trying hopefully to make a cricket career and I'm working towards it, I made the Victorian team, so hopefully that happens. But if it doesn't [I'd] probably be a journalist to really share stories about people and try to use my voice to influence society. That's my ultimate goal to be able to write things and put it out there and for people to read and hear, and they can be influenced by that... Like what we're doing with radio... That's my ultimate goal... to share people's stories and to influence.

Similarly, Edward (17) spoke about his interests and aspirations for pursuing music and rap. In his interview, he said that his radio show, *The Hills*, gave him an opportunity to engage in

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his passion for music and showcase his songs through his radio platform. On his show, Edward discusses how his radio show provided a “*starting point*” for his desired career as a musician:

Music has been part of my life since birth... Having music is not a hobby... Through this program - talking about my music on radio, writing songs - it's like a job for me, and this program has given me a chance to pursue what I want to do.

These shared insights reflect how we have distinct interests and aspirations that are important in our lives and that represent us, and that we see capacities and possibilities in ourselves in relation to them. Additionally, we created and mobilised our radio shows to represent these passions, and we used our radio work to build on our knowledge within these realms and strengthen these pathways for us. This reflects how we actively engaged in our pursuit of these interests through radio, whether it was being able to record and use our shows as a platform for our music as a budding musician, to engage in dialogue through radio about political and community issues as people who wanted to pursue careers in media, or use radio to speak about sport as someone who hopes to pursue sport professionally or be engaged in sports journalism. Furthermore, it reinforces the weight, influence and embodiment that these interests have for us, and how the goals and aspirations attached to them are at the forefront of our lives, thus disrupting ideas of our presumed incompetence, inadequacy and lack of ability to aspire to goals (Kelaher et al., 2010; Millado, 2020; Tiller et al., 2020).

Overall, this subtheme shows how we used radio as a platform for a range of conversations about how our identity positions and affiliations with place enriched us. Through this, we articulated how our social categories and attributes bring us pride, joy and connection to community, and exist more complexly in our lives, rather than being seen through damage-focused lenses. This was seen in how we projected stories about how our race, our ethnicity, our gender and LGBTQIA+ identities sparked joy and pride for us. It was also evident in discourse about how these affiliations connected us to community and like-minded people, and how they enabled us to form collectives and our chosen families. Furthermore, we affirmed our appreciation, attachment and connection to our area and the community of Brimbank, as we spoke of our positive regard for its multiple facets, its diversity and the community it provides,

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even though others may paint it negatively. We also spoke of other aspects which sat beyond these identity positions as we talked with confidence and surety about our interests, passions, as well as our futures, dreams and the clear pathways related to them. This showed that whilst we have a stake in speaking about our identities, our identities do not solely define us, but that we are also defined by our passions and interests, which shape our lives and are important aspects of who we are. Furthermore, it conveys how we hold a variety of knowledge, insights and expertise in various other areas and subjects that we yearn to share. Ultimately, it also demonstrated that we have the capacity to do and dream, as we possess the interest and desire to excel and flourish in these various fields. These humanise us as complex beings who have a range of stories to tell about our lives. It also complicates the outside world's understanding of young people from Brimbank as our life biographies and experiences cannot be neatly tied up and seen through social categories alone, but are rather lived boldly, richly and in complicated ways.

In conclusion, this chapter analyses the stories of how we resisted and spoke back, in explicit and implicit ways, to the dominant framings and narratives that often circulate and conflate us. Speaking back took place as we specifically named and called out stereotypes and misrepresentations around our age and racial, ethnic and gender identities, and used our radio shows as a vehicle to give a direct platform to content that criticised, challenged and corrected these misrepresentations. In addition to actively and intentionally raising and disputing these framings, we also did countering work in more inadvertent and organic ways as we carved out stories that bypassed and de-centred the dominant, violent ideas to instead showcase alternate stories formed about our identity categories as well as the other important aspects in our lives. Through this, we showed that although young people are often othered and reminded of their differences based on their social categories and place, these identity positions enable a sense of richness in our lives. These shared stories show how young people speak agentically about the multitude of social categories in their lives, some accounted for and others conflated and made invisible, and the ways that these conjure a range of experiences and impart different dimensions to our lives. Whilst we spoke about how our identities and affiliations impart complex experiences and manifest in our lives in various ways, we also shared how we do not always draw upon these personal identity positions to define ourselves. To illustrate this, we told stories

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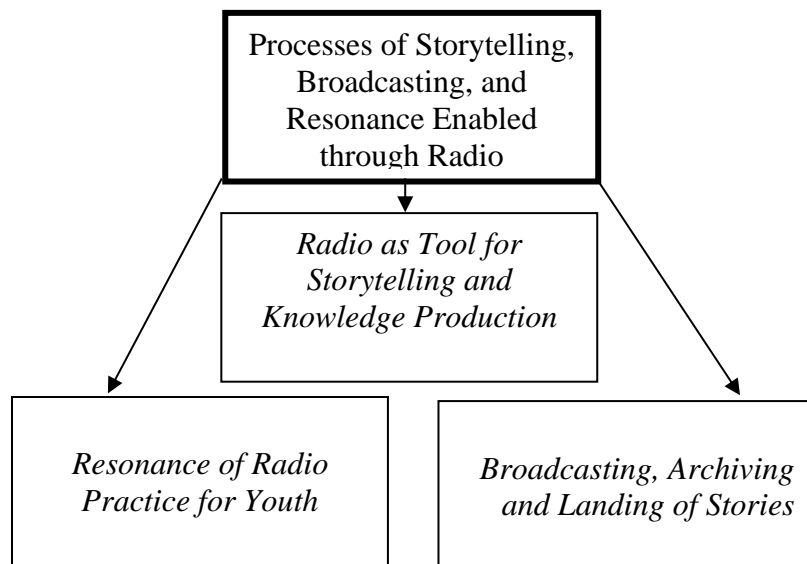
of our interests, and our future goals in relation to these interests, and we used our radio shows to assert these passions as well as enrich them. By highlighting how we think of ourselves and our lives beyond the dominant framings and representations about our identities, and beyond the mere identities themselves, but also through our passions, aspirations and possibilities, we showcased alternate stories and constructions about our identities, attributes, community and futures. These stories disrupt the dominant and homogenising framings about our identity positions as well as the violent notions about our incompetence, lack of interest and disengagement. They also move away from ideas about the essentialisation of certain identity categories, as well as the reduction of individuals to stereotypes, to reflect a sense of the complexity that is present in our lives.

## Chapter 8: Processes of Storytelling, Broadcasting, and Resonance Enabled through Radio

This chapter illustrates how the young people spoke about the use and practice of radio, and the specific outcomes it conjured for the members of *Brimbank LIVE*. In light of these, I present my theorising and understanding of what was shared in their comments about radio to convey the mechanism and processes that took place. The first subtheme, *Radio as a Tool for Storytelling and Knowledge Production*, reflects how they spoke about radio as a tool that they could control to tell stories about their lives in various ways, and how this can be understood to show how radio enabled the young people to engage in storytelling processes. The second subtheme, *Resonance of Radio Practice for Youth*, comes from the young people speaking about how the practice and processes of radio-making resonated with them. They provided details about how their engagement with *Brimbank LIVE* radio nurtured them and gave them new skills, and talked about the opportunities that came with their involvement. Finally, the young people spoke about their radio work landing with and reaching others, and this is encapsulated in the subtheme *Broadcasting, Archiving and Landing of Stories*. This subtheme reflects the sharings around the broadcasting and the archival of the radio content, as well what it meant for those in their community, and beyond, to hear stories from young people. Figure 15 presents the theme.

**Figure 15.**

*Processes of Storytelling, Broadcasting, and Resonance Enabled Through Radio*





### **Radio as a Tool for Storytelling and Knowledge Production**

As reflected in *Chapter 7*'s theme, *Speaking Back to and Resisting Dominant Narratives*, the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* gave numerous examples of how they believed that the dominant forms of media were often vehicles for dominant narratives and stories produced by people outside of their communities and the youth experience. Additionally, they spoke about how these outlets misrepresent and distort notions about their worlds and experiences, and how they can also erase youth's voices and conceal their truths. It became clear through this dialogue that although stories about young people exist, they were not the young people's stories. To counter this, the *Brimbank LIVE* program was conceived as a site in which we could engage with the tool of radio to produce knowledge and create our own stories about our lives, our trauma, our joy and our futures. To achieve this, we carefully constructed content that spoke back to and critiqued the dominant stories by sharing how we navigate these constraints in our everyday lives. The content of our radio shows also spoke of the pride we have in our identities, as well as the passions, knowledge and interests we possess. In this way, we were able to share the stories that we wanted through our radio shows. This was noted by Ally (26), who spoke of how she was able to claim the radio space and use radio to speak of her interests, perspectives and agendas:

This [radio space] gave me the opportunity to talk about things I wanted to talk about, and things important to me... the radio show, it amplified my voice, and it was something that I originally wanted to have in my community, which was really nice.

Daniel, the SNH team leader, conveys how this was seen from his perspective as a mentor in the space, and how the radio shows on *Brimbank LIVE* enabled the production of meaningful and true stories for young people:

I do believe giving young people a chance to tell their story gave them the power to portray the stories that the media, or mainstream media people and the views that people in the mainstream world do not have on them... It [radio] gave them an opportunity to really voice out some of their feelings, feelings they've been carrying for years, whether

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it was parents not being around, whether it was the gender equity challenges they were experiencing, it gave them platform.

Just as radio-making can be seen to enable the processes of storytelling, it also permitted our voices to be raised and heard in telling our stories. For instance, Ally (26) spoke of how the radio show “*amplified her (my) voice*”. Lee (15) also described how radio gave them “*a proper voice*”, which they really appreciated, given that youth’s voice, input and stories are often precariously received or shunned in other spaces. This shows radio as a democratising vehicle, as the radio-making not only enabled young people to lead the processes of telling stories about their experiences, identities and worlds that oftentimes are not produced in mainstream spaces, but also enabled the young people to represent themselves in these processes.

The tool of radio was not only helpful in allowing us to produce and voice our stories, but using radio also permitted the sharing of these products in distinct ways. Each member of the *Brimbank LIVE* team moulded and constructed the medium of radio to create shows that best suited our individual, creative and dialogical desires. One way of using this tool was evident in the conversation style shows produced, where the young people engaged in dialogue and conversations with co-hosts or guests as their way of platforming their stories. This was the most common method that the young people drew upon to present their perspectives and insights, as they felt that the ability and opportunity to communicate and talk about matters publicly was important. Matthew (18) conveys: “*Someone once told me you can’t just write, you need to be able to talk as well,*” and this highlights the power of engaging in dialogue and discussion through spoken language, which Matthew (18) said was what drew him to become involved in the radio space. Another way in which radio was used to showcase the young people’s stories was through writing music and playing it on air. Edward (17) spoke of how being able to create music and feature those tracks on radio enabled him to speak and connect to the process of storytelling in a way that is comfortable to him:

I can hardly talk about my feelings and emotions. I can’t really, you know? If one of the boys sees me sad and ask me what’s wrong, I just sit there and I’m like “I’m alright”. But when you write it down on your phone or pen and paper, that’s where I get my emotions

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to come out... putting things into a song allows me to tell the story through rapping, rather than talking... It's easy to write while rapping, it helps express more emotion... Cos like everyone needs help, even I need help sometimes. And you can't really tell another person, so you just write and hope that they hear what you're saying through your music...

This aligns with the view of Watkins and Shulman (2008) that “music is a powerful and flexible form for re-signifying experience in community” (p. 247). Likewise, Charlie (19) also conveys the importance of telling stories through music, as he speaks of how musical expression is not only an outlet for him to tell his stories, but also of how making music is embedded in his Pasifika culture: “*Music plays a big part [in my life]. Even for our culture... like the songs, they do have a message. Everything has a message behind it... in church you sing, in our culture you sing*”. While the young people talked about the various ways they used radio to encapsulate stories, this was also reinforced in the focus group discussions with the young team as the adult mentors shared how each radio host encompassed a unique nature and style for sharing their stories. In the excerpt below, Henry, the radio producer, details the way Charlie (19) uses songwriting and rap in his radio shows:

Charlie, your will to actually talk from the heart about stuff that's important to you was just brilliant. You could have heard a pin drop... people were listening every word [of your show], they were hanging off it. I hope you know you've got that ability to do that, and it's probably why you're so good with your rap, because you're actually in the mood to give, and if you're in the mood to give and you got something to say and you got experiences and there's some pain there and there's some happiness there, mate, that is a story to tell.

Henry also spoke of how other shows engaged well with audiences through conversation and shows that were interactive and used a talk-back style to platform stories about current affairs, politics, pop culture and social issues, such as *Soul Dive*, *The RAD Experience* and the *In The Know Show*, hosted by Laila (24), Ally (26) and me (23). This format differed again from

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informative shows, such as the one hosted by Matthew (18), or from the conversational shows, such as those of Mike (24) and Grace (18).

This shows how we were able to create and customise shows using different approaches that best suited our preferred ways of communicating. It also illustrates the potential radio has in incorporating various modes and styles of communication in its broadcast, which made radio-making a pliable tool that could be moulded by the young people controlling it. Sylvie, the BNHCC unit coordinator, reflected on how these different styles and ways of using radio, whether it was conversation or music, enabled us to convey messages and stories that were distinct and connected to us in different ways:

There's something very different from recording a beat or even writing a rap, though there are similarities there to having a conversation with your peers about things that are really important to you or things that you're worried about, or things or experiences that you're having that negatively impact your community. Because there was lots of conversation within those radio shows. Yeah, there was conversation about the art people were making and the music people were making, but there was lots of conversations about the experience of being a young Pasifika man, or the lockdowns in North Melbourne, or experiences of race-based discrimination. There was a lot of content that was quite personal, but it was political.

This subtheme reflects how radio provided storytelling mechanisms for the young people and how as a tool it enabled them to share and project their stories in varied ways. The program members who were singers and songwriters chose to write, record and play music to convey their stories, while the others curated radio shows that were dialogue-based and featured conversations between co-hosts or interviews with guests in relation to their chosen radio show themes. Furthermore, this subtheme also conveys the different approaches chosen as some young people crafted their shows and content through information and education lenses, some incorporated audience participation and engagement, and others took a more humorous and laidback approach to sharing their stories. This shows the unique nature that each of us was able to bring to the process of telling stories through radio, and it highlights the possibilities that come with the

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practice of radio which not only enables storytelling, but also facilitates using a variety of ways to present the stories.

### **Resonance of Radio Practice for Youth.**

The work of creating radio content and sharing stories had a significant impact on the young people of the *Brimbank LIVE* team. The radio-making gave the young people in the program a sense of significance and importance as they shared their stories. In his interview, Daniel, the SNH team leader, reflected on the impact that doing radio, giving our voices a platform and engaging in storytelling had on the young people:

I think it had a profound impact on these young people and the profound impact is more around young people starting to feel like “people actually value us, people actually want us” because prior to being involved in *Brimbank LIVE* and *The House Program* and Neighbourhood House, the messaging that they were hearing was that nobody cares, that they weren’t important, from their perspective was quite dehumanising. I think this pathway gave them an opportunity to feel like human beings and feel like \_ was instilled in them. And they might see like their music as like not so good, but to someone else they saw their music as powerful. They had the opportunity to talk about the grief and loss they experience in their personal life, they were able to narrate what they were experiencing through their own music and shows. And then impact for those young people, people listening to them and actually taking them quite seriously... There's so many great outcomes through *Brimbank LIVE*. But one of them is young people having an increased sense of, what I’d describe, confidence in themselves and in their ability...

Here, Daniel is talking about how young people often reported feeling de-humanised, unimportant and undervalued, but being able to engage in processes where they could create and share their insights, identities and passions made them feel a sense of importance and gave them confidence in their voices, stories and capabilities. Through their radio shows, the young people were listened to and heard, as well as taken seriously in ways that they may not have experienced in other spaces. The young people also used the process of making radio to gain clarity and heal

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through their storytelling: *“it was like a therapy session, they used it [radio] as an opportunity to voice and through that come to terms, deal with things and get better”*.

In addition to the powerful process of engaging in storytelling through community radio-making, the radio work also built skills and enriched the participants' knowledge. The young people of *Brimbank LIVE* spoke about how they *“learnt so much about radio”* during the program, as they immersed themselves in radio training, learnt the craft of producing and planning radio shows, and broadcast their shows live. These skills learnt and retained through the radio program were not only relevant to radio work, but were also reported as being applicable outside of the program. The young people mentioned that conducting interviews, researching topics, writing content plans, reaching out to guests, and public speaking were all transferable skills that could be used beyond the radio process. When speaking about skills as a key takeaway from the program, the young people also mentioned how exercising these skills in the space enriched their expertise, and that they felt better able to use these skills. Ally (26) stated: *“I feel like I’m more confident in my skill set... I gained. I don’t know, more knowledge in general”*. In addition to skills, connections and networks were also strengthened during their engagement in the radio program. In her interview, Laila (24) said: *“I definitely made connections, and like meaningful connections, not just networking connections that are... worthwhile in my career sense, but also actual connections with people”*. SNH team leader, Daniel, also highlights this as he describes the ways that connection and belonging emerged for the young radio hosts through their engagement in the program and in the broader SNH setting:

There was also a massive sense of connection to the community in the sense of these places and spaces are no longer for the elite, but that young people could begin to see that “these places are for people like me too”. I think importantly, as well, there was an increased sense of belonging through the community, you know, young people were meeting young people through the program that they otherwise would not have met, so really... that social connection.

This reinforces the view that young people mobilising their own creative spaces not only allows them to express themselves in their own ways and on their own terms, but it is also crucial in

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them establishing a sense of importance and connection to space, and in building one's intimate sense of belonging (Case & Hunter, 2012).

In addition to sharing how radio had nourished and sharpened their skills as well as helped them forge connections in the process, the young people spoke of how the radio platform and practice supported their goals and provided them paid opportunities to engage in their fields of interest. Charlie (19) and Edward (17) discuss this:

C: Through this program writing songs, doing songs is like a job for me, and it's given me a chance to pursue what I want to do.

E: It gives us a path to go down... using this platform and storytelling to make someone feel like they're falling in love, or making them cry, it's just good. And that's what this program has done for us, it's expanded everything for us, not just with music but life in general

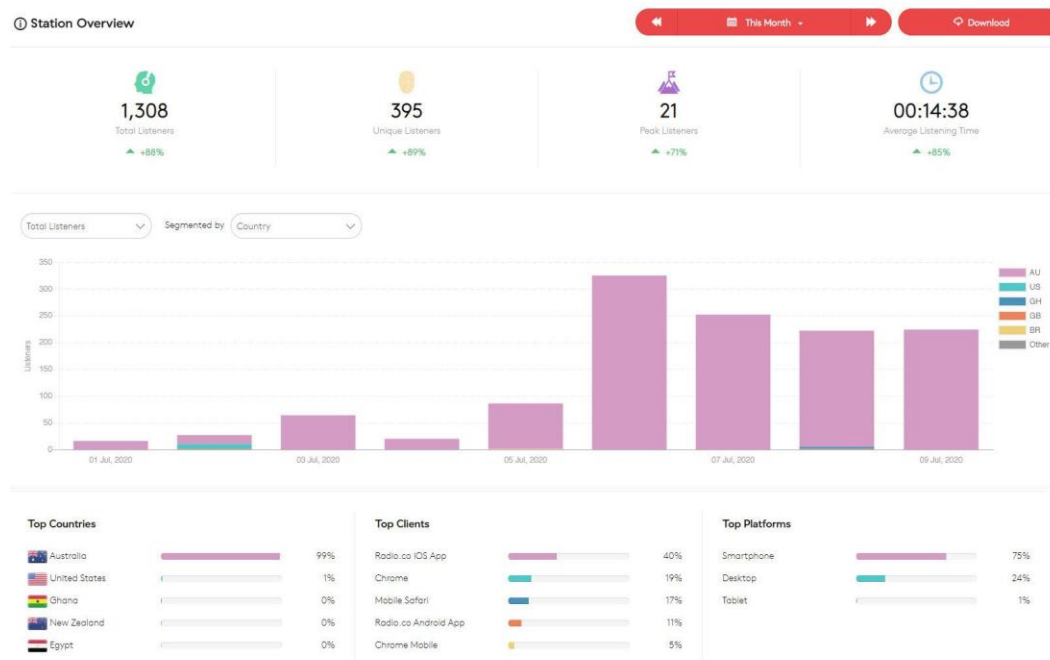
This shows how the radio process and site opened up possibilities for the young people to engage in practices related to their respective fields of interest. Furthermore, the young people in the program also gained opportunities through their connections made from the program as well as through the skills built and enriched during the process. For example, once physical spaces opened up again after lockdown, Lee (15) became a mentor when *The House Program* recommenced at SNH, working to guide other young people in the creative activities and classes on offer. Laila (24) and Ally (26), who talked in the interviews about pursuing hosting and being in the media space, went on to do paid hosting gigs for a range of conferences, summits and events in the fields of education, arts and youth sectors, as well as for global brands. Matthew (18), who spoke of his goals to pursue journalism drew upon his skills of radio as he went into print and broadcast journalism, writing and reporting on local stories. These show how the expertise and skills of the young people, as well as their passion for conveying messages and telling stories, were sharpened through the radio program and how this knowledge has been transferred outside of the radio program. The radio program and practice can thus be seen as a springboard for young people and a starting point taking them into many different fields and directions of work, both close to home, such as within the SNH site, and further afield.

### Broadcasting, Archiving and Landing of Stories.

As engaging in the process of radio resonated with the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* and enriched their skills, the process and stories also landed in various ways for the audience of *Brimbank LIVE*. The digital element of broadcasting was said to give young people's stories "wings", as the stories were made public through the practice of community radio. According to Evans (2007) "for young people to fully experience voice, it requires resonance - some signal that their contributions are being heard and actively considered" (p. 700). In the context of the *Brimbank LIVE* radio work, this signal was seen as the shows created by the young team members, which consisted of approximately 150 hours of live radio content, were live streamed on the LIVE FM radio app as well as through the *Brimbank LIVE* webpage. These outlets and channels where listeners could tune into the *Brimbank LIVE* station were available for the public to access at no cost. Figure 16 below gives the statistics from both the webpage and app for the first day of broadcast, and shows the ways in which the radio content was disseminated and received.

**Figure 16.**

*Radio statistics*





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*Note:* Images were sent via email by radio producer from Making Media Australia. No public access. Making Media Australia ©

In Henry's dissection of the statistics above, he conveys the different ways in which the shows reached listeners:

[This] shows around 1,300 listens with nearly 400 unique listeners. This shows that the same listener on average listened 3 unique times or more. The most pleasing aspect is the 'Time Spent Listening' stat which shows that listeners on average listened for around 15 minutes every time they tuned in. This shows that your shows were interesting enough for people to listen for an extended time. You should be proud of this number ... for them to listen for an extended time means that you were entertaining, personable, engaging, interesting and professional.

According to the broadcasting statistics, the audience engaged with our shows for a substantial amount of time and the shows also reached listeners on both a community and global scale. Whilst the majority of listeners were from Australia, people also tuned into our shows from countries such as America and Ghana. This reflects the particular reach that community radio attached to digital platforms can have in disseminating content, and how community radio has the ability to become a vehicle not just to create stories, but also to disperse those stories to the wider world. Additionally, it conveys how our community radio content resonated and was relevant to those within our Brimbank community, as well as those in other locations and places.

These statistics show what the listenership was like for the live shows, but the radio shows of *Brimbank LIVE* were not just broadcast live. As the shows were being aired, both audio and video footage of the young people presenting was recorded and then archived on the *Brimbank LIVE* website. The archived audio and video content was then accessible for continual access through the online audio player Soundcloud and video player Vimeo. These audio and video clips, as well as the archived shows, were also promoted through our social media channels, which continued the exposure of the *Brimbank LIVE* content. According to the statistics gathered, archived videos reached approximately 2000 views in total and the audio clips of our shows reached around 8000 listens in total. This shows how radio content can be

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preserved and contribute to cultural archives about young people's lives, as the *Brimbank LIVE* radio shows and content, both in audio and visual forms, still exist and can be continually engaged with through the digital forums on the *Brimbank LIVE* webpage. This also emphasises how digital tools, such as Zoom, Vimeo and Soundcloud, can support radio-making as they enabled both audio and video content to be recorded, stored, embedded and made available to be played through the *Brimbank LIVE* website.

With the young people's perspectives and opinions being stored, shared and listened to by others, the program participants and the adult mentors touched on how the wider community engaged with the radio content. For example, one of the radio shows, *The Music of Covid*, featured songs that the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* wrote and recorded about staying safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. The songs were performed in various genres, and even incorporated lyrics in languages other than English to reach a broader range of people. In his interview, Daniel spoke of how other young people in the community came to listen to the show and the music it played, and how they took on the messaging that was conveyed through it:

They [the young musicians of *Brimbank LIVE*] made about six or so songs about the impact of COVID-19 from a youth perspective, and again that particular music had specific messaging in terms of what they need to do to stay safe. And with all the young people listening to this music, they tend to follow it, because it wasn't done by people in their late 30s like me, but young people in their 20s talking and communicating to other young people their age.

This shows how *Brimbank LIVE*'s stories and messaging landed with young their peers. Young people were able to hear particular stories or ideas conveyed by the radio team, and connected with relevant information communicated to them in ways that they found compelling. The radio work in itself also resonated with young people, as Ally (26) talks about the process and impact of doing radio, and how the work reached and was received by others in her community:

The beautiful thing is it wasn't just one week of radio or two weeks it was played... I have people from my community reaching out being like "great work, I love your hustle,

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you're doing so many things how can we get into this?" so it's been really nice other people benefit from my work and being inspired to do stuff like this.

In addition to the impact and reach of the shows on fellow young people, the radio practice and shows also enabled those outside of the youth experience to connect, learn and better understand young people. Sylvie, the BNH&CC coordinator, talked about how the radio shows, which showcased young people sharing sentiments about their perspectives and their lives, landed with others in the broader community, particularly older community members. Furthermore, she conveyed how community members of all ages also joined in on the conversations and shows with the young people, and how these interactions enabled a sense of ease in their minds about youth in general:

It's just like the power of these community spaces and what they can do and what they can support, what sort of contact they can support across cultures and genders and ages as well... There was a fair amount of intergenerational crossover once everybody kind of settled down and realised that connecting with and having young people in the space didn't mean that you were going to lose the tires off your car.

This highlights how generational ties were able to be forged through the radio process. It also shows how listening to the young people's radio content resonated with the community and how the community was then more open to engaging with youth in light of a better understanding of their lives through their stories and through interacting with them in this realm. Daniel reinforces this in the following quote:

*Brimbank LIVE* provided us a better communication channel with young people. The information and feedback we got from young people from the African diaspora, Pasifika background, Sri Lankan background, all these backgrounds that without *Brimbank LIVE* we wouldn't have had this opportunity. People with disabilities got to talk about their own stories, young people who identify as LGBTQI community hosted their shows talking about things so dear to them... and I think the thing with young people from these communities now understand council and now feel comfortable in our neighbourhood houses, so it's a massive achievement.

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This reflects how this work landed in broader ways for the community and young people, as it enabled young people to forge ties and feel safe with local spaces and council workers, whilst the radio broadcasts also allowed those outside of the youth experience to connect and gain a better understanding of young people.

These stories not only found resonance with listeners of different ages, but also with those who had worked closely with the young people in the program. Throughout their interviews, the adult mentors, Daniel, Henry and Sylvie, continually spoke about how much they grew and learned from the young people through supporting them, interacting with them and listening to their radio shows and the stories they carried. Henry, the radio producer, who spent a large amount of time with the young people during the planning, training and recording of the shows, conveys how grateful he was to have been given the opportunity to connect with these young people and be part of the process of *Brimbank LIVE*:

You lot thought you got a lot out of it?! Mate, I got so much out of it. It was so inspiring for me... I feel like I'm the winner here ... I got educated by you all, I've suddenly been introduced to conversations about colourism, representation, the transgender world, pronouns, and I'm sitting back and thinking "My God". I walk away being a much better person than I was before by doing this...

As Henry spoke of the ways that the young people's radio shows and stories informed and taught him valuable insights about their subjectivities and worlds, this emphasises how the stories of young people also made an impact on others through informing, enlightening and bridging gaps.

In addition to this resonance and impact felt within and outside the radio program, the radio program was also formally recognised and acknowledged within the local council as well as statewide. For instance, the *Brimbank LIVE* team won the 'Encouragement Award' in the category of Learning Excellence at the 'We Are Brimbank' Awards in late 2020. This award is given to a group connected to Brimbank that exhibits and implements inventive initiatives and projects aimed at enhancing our community's knowledge, skills, and overall wellbeing through engaging and educational environments. The award recognised how the *Brimbank LIVE* program provided a platform for the young people of Brimbank through radio-making to discuss what

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matters to them and their community while engaging in vital learning during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The *Brimbank LIVE* program also received a High Commendation in the Diversity & Inclusion Category at the 2022 'LGPro Awards for Excellence'. The 'LGPro Awards for Excellence' promotes and celebrates outstanding work that is produced, undertaken and delivered by individuals and teams in LGAs in Victoria. In addition, the *Brimbank LIVE* team won the 'Reducing Inequalities Award' at the 2021 annual 'Neighbourhood House Victoria Awards'. This award is connected to multiple Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, and honours projects, programs and initiatives which address inequalities experienced by different groups within our community. Figure 17 displays an excerpt that details Brimbank LIVE's win at the 2021 'Neighbourhood House Victoria Awards'.

**Figure 17.**

*Brimbank LIVE Awards*

### 2021 NHVic Awards

#### Reducing Inequalities Award



**Winner: Sydenham Neighbourhood House – Brimbank Live**

Brimbank Live is a digital radio platform supporting young people to connect and learn through media production. Participants receive training in writing, hosting and production of radio shows and podcasts. It is aimed at young people experiencing structural disadvantage, to unpack issues important to them, on their terms. Conceived during the pandemic as a way of supporting young people to feel connected, the platform provides opportunities to showcase the talents of young people and provides space for learning about mental health, gender and racial diversity, and career pathways.



*Note:* Image taken from <https://www.nhvic.org.au/2021-nhvic-awards> (Neighbourhood House Victoria Website, 2021)

Additionally, this resonance from the stories shared on the radio also led to other organisations and larger institutions wanting the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* to continue to contribute and share their perspectives. This was seen as the young people were invited to take

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part in, connect and share with various stakeholders to help change their ways of working when engaging with youth. Daniel explains:

It was also amazing to hear that a number of the youth who interviewed organisations, the organisations invited the young people to come and shape the policies that the organisation had in terms of how the organisation should view young people. And if it wasn't for the young people telling their stories I don't think that opportunity would have ever been thought of.

This reflects how the radio shows and the stories created were positively received by the wider community, but also how the radio work and products were useful resources in addressing and responding to the forms of violence experienced by young people.

This subtheme reflects how the stories that the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* produced reached both youth in the community and those outside of the youth experience. It exhibits the ways the work landed through its extended reach, broadcasting and archiving, and how it continues its reach through digital means. The responses of participants also show how the radio-making itself and the content created provided an insight into young people's lives and perspectives, which enriched people's understanding of youth. The body of work was also formally recognised by those outside of the Brimbank community and deemed to have made an impact in addressing and responding to youth needs as well as providing opportunities for the young people to further share stories and continue leading processes of meaning-making.

In conclusion, this chapter shows the ways that the tool and practice of radio enabled processes for telling and disseminating stories, with details of how young people spoke of being active agents through the vehicle of radio, engaging in knowledge and cultural production, as well as creating content that humanised who they were. It also emphasises radio-making as a flexible practice that enabled us to speak about our lives, on our own terms and in our own ways. The resonance that radio had for *Brimbank LIVE* members was also documented in this theme through the ways in which creating radio shows within the program enriched the confidence, belief and power that we as young people held in our voices and stories. In addition, the young people spoke of the connections made through the radio program, as well as the opportunities it

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granted to strengthen our skills. Furthermore, our involvement in radio has fuelled and enabled new and different pathways, opportunities and realities for us, highlighting the unique nature of engaging in community radio through what it can make possible and ignite both in the setting and practice of radio itself, but also beyond it. Using radio as a tool and practice has enabled the broadcasting and archiving of our stories and this led to discussion around how this has amplified and sustained the reach and engagement of our shared stories. This chapter also highlighted discussion of the ways that the stories the young people shared have been acknowledged in the wider community and found positive resonance. Other young people connected to our content, and those outside the youth experience grew in their understanding of the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* with expanded insight into our lives. The way our stories landed was also discussed in terms of how the program, practice and stories were recognised by other organisations and institutions, as participants spoke about how these bodies acknowledged the benefits of the radio-making process in *Brimbank LIVE* in facilitating the construction of our stories, and in enabling us to respond to and resist the violence we experience.

### **Chapter 9: Discussion, Contributions, Implications, and Limitations**

This chapter includes the discussion section which details the main components of the research and draws back to the literature. This will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological contributions from this work as well as consideration of its limitations and possible directions for future research.

#### **Discussion**

This work began in the context of reports concerning exclusion and discrimination encountered by youth in Brimbank, and the ambivalence, surveillance and disengagement from community spaces by young people in the municipality. In light of these experiences, which were framed to occur through the particular lenses, dimensions and processes of racism, policy commitments were made by SNH for young people who experience these forms of violence to include them in the SNH space and have them lead programs and activities which spoke to their interests. Given the contextual circumstances of COVID-19 (Miller & McGregor, 2021), the nature of this work also moved with and responded to pandemic restrictions in Melbourne, as program delivery was alternatively online and was implemented with digital tools and technologies. In the face of these commitments and the prevailing conditions, the *Brimbank LIVE* program was established with the support of SNH. *Brimbank LIVE* was a community radio initiative for young people connected to the Brimbank area, which entailed its young members creating their own radio station and engaging in the practice of radio-making to form and lead their own self-determined radio shows.

During this research, I worked with and alongside the group of young people who were part of the *Brimbank LIVE* program to document the creation, process and stories that emerged from their radio setting and practice. Specifically, I sought to examine how radio as a program and activity provided young people with opportunities to address and respond to the issues of racism and the various other forms of structural and symbolic violence that they experience. I was also interested in understanding how radio emerged as a tool and practice that facilitated them in voicing and constructing meaning about their lives, experiences and identities, while at



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the same time learning and gaining skills in the process that helped further empower them. The research questions that guided this research were:

- What stories do young people share about their identities and subjectivities using the tool of community radio in *Brimbank LIVE*?
- What are the mechanisms and features that enable and support young people on the site and in the processes of *Brimbank LIVE*?
- How does the process of young people making community radio through *Brimbank LIVE* and constructing stories about their lives respond to structural and symbolic forms of violence?

Situating this work within the field of critical community psychology, and drawing upon conceptual tools and frameworks of intersectionality to enrich my understanding of the ways in which responsive work can take place, I sought to respond to calls from critical community psychologists to theorise processes of understanding, countering and disrupting forms of violence (Evans et al., 2017; García-Ramírez et al., 2014; Prilleltensky, 2014; Shinn & McCormack, 2017). Using community-engaged approaches, which drew upon accompaniment (Watkins, 2015) and ethnographic techniques, I worked with and alongside peers in the program as a researcher participant. These roles enabled me to be “part of the action” (Fuller, 1999, p. 221) and they enriched my understanding and documentation of how the radio setting of *Brimbank LIVE* was formed, the mechanisms which helped amplify the program and young people’s governance within it, as well as the creative practice of radio-making. I immersed myself in data gathered through observations, interviews, focus groups and from the radio archives of the young people’s shows. Since narrative inquiry provides a methodological approach that aligned with the adopted frameworks and enabled me to examine the stories that youth narrated, as well as to privilege their stories about their social worlds and identities, I employed critical narrative analysis as the core methodology (Souto-Manning, 2014). Through the analysis process, I identified narratives that reflected how young people name, understand and are aware of the violence they experience in relation to their identity positions and communities, how they used radio to resist and call out dominant narratives and framings about their identities, and how they asserted new stories and perceptions about their worlds. I also

examined radio as a tool and activity that enabled stories to be formed, aired publicly and archived, how radio content facilitated connection to listeners within and beyond community, and how the process resonated with the young people themselves. These findings will be discussed further in the sections below pertaining to the resistance and alternate stories the young people told through their radio shows, how the site of *Brimbank LIVE* represented and formed an intentional setting in partnership with youth and SNH, how community radio as a tool and practice symbolised a disseminating, creative and collective practice, and what it meant as a young researcher from the Brimbank community to do this research alongside the young collective.

### ***The Stories from Brimbank LIVE***

Using storytelling as a way to derive meaning through stories, the young people of *Brimbank LIVE* engaged in radio work to tell resistance stories. These stories were seen as young people conveyed that on the ground, there are various social categories that we are affiliated with in our lives, categories pertaining to our age, race, ethnicity, gender and place. These categories interact and are the basis for stereotypes and framings in the dominant media. As a result, the young people spoke of how we often experience forms of structural and symbolic violence through discrimination, exclusion, and unfavourable treatment in reference to these multiple subjectivities. These stories do not seek to convey oppression, but as the young people narrate these stories about their lives, they give insight into their everyday lives as young, racialised, gender diverse people from a place classed as socio-economically low. As we spoke about our experiences, there was clear understanding of how larger systems of power and privilege as well as broader discourses about youth shape young people's everyday lived experiences (Weis & Fine, 2000; 2012), and that we are aware of these dynamics. This awareness of social systems is reflected in other research where young people use creative vehicles to assert their understandings and consciousness of their worlds (Karabanow & Naylor 2015; Osei-Kofi, 2013; Wilkinson, 2019). These stories also reflect how creating a setting for radio-making and storytelling can aid as a process for naming and exploring structures of violence, and the multiple categories and affiliations that constitute intersectional identities (Collins, 2000b; Crenshaw, 2017; Guan et al., 2021; Rice et al., 2019; Wilkins, 2012). Through telling these stories, it also

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became clear that although racism is prominent for some, other structures and mechanisms of violence often remain invisible. Our stories of everyday life and the ways we experience violence can be understood as concealed stories (Bell, L. A., 2010) or oppression narratives (Case & Hunter, 2012) which convey how our experiences and realities can be shaped beyond the assumed ideas and narratives about young people from Brimbank. These realities were privileged as we highlighted our various identity positions, the ways that these subjectivities are framed, and the violence that we experience in light of constructions about these positions. As we constructed stories about our identities and experiences from our own vantage points, it enabled us to tell explicitly our own versions of our various positionings and the unfavourable encounters these harbour, rather than having outsider's perceptions of these accounts dominate. These stories formed are also reminiscent of Satchwell (2020) and Marlow's (2018) reflections which convey that it is important to understand the everyday injustices which communities face, and rather than 'looking away' from disadvantage and marginality, stories can be told from inside these positions which reflect a truth that is authentic and imbued with both humanity and complexity.

Through individual and collective storytelling in the program, the group also engaged in deconstructing dominant stories as they critiqued taken-for-granted meanings and the discourse in the dominant stories about their identities and communities. The young people pointed out how these stories are problematic and highlighted the discrepancies between the dominant framings and their own realities and experiences. These contestations are reminiscent of Bell's, L. A. (2019) conceptualisation of resistance stories. Through sharing these resistance stories, the narrators actively challenged dominant cultural narratives, and showed that they have the capacity to instruct, educate and disrupt ideas of oppression (O'Neill, 1994; Sium & Ritskes, 2013). These resistance stories not only unsettled, but they also conveyed the young people's navigational capital as they were seen to undermine, negotiate and subvert unfavourable stereotypes and ideas about who they were through the stories produced (Yosso, 2005). Resistance stories also disrupt representations of passivity and instead emphasise how young people are active in seeking to challenge the ways in which society paints their circumstances and lives (Bok, 2010). Furthermore, these stories show how storytelling enables the opportunity

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for us to do this unsettling work in the face of violence, and allows us to point out and correct inconsistencies (Dutta et al., 2016; Sium & Ritskes, 2013).

Resistance stories were also evident in our stories of positive race and queer identities, as well as in our stories of connection to place, to Brimbank. These stories were shared to convey the importance and cherished aspects of experiences of place and personal affiliations that elicit joy, pride, connection and community in our lives. Positive experiences of place and identity positions offered a different perspective of our lives, which showed that young people do not only speak about themselves through the lens and experiences of racism and exclusion, nor do they solely negotiate and counter dominant and unfavourable ideas solely in relation to these categories, but rather they make decisions to present their identity positions in various lights. These stories transcend limiting and dominant constructions that reinforce one-sided and negatively framed ideas. Instead, they offer alternate ways of understanding young people's identity positions. Furthermore, stories that reflected young people's passions, interests and future ambitions also contribute to stories of resistance as well as to stories of wilful subjectivities (Ahmed, 2014). These resistance stories showed the possibilities that youth see for themselves in their futures, careers and prospective pathways, as well as their capacity to aspire to a different future (Appadurai, 2004; Bok, 2010; Keast & Sonn, 2020). These stories also conveyed their aspirational capital in holding and maintaining hopes and dreams in the face of ideas about their "real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

These tellings also went beyond stories of resistance to become stories of emergence and transformation (Bell, L. A., 2010). As the radio team formed unique and multifaceted constructions about their identities that bypassed dominant narratives, and created imaginings around possibilities and capacities in relation to their futures, they also conveyed re-crafted, alternative and expanded ideas about youth's individual identities. These stories of emergence and transformation can be considered similar to Case and Hunter's (2012) reimagined personal narratives. Through these reimagined personal narratives, "dominant cultural narratives are said to become sites of fierce contestation in the service of 'a self-defined standpoint'" (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 264; Collins, 2000). They speak to the narratives individuals hold about themselves (Mankowski & Rappaport 2000; Rappaport 1995), and instil ways for people to

believe that they are more than what the dominant narrative suggests they are (Balcazar et al., 2011). Similar to the work of Ahmed (2014), which has also been drawn upon by others in the context of working with youth (Fine, 2016; Fine et al., 2018), such stories also produce and embody wilful subjectivities, as they show that young people of Brimbank do not simply succumb or shrink under the dominant narratives which racialise them and present them as economically deprived subjects. Instead, as Ahmed (2014) argues, they “unapologetically refuse to straighten” (Fine et al., 2018, p. 612) and they navigate these framings, whilst narrating their identities and aspects of their lives in the layered and complex ways in which they manifest. This is similar to other documented storytelling and meaning-making practices where youth use such processes as opportunities not only to challenge and reject dominant and homogenising ideas, but also to paint diverse and complex meanings about their identities and speak of their worlds beyond connotations (Fine et al., 2018; Keast & Sonn, 2020; Sirin & Fine, 2007; Sonn et al., 2018).

In forging multiple stories about ourselves and showing that these stories do not fit nicely into a definable box (O’Sullivan, S., 2015; Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000), we echoed O’Sullivan’s, S. (2015) call for breaking open the container, thereby disrupting the categories of representation, and revealing the robust complexity, diversity, and expansiveness in our lives. This also reflects our complex personhood (Gordon, 1997) as the stories told represent the plethora of ways in which the young people of Brimbank speak of and represent themselves through the various identity positions of age, gender diversity, ethnicity, race and place that interact and contribute to our lives; the violence experienced through these affiliations; the stories crafted that disrupt conflated constructions and stereotypes imposed; the joy, community and pride they hold in their identity positions and communities; and the stories about their interests, passions and future prospects whether in music, media or sport. Gordon (1997, p. 4) explains that:

Complex personhood means that people suffer graciously and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves. Complex personhood means that those called ‘Other’ are never never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and

about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward... At the very least, complex personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning.

Making these complex stories and ideas visible enables resistance to siloed and homogenising notions. Tuck (2009) speaks of how asserting complex personhood is also a way of sharing counterstories. In the context of this work, these counterstories reiterate that there is more to youth from Brimbank on the ground than is evident in the damage-focused and at risk narratives circulating about us, and that we are more than one category or the conflated idea of one category. Through our storytelling work, we show that we do not solely revolve around or are reliant on being explained through social categories, but we also expand what it means to be affiliated with these categories, thereby conveying that we have the right to complex identities (O'Sullivan, S., 2015; 2023). As these counterstories defy oversimplified assumptions and stereotypes, they reflect our intersectional identities and alternative ways of being by representing new constructions and narratives about who we are as young people from Brimbank, as well as privilege our own meaning for our identities and life events and convey a sense of history and the future (Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000; Walsh, 2022). Whilst the contributions of these stories disrupt dominant cultural narratives and provide alternate ways of understanding our lives, they can be understood as more than resistance stories, but also stories that re-signify and affirm the complexities in our lives (Melo, 2023; Walsh, 2022). This reiterates how the process of telling these stories exposes the "multiple, competing and often contradictory discourses that mediate our experiences," thus enabling the countering of dominant discourse and knowledge, as well as making way for multiple and "new possibilities for being" (Fisher et al., 2007, p. 261).

### ***Brimbank LIVE as an Intentional Setting for Participation and Partnership***

The *Brimbank LIVE* program was forged in the context of COVID-19 that forced program delivery online and in light of new BNH&CC policy that young people should have

more opportunities to lead programs and initiatives in its community spaces. The program was sanctioned and supported by SNH, and the criteria for inclusion in the program were that participants should be young people connected to the Brimbank area. With this in mind, the council and SNH workers invited young people in the municipality to join the program and also to take the reins in leading its practices and processes. Through this, the *Brimbank LIVE* program formed an intentional space based on youth-centredness. As institutional programs tend to sideline or passively include youth knowledge, ideas and voices (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Macaulay & Deppeler, 2020), the youth-centred focus of *Brimbank LIVE* was seen to challenge traditional structures and systems of power and control in spaces when engaging with youth. This was evident as the *Brimbank LIVE* program went beyond simply consulting young people for their input and ideas. Instead, it provided an example of a site where young people were invited and included into the space, where they were enabled to make decisions about the features and programming of the radio station, and where they were given the opportunity to lead the radio-making processes by formulating their radio content and shows on their own terms. The young people in the *Brimbank LIVE* program went from feeling indifferent, left out, and disconnected from traditional community settings and practices where adult-oriented governance and knowledge reign supreme, to having control of and leading the radio-making process. This reflects how settings and spaces have the capacity to subvert traditional norms of authority (King et al., 2015; Massey, 2013), as these youth-centred and youth-oriented structures changed youth's conventional positions, and enabled them in acquiring authority and the ability to do, organise and execute.

As the young people demonstrated that they were active and willing to engage in this program, this also speaks to how when youth are meaningfully included in settings, able to steer processes, and given the space that speaks to their needs and enables them to speak about who they are, they seize such opportunities (Brennan et al., 2022; Dolan & Brennan, 2016; Farthing, 2010; Zeldin et al., 2000). Similar outcomes are reflected within the literature in community-oriented programs and initiatives that embody features of youth-governance as well as interests which attract young people in participating, engaging and leading (Ansloos et al., 2022; Bloomer et al., 2022; Fine & Torre, 2016; Fine et al., 2000; Fine et al., 2021; Fox & Fine, 2013; Loebach

et al., 2020; Mawn et al., 2015; Young-Bruehl, 2012). It also exemplified a space where skills of public speaking, facilitating and creating were harboured and nurtured for young people, and how these skills learnt in the radio program were also transferred as young people continued to exert their knowledge and expertise in other realms. Through this process, participants were energised and spurred to further engage and participate in community, and a deeper understanding of them emerged. This can be understood as catalytic validity (Brown & Tandom, 1978; Lather, 1986).

As the radio program centred youth, this setting also shaped relationships between the young people and the adults involved, such as the BNH&CC and SNH staff as well as the radio producer from Making Media. The adults within *Brimbank LIVE* came together to actively work alongside the young people. They believed in the young people's potential, ideas and knowledge, and empowered the young people to enact their visions through the radio station and shows. As the adults encouraged the young people, they also provided the young people with the necessary means to take control by stepping aside and actively giving the young team members space to drive the processes and make their own decisions about the radio program and the shows' content. This shows that "as youth participate in organizational and community life, with adults as their collaborators, they begin to see themselves as powerful civic actors" (Zeldin et al., 2013, p. 389), and demonstrates how adults can be important social actors in youth-led processes (Checkoway, 2017; Fox & Fine, 2013). Furthermore, it reinforces the view that collaborative spaces do not always require shared control between youth and adults (Wong et al., 2010), but collaboration can be seen through adults supporting and making way for young people to capably take the lead.

Whilst scholars generally acknowledge that youth-centred and engaged work does not exist in complete isolation from operating social and cultural dynamics, and that adult power still exists within the larger systems (Bettencourt, 2020), the ways of working employed in *Brimbank LIVE* showed how adults were able to use their influence, voice and capital to further the young people's radio-making trajectories. This was seen when the adults vouched for the young people and their talents in relation to outside broadcasts, and in the way that they continuously uplifted and advocated for the young people within the broader institution. Malherbe et al. (2017)



similarly suggest that young people are able to better navigate institutions and organisations with adult support, due to adults' proximity to and knowledge of these systems. Furthermore, this work also embraces notions that adults have a responsibility to work in solidarity with youth, and that they can and should make active decisions to use their power in the process of working towards youth's causes (Checkoway, 2017; Fox & Fine, 2013). Through their connections and capital, the adults in *Brimbank LIVE* did this as they granted the young people access to space, tools, equipment and radio training to carry out their radio work. As social transformation is said to be possible when people are not only given power and control but also the practical and appropriate tools (Fine et al., 2000; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012), SNH and Making Media affording the young people these resources and avenues, as well as providing expert guidance and support, affirms the importance of tangible and practical means and assets for this sort of work. Fine et al. (2021) emphasises this as they note that institutions have obligations "to commit resources and scholarship, practice, and policy, to name injustice, document the consequences of structural inequity and violence, and work with communities and movements to generate alternatives" (pp. 354-355). Scholars also note that having access to resources for learning and skill development, along with opportunities to build confidence in applying and utilising them, can also further enrich participatory and community-engaged processes (Fox & Fine, 2013; Ginwright, 2011; Iwasaki et al., 2014; Oetzel, 2022).

As scholars often frame differently positioned youth and adults joining, learning and developing together within community-engaged and participatory contexts through contact zones (Pratt, 1991; Torre, 2009; Torre et al., 2008), the SNH staff and the radio producer in this process and through this partnership can also be understood as adult allies to the young people (Checkoway, 2017). These participants were older people outside the young people's immediate families who supported them, collaborated with them for a common purpose, and played various roles in supporting and enabling the young people's processes for reaching their goals and purpose within the radio space. Central to the alliance and partnership in *Brimbank LIVE* was the building of trust, care and camaraderie between these various social actors, things which are widely cited as vital in successful community engaged practices (e.g., Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Fox & Fine, 2015; Fernández et al., 2019). In light of this, support and mentorship between

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adults and youth were also built up both within the program's processes and also in relation to other matters. This was exemplified in their support through COVID-19 or provided insight and guidance in each of the young people's fields of interest such as media, creative production or sports journalism. Suffla and Seedat (2014) also share that processes of participatory and collaborative work between adults and young people can enable ethics of care, understanding for one another and mutually enabling relationships, and this was evident in the ways the adults of *Brimbank LIVE* learnt about the young people in deeper ways and become enriched through their connection and work with the young people in the program.

SNH's commitment to the *Brimbank LIVE* program demonstrates a particular way of working that values collaboration with young people, and the program exhibited how youth can be included in and build partnerships with differently powered people within systems and organisations. This research shows that even with the institutional constraints around the program, as well as the previous ambivalence faced by young people in the SNH space, a reasonably secure, safe, welcoming and empowering setting was created through the *Brimbank LIVE* radio program so that young people were willing to engage with adults in doing this radio work and expressing their stories. As youth-adult partnerships are said to be an "active ingredient and fundamental practice for positive youth development and civic engagement" (Zeldin et al., 2013, p. 385), the work also showed how adults partnering with young people and working with and alongside them provides opportunities for "collaborative deconstruction" (Bettencourt, 2020, p. 166). The program was an example of how partnerships between youth and adults enable the shifting of dynamics and a reforming of traditional ways of working in settings that can create and amplify better approaches for engaging young people (Bettencourt, 2020; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). It also showed how the adult and youth partnerships created a context that strengthened the young people's ties to the SNH as an organisation, and how community between adults and youth formed and strengthened within the radio space (Zeldin et al. 2000). The features and mechanisms of the *Brimbank LIVE* show the importance of resource sharing, social support and relationships driven by the needs and aspirations of young people in creating a productive youth-led setting. Additionally, the partnership achieved in *Brimbank LIVE* reinforces the point that it is not only the involvement of adults that is vital, but also the particular ways that

adults act and engage with young people within a space, what they choose to relinquish in this process, and what they bring to the table (Fine et al., 2000). Furthermore, this highlights that working towards autonomous and self-determined spaces does not necessarily require young people to do this work alone or to “move away from a system with resources and the ability to care for its people, but actually moving towards building a caring system” (Banegas, 2022, p. 13).

### ***Community Radio as a Tool for Creativity, Authoring and Dissemination for Young People***

Although the decision to utilise community radio in the *Brimbank LIVE* program was determined by SNH’s existing connections, as well as by the context of COVID-19, radio as a tool and practice became a pivotal aspect and conjured specific outcomes in *Brimbank LIVE*. Firstly, community radio as a practice responded to mainstream forms of communication that often exclude youth from making meaning, and instead afforded the young people roles that allowed them to make decisions about their radio shows and station, as well as create stories of their own. This embraces notions of community radio work documented in other contexts, which state that the premise of community radio and its practice is to position community as knowledge producers and centre their meaning through the creation of radio content (Meadows, 2009; Wilkinson, 2019).

With community radio already well documented as playing a role in disseminating knowledge and facilitating learning in the fields of education and community work (Laskar & Bhattacharyya, 2021; Belik, 2021; Fombad & Jiyane, 2019), *Brimbank LIVE* showed how radio can be a vehicle for participatory learning as well as telling counterstories (CBAA, 2014; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). The creation of radio content and the stories produced through the program allowed young people to centre their lifeworlds and to carve out their own representations and constructions of who they are, which are often erased and excluded from mainstream spaces and platforms (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017; Mitchell, 2016). It also enabled them to tell the stories that they wanted to, and on their own terms. This storying work in *Brimbank LIVE* also enabled youth to showcase their firmly and strongly shaped cultural and political knowledge, and to display their literacy about their social worlds and their own

identities that they are eager to share. What occurred through *Brimbank LIVE* emphasised that young people come into spaces with deep community cultural wealth, critical consciousness and awareness about our identities, as well as the inequalities, dominant systems and narratives attached to them, and it showed how these can be seen and brought to the surface when we have the vehicle, resources and space to convey our established knowledge and capital. This highlights how community radio is an accessible and democratising vehicle that does work in levelling hierarchies of power in producing knowledge. The *Brimbank LIVE* work also emphasises how community radio can be used by community to counter and respond to issues they face as well as produce culture about their worlds (Dagron, 2001; Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

The characteristics of radio also enabled the amplification of meaning and content produced, as radio-making permits participants to re-signify cultural resources and claim identities, whilst enabling their voices to be heard (Baker et al., 2020; Gershon, 2013; Watkins & Shulman, 2008; Sonn et al., 2014). Meaning being shared through audio is said to de-centre text-based modes, moving “beyond traditional and prescribed settings of knowledge production and activating new sensory spaces of affective knowing with others” (Baker et al., 2020, p. 5). The aspects of sound, language and style are also important in the context of radio-making, as sound can be an instrument in informing and broadening understandings about what someone knows and who they are, as well as for registering resonance through the reconstructions of their ideas (Gershon, 2013; Robinson, 2020). For the young people of *Brimbank LIVE*, the voicing of their stories was regarded as a powerful and symbolic process, particularly as youth are often denied opportunities to speak for themselves or have their voices heard in mainstream platforms, spaces and programs (Bilbrough, 2018; Fine & Fox, 2013; Foundation for Young Australians, 2020). As the young people became active authors, creators and contributors of media through the radio process, it also shows how such tools can contribute to fostering a more vibrant and inclusive community media landscape (Al-Hassan et al., 2011).

Radio-making not only enabled them to have their voices heard, but also afforded them opportunities to have their voices and stories projected in a myriad of ways, whether as dialogue and conversation with other co-hosts in group discussions, through talk-back radio and

interviews with guests, or as individual reflections. Various styles of telling stories were also evident with stories presented in informative, persuasive, light-hearted, humorous and entertaining ways, sometimes preplanned and sometimes off-the-cuff (Duncan et al., 2014). Stories through radio-making were also carried through various forms of music, beats and rapping created by members of the collective. This reflects how the tool of radio is not only democratising in giving community members a platform for their meaning to be heard, but it also enables stories to be performed, narrated and embodied differently, which leads to the sharing and representing of forms of knowledge in innovative, captivating and also distinct and personalised ways (Foxwell, 2012; Good et al., 2021; Halverson, 2013; Sonn & Baker, 2020; Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

The *Brimbank LIVE* radio shows were streamed on the LIVE FM network, which was available digitally through the LIVE app and on the *Brimbank LIVE* webpage. The *Brimbank LIVE* station showed how radio, even in its digital format, can enable the distribution of stories and carry messages from the teller to the listener (Greene, 1995). This supports the view that radio can widely disseminate community knowledge through broadcasts which may not be heard in mainstream spaces (CBAA, 2014; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). As video and audio recordings of the radio shows were taken and uploaded onto the *Brimbank LIVE* webpage, it also shows that community radio can be useful for archiving community knowledge. The inscription and reproduction of sound waves not only enables knowledge to be preserved and saved but also produces a pathway for pushing stories and voices ‘out’ beyond the initial radio listeners. This conveys how the young people’s stories told through the vehicle of radio were not fleeting or did not just simply land in a one-off occurrence, but instead the program enabled and demonstrated how radio content can be captured, archived and re-experienced digitally, and how creative digital vehicles can expand and continue the reach of young people’s stories so that they are heard, dispersed and promoted in new spaces and to new audiences (Brailas, 2021; Edmonds et al., 2014; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2020; Rice et al., 2018a).

### ***Methodological Reflections: Radio-making as a Collective and Community-Engaged Process***

As radio-making provided a pathway for me to collaborate, connect, support and work with community, engaging in radio-making and being part of the radio practice enabled aspects of *vivencia* (Glassman & Erdem, 2014). Through *Brimbank LIVE*, I joined a collective of young people from Brimbank who had come together through our shared goals of wanting a space to connect and have our stories heard and represented. In the course of this program, we engaged in learning the practice of radio through training, and together we built our knowledge of digital literacy and media. We refined our communication, writing and public speaking skills needed for our radio shows and broadcasts, and through the radio work gained job opportunities and remuneration. This is an example of how participation and collaboration in realms and practices that enable community control can increase youth's skills, self-reliance and belief in themselves, as well as enrich their capabilities within and outside these processes (Botchwey et al., 2019; Cornish, 2023; Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997; Toolis, 2017). In addition, this reflects how creative practices with community can enable the involvement and inclusion of researchers, and in this way we can build skills from the processes of our own research (Ortiz Torres, 2020). In *Brimbank LIVE* I was part of the action of radio-making as I learnt the craft, created radio content, and hosted shows with and alongside the rest of the team. Moreover, Hessler and Lambert's (2017) argument that the practice of storytelling, particularly those of a creative nature, is a collective process that can forge a deep level of communion was borne out as we planned, prepared and hosted shows with one another, and made creative decisions for the radio station as a collective.

As we engaged in radio-making and learning as a team, we also navigated struggles within the space collectively. Considering the program did not have the necessary funding to support its creative practices as well as the financial and promotional efforts needed to maintain the program, we responded to the institutional constraints by applying for grants, seeking new opportunities for furthering the radio initiative, and doing our own promotional work. Although this is a reminder that community-engaged work, spaces and practices may face financial barriers and precarity, particularly when the work may challenge the status quo through the process (Fox & Fine, 2013; Langhout & Thomas, 2010), it also shows the navigational capital and ability

present as we worked as a team in negotiating and upholding our radio practice (Yosso, 2005). Doing radio collaboratively enabled me to gauge the context and nature of the meaning-making process, to navigate the complex challenges and experience the accomplishments alongside the young people, and to better support my fellow radio team members throughout their practice (Chavez, 2008). Engaging in this work with young people from my community also reflects sentiments from scholars such as Morrel-Samuels et al. (2016) and Ortiz Torres (2020) who speak of how we as researchers should find ways to make conscious decisions to work in, collaborate with and show accountability to our own communities. Furthermore, my knowledge and contextual understanding of the young people's motivations, situations, ways of working and stories emphasises how our ties and familiarity with the communities we research are beneficial for the research process, as they provide comfort and assurance for the community on a personal level (Rowberry, 2015).

As part of my engagement in the program, I participated in meaning-making and storytelling alongside the other young people, bringing myself and my social locations to the table. This is a clear demonstration that we as researchers have our own personal stories and meanings to contribute outside of our research agendas, and shows how creative and community-engaged practices and methods of storytelling can enable us in sharing these together with community (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Harrell & Bond, 2006; Summers, 2013; Yarbrough, 2020). Such work is also said to reflect a sense of reciprocity (Christens, 2012; Zeldin et al., 2013), as whilst I was interested in the personal tellings of the *Brimbank LIVE* team, I was also willing to be equally open and vulnerable in sharing my own. This shows how engaging in this critical and ethnographical work produces “not just the collection of observations and data about the cultured ‘other’” but how it is also about “the incorporation of one’s self into the research process” (Summers, 2013, p. 5). Furthermore, Scheper-Hughes (1995) states that ethnographic work can form a realm for resistance that exists both as a field of knowledge and field of action (p. 419). As engaging in such work can deepen and personalise research practices for us as researchers (Ortiz Torres, 2020; Summers, 2013), it also reflects the intertwining nature of research, advocacy and personal connections that are prevalent and embedded in the values of participatory and community-engaged work (Fox & Fine, 2013). This engagement in *Brimbank*

*LIVE* and telling of my own stories reflected Reed et al. (2012, p. 12) call for researchers to “become more willing to share our stories” about connecting and relating to diverse communities, as well as about the reflexivity, vulnerabilities and experiences we go through in this process of working with them, as through this work we become part of a community of scholars who exemplify the “spirit of community psychology”.

### **Summary of Key Points and Contributions**

In light of the four sections above that examine the findings and draw us back to the literature, it can be understood that *Brimbank LIVE* as a radio-making practice represented a participatory, collaborative and creative approach that not only responded to structural and symbolic forms of violence experienced by young people in the municipality of Brimbank, but also enabled a counterspace for relationality, narrative work, and resistance through both challenging and disrupting the positions of youth and the stories often told about them, and also through reimagining them (Case & Hunter, 2012). The formation of the program and its setting show how responsive institutions invited young people into their realms and actively valued their contribution by wanting them to lead programs and initiatives and centring their ideas. It conveys the potential council settings have for creating youth-led realms that respond to and challenge the exclusion that youth face in traditional program delivery and adult-centric spaces. Within *Brimbank LIVE*, relational transactions which are an aspect of counterspace work, could be seen in the partnership, solidarity and collaboration formed with the council workers and radio producer through the radio process (Case & Hunter, 2012). In addition to providing practical tools and resources, the process of *Brimbank LIVE* conveys how social actors in institutions can work together with youth to create ‘openings’ (Greene, 1995). Whilst it is acknowledged that the forging of such processes and spaces is not linear, straightforward or without its hurdles (Fine et al., 2016), the process and realm created opportunities to disrupt notions of young people being apathetic and disengaged, which went further than simply having them, their ideas and thoughts considered and included in the space. Instead, the *Brimbank LIVE* program and its realm fostered new ways of working and being in local council settings and institutions, and repositioned the young people so they were able to take control and be centred as leaders and knowers within that realm (Walsh, 2021).



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Countering realms “provide opportunities for members to engage in behaviours specifically meant to critique the oppressive conditions under which they live” (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 265) and the radio-making of *Brimbank LIVE* represented the space and vehicle for this work to occur. Through the program’s radio-making, a realm for counterknowledge was forged “where what could be, is sought; where what has been, is critiqued; and where what is, is troubled” (Torre et al., 2001, p.150). This created the room and means for youth to convey resistance through their specific stories shared on *Brimbank LIVE*. As a collection, the stories they told reflect new insights about young people from Brimbank, complicating the ways they are often reported, circumventing the categorisation of them based on inferences of race, and enriching thinking around the need to view them intersectionally (Crenshaw, 2017; Overstreet et al., 2020). The stories produced showed that we young people are not a homogeneous category nor do we understand ourselves through narratives that construct us through the siloed categories of our race and economic disadvantage. Although we are tethered through our connection to Brimbank and may be from an area that has a high population of migrants and refugees, we spoke of the diverse identities and subjectivities, such as our age, race, ethnicity, gender, queerness and place, that interact and form specific manifestations of discrimination, stereotypes, marginalisation and privilege in our lives. These stories contribute to knowledge that not only acknowledges and recognises young people’s varying experiences of structural and symbolic violence in light of different affiliations, but also gives insight into the ways they navigate, subvert and negotiate these violences in their everyday lives. In this, the young people showed that in the face of ideas that constrain them, as well as the structural and symbolic violence they experience, they do more than just survive and respond to dominant narratives, but instead through our stories we engage in the active repudiation and rejection of narratives that dominate about our tragedy, victimry and passivity (Vizenor, 2008).

The aspects of these acts of resistance can also be understood through the tool and vehicle summoned to do the work in the program, community radio. Community radio as a tool and storytelling as a method are examples of the ways that resistance can be forged. The practice and engagement of community radio is a community-oriented way of amplifying community voices at the margins, one which challenges mainstream communication of knowledge and uses

creative and multimodal methods to produce knowledge beyond that found in written and text-based products (CBAA, 2014). This description of the *Brimbank LIVE* program contributes to the literature that speaks to the potential of community radio-making and shows how it can be useful in supporting meaning-making work for young people (Green, 2013; Ojwang, 2017; Wilkinson, 2019). It also generates new insights into the utilisation of community radio and radio-making, specifically in community and local contexts in Australia. Moreover, storytelling as a method is understood to be a way to engage in resistance through its blurring of the discursive lines of research traditions and through the way it embraces a pathway for youth to generate multiple and conflicting ideas (Parfitt, 2019; Summers, 2013), and this work has shown how storytelling can be enabled through radio. It also reinforces the notion that self-determined creative practices and vehicles like radio can be an effective intervention and avenue not only for learning, but also for enabling processes that allow young people to create personal stories that respond to the societal structures and systems for young people, and to express constructions about their identities and lifeworlds. Additionally, the workings of these vehicles also disrupt the hegemonies of colonial and adult-centric knowledge and systems, and challenge cultural and social understandings of who gets to be the elite knowers (Aldana et al., 2021; Cosgrove et al., 2023; Fox & Fine, 2013; Suffla et al., 2014; Zeldin, 2004). In the context of this work, this was seen when the young people were permitted to have the means and tools to be the knowers.

Whilst redressing forms of violence can occur through resistance and through opposing and disrupting the homogenising acts of being raced, the discrimination and exclusion we face, and the ways we can be constructed in an unfavourable manner in the dominant narrative, according to Melo (2023), resistance can also occur in doing more than just countering or challenging but also by producing, proposing and reconstructing new meanings and alternate stories and ways of being (Montero et al., 2017). In the *Brimbank LIVE* program storytelling through community radio was a liberating process and praxis that enabled the young people involved to exercise their cultural rights and to author and articulate their knowledge and social experiences so as to produce alternate stories about their identities and lives. In forging stories of our identities and the ways that our various affiliations to these categories produce joy, culture, connection and community, we disrupt framings that paint us through the limiting lens of

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perceived damage around our categories, and instead we show the complexities of our identities and subjectivities and the varying ways these exist in our lives (Hammack, 2008). By forging stories about our passions and interests, as well as speaking to our capacities, possibilities and futures, we told stories beyond the limiting ideas of race, stories beyond the burdens of our affiliated subjectivities, and also stories beyond our identities themselves. While using storytelling to engage in identity work and uplift the multiple voices and knowledges that thrive in our communities, we constructed accurate representations of our identities and worlds by proposing emerging, transforming and alternate stories that painted our complexities, the benefits and cherished aspects of our identities and stories about our futures and possibilities, thereby redefining and producing new and revitalised ways for our being and existence (Bell, L. A., 2010; McKenzie-Mohr & Lafrance, 2017; Melo, 2023; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Pérez, L. E., 2019; Sonn et al., 2021). In affirming rounded and humanised ideas about our complexities, what is important to us and what we are capable of, making meaning through the creative practice of radio in *Brimbank LIVE* enabled us to engage in resistance by producing stories that unravel conflating constructions and challenge the dominant narratives. Furthermore, it also enabled us to reframe, reconstruct and speak openly to re-signify and form alternate stories that reflect more “braver, more truthful, and more deeply human understandings” of who we are (Pérez, L. E., 2019, p. 79).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak during the time of this work and that impacted both the processes and implementation of the research. Initially, I began this research work by engaging in the on-site youth programming within the embodied space of SNH. I engaged in face-to-face fieldwork during this which involved me connecting, engaging and familiarising myself with the young people and SNH staff. When the pandemic led to the abrupt cessation of the in-person programs and on-site interactions, this prevented me from spending prolonged time interacting and engaging with the young people of *The House Program* and SNH staff in the physical space. These disruptions to building familiarity and initial connections were also relevant when *Brimbank LIVE* formed, as we had to rely solely on engaging through digital and online means to build relations and forge our radio collective. Having direct access and the

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ability to connect in person with the young people and adults of the program, particularly at the beginning of the radio work, might have been beneficial in strengthening ways of working and establishing relationships in more natural and intimate ways.

Research practices and processes within the *Brimbank LIVE* work also had to be navigated around the pandemic's restrictions, as most of the interviews with the young people as well as the focus groups had to be conducted over Zoom. Although this enabled me to explore what it meant to carry out community-engaged and participatory work with youth online, this may have limited the potential for connecting intimately and personally with participants face-to-face during the data collection process. Additionally, initial hopes of further involving the young people from the program in participatory research analysis processes were also suspended in light of COVID-19. The initial plans had been to bring the young people together in workshops to collaboratively theme, code and summarise data from their interviews, and to further unravel their experiences around forms of structural and symbolic violence in their lives and locations through story mapping. Due to the uncertainty of how long it would take to fulfil these plans amidst the ongoing and fluctuating lockdowns in Melbourne, and because there had already been delays that came with replanning the research processes as a consequence of COVID, these participatory research practices and processes had to be discarded. Furthermore, at the same time, the young people were working through their own personal situations and circumstances during the lockdowns, such as studying for their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) exams remotely, navigating online learning at school and university, taking on extra responsibilities at home, and dealing with job precarity, all of which played a part in my decision to remove these phases. As their available time was constrained and ephemeral at the best of times, and the unprecedented nature of the pandemic made this worse, this decision was made in hopes to not make the research process additionally taxing and laborious for the young people, which is an issue reported to be common in participatory research contexts (Ansloos et al., 2022; Mawn et al., 2015).

In addition, when *Brimbank LIVE* adopted the use of community radio as a tool and practice, this particular creative tool was not entirely decided on by the young people themselves, but was the tool selected in light of SNH's existing connections, the COVID-19 context and

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knowledge of young people's creative interests. Although the unique features of community radio turned out to have important implications for the work, giving the young people the freedom and liberty to actively choose and develop a creative practice to engage in their storytelling work would have enhanced the youth-led nature of the program, and might have elicited better fitting forms of responsive work that sat more closely with what the young people may have primarily wanted to use and engage with.

Another limitation was the limited one-on-one time for data collection with each of the adult allies during the *Brimbank LIVE* process. Although the young people's voices and perspectives were deemed a priority, and although the adults did engage in the focus groups with the young people, I was only able to unpack the processes of adult involvement after the *Brimbank LIVE* program had ceased. This was because the adults from BNH&CC, SNH and Making Media rightfully prioritised tasks within and related to *Brimbank LIVE*, and attended to their additional priorities to the community beyond the *Brimbank LIVE* program. For the BNH&CC and SNH adults, the delay in interviews was also due to organisational changes that occurred for them through and after the *Brimbank LIVE* program, which reduced their availability for interviews. Although doing the interviews after the program ended gave them an opportunity to speak retrospectively about *Brimbank LIVE*, further engagement and data collection with the adult allies while the radio program was in progress could have enriched their insights and provided more explicit details about the program's process from an organisational point of view while instances of the adult's interactions and partnership with youth were unfolding or still fresh in their minds.

There are several avenues for future research that are relevant to this work. Firstly, aspects such as the lack of funding and promotion of the radio station threatened the longevity of the program, which reflected the precarious nature of tools, processes and sites for community meaning-making, particularly when these realms exist within and are connected to larger institutions. These hurdles highlight how we should not just pay attention to how sites and processes for community-based practices are created for youth and what they produce, but also leave room to further explore and understand what it takes to maintain and sustain spaces and programs for this work, particularly from an organisational and institutional point of view. As

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these barriers had to be navigated in the context of *Brimbank LIVE*, further exploration into these hurdles and how they are currently navigated in community-engaged practice within organisations and institutional realms may contribute to understanding the presence and pervasiveness of structural limitations and barriers, and may forge mechanisms and ways to reduce, combat and work through these to improve community meaning-making practices.

As it had been intended to involve the young people in the research and analysis processes, future research and documentation in contexts and programs like these might be furthered by adopting and implementing participatory approaches, which may benefit and deepen findings and outcomes. Future research into programs and initiatives like *Brimbank LIVE* which include young people in processes of data collection, analysis and reporting may not only further ignite more ways for engagement with the community to transpire, but can also deepen understanding of the processes and products of stories derived from within these practices and spaces. Furthermore, having young people part of the process in publishing and documenting this sort of work can also give them more control over what is included in the documentation, and potentially strengthen the accuracy of the stories included.

### Conclusion

This documentation of the *Brimbank LIVE* program illustrates that when policy supports youth-led initiatives in an organisational space, partnerships are made with youth, and resources and adult support are provided to the process, then young people are empowered to come together to create an intentional and inclusive space of resistance and mobilisation. This research also documents that when this occurs, young people are also able to engage in practices that enable them to reconstruct and formulate meaning about themselves, and thereby produce culture and knowledge. This research tells the story of how organisations and society persist in seeing young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds through the lenses of race and stories crafted by outsiders, but it emphasises that when young people are given the space and means, they construct their own meaning and stories about themselves to reveal the complexity behind constrained and siloed categories. The stories produced by the young people through their *Brimbank LIVE* radio program are a reminder of how young people name, respond to and

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navigate structural and symbolic violence in their lives, and how they choose to speak of themselves in alternative ways that transcend the dominant narratives. Their stories reflect complexity, multifacetedness and resistance, as well as reconstruct and reimagine notions about their identities and lives. This research on *Brimbank LIVE* shows how radio-making was a creative, political and liberating activity which enabled young people from Brimbank to resist and disrupt the dominant narratives, exercise their cultural rights, articulate and assert their knowledge and social experiences, and speak openly about their complex subjectivities to reclaim who they are and affirm their lives in their own ways.

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## Appendix A: Research Partnership Agreement and Key Deliverables



19 December 2019

Victoria University  
Ballarat Road  
Footscray Vic 3011

T 9249 4000  
W [brimbank.vic.gov.au](http://brimbank.vic.gov.au)  
PO BOX 70  
Sunshine, Victoria 3020

To Whom It May Concern;

**Re: Research Agreement**

Brimbank City Council is pleased to partner with Victoria University to undertake a Ph.D research project with Ph.D candidate Roshani Jayawardana. The project will take place in partnership with the Brimbank City Council Neighbourhood House Unit. The research will involve working in young people at Sydenham Neighbourhood House (and other site if required).

Roshani Jayawardana will be registered as a volunteer with Brimbank City council which will provide her public liability and personal accident coverage for the duration of the project.

All participants (young people) who take part in the project will be enrolled as Neighbourhood House program participants which will provide them public liability and personal accident coverage for the duration of the project.

The Ph.D candidate will receive supervision from Mohammed Isah (Team Leader Sydenham Neighbourhood House and Liss Gabb (Neighbourhood House Unit Co-ordinator)

All research activities and subsequent findings will be governed by the Collaborative Research Agreement - 'Exploring Place Based Community Making In Brimbank' signed by Community Wellbeing Director, Kath Brackett on 19/12/2019.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L Gabb'.

Liss Gabb  
Acting Manager  
Community Learning and Participation  
Brimbank City Council

## ATTACHMENT A - PROJECT

The purpose of this partnership is to support Victoria University development of a research program in collaboration with researchers from Victoria University's in the relation to the Reimagining Neighborhood Houses Program (NH). The NH provide both spaces and programs to the community which allow them to participate, engage and learn. BBC have recently proposed the transformation of their NH; to re-design and revive their current facilities and programs to cater to all members of the community.

### **Key Deliverables:**

---

- Research data collected through project based work with young people attending youth programs at Sydenham Neighbourhood House (SNH). *The reimagining of Neighbourhood Houses: Tackling Racism for Young People of Colour within the City of Brimbank.*
- A Literature Review of contemporary research and theory publications in relevant disciplines.

### **Victoria University will:**

---

- Complete ethics application and receive approval to undertake research through arts based projects with young people at Sydenham Neighbourhood House.
- Play a role in establishing the centre as a culturally safe and welcoming environment for young people.
- Co-design projects with SNH staff and young people attending youth programs at SNH.
- Design survey instruments for baseline and subsequent data collection.
- Provide BCC with a summary of the data collected.
- Keep data collected in secure storage at VU.
- Support BCC with the preparation of any funding applications for proposed projects that are relevant to PHD research project.

### **Brimbank City Council will:**

---

- Provide a community space at SNH for projects relevant to research project.
- Provide a key contact: Liss Gabb Neighbourhood House Unit Co-ordinator.
- Provide staff and/or security while students are in the building
- Provide support and advice for future project development.
- Make funding applications if required for projects with young people.
- Include the VU logo on any material that may promote the partnership
- Promote the program in our printed and online promotional material
- Contribute towards its own staffing and project costs.

### **Data retention and additional publication details of works created by parties not privy to this agreement**

- (a) Young people participating retain all IP of individual creative works produced through projects.

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- (b) Both VU and the Collaborator agree to seek the permission of third parties (the young people) involved to allow the either party to publish reproductions/documentation of the works produced by young people (only with their express written permission) for non-commercial purposes, including but not limited to the either parties brochures, promotional posters, catalogues, social media and documentary film.

**Appendix B: Ethics Approval**

Dear ASPR CHRISTOPHER SONN,

Your ethics application has been formally reviewed and finalised.

» Application ID: HRE19-186

» Chief Investigator: ASPR CHRISTOPHER SONN

» Other Investigators: MS ROSHANI JANYA JAYAWARDANA, DR NICOLE OKE,  
DR AMY QUAYLE

» Application Title: Young People of Colour Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Race-based Discrimination and Social Exclusion

» Form Version: 13-07

The application has been accepted and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)' by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval has been granted for two (2) years from the approval date; 13/01/2020.

Continued approval of this research project by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the above approval date or upon the completion of the project (if earlier). A report proforma may be downloaded from the Office for Research website at: <http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php>.

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious events or adverse and/or unforeseen events that may affect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes. Researchers are also

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reminded of the need to notify the approving HREC of changes to personnel in research projects via a request for a minor amendment. It should also be noted that it is the Chief Investigators' responsibility to ensure the research project is conducted in line with the recommendations outlined in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).'

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee

Phone: 9919 4781 or 9919 4461

Email: [researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchethics@vu.edu.au)

**Appendix C: Informed Consent + Information to Participants (18+)**

# **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH (18+)**

## **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

We would like to invite you to be a part of a research project titled 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'. This study is being conducted by Roshani Jayawardana from the Institute for Health and Sport at Victoria University under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Sonn, Dr Nicole Oke and Dr Amy Quayle. The research project is in partnership with Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses (NH).

The study aims to work collaboratively with Young People involved in Brimbank LIVE to explore their involvement in the program, experiences within their communities and look to understand how these programs and spaces online can speak to responding and expressing Young People's passions and issues.

## **HOW WILL I BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?**

Involvement in this research will begin with taking part in an interview with the researcher to explore what types of programs Young People have previously been a part of, why they have chosen to be part of these spaces, what these spaces address for them, and what they hope to share and gain being part of Brimbank LIVE

After the process of "going live", young people will then take part in another interview with the researcher to discuss what they learnt and gained during the process of planning, sharing and broadcasting Brimbank LIVE and what could be improved on in the program.

## **WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM PARTICIPATING?**

Your participation will provide you with an opportunity to express your experiences regarding RBD, social exclusion and sense of community within Brimbank. It will also allow you to have a say in how the current NH spaces may discriminate, include/exclude and cater to YPoC.

You will also be able to share and speak about your radio shows in Brimbank LIVE, how you came to be involved, and suggest better ways that community spaces may connect and support young people.

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

### HOW WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE USED?

This summarised data will contribute towards the compiling of experiences of YPoC in the Brimbank area and be used to build knowledge on their RBD and social exclusion. The summarisation of experiences will contribute towards understanding outcomes of community-based arts initiative,

This data will also contribute to research which will be produced into a written PhD thesis, an academic journal article and be used in presentations about the project.

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?

The aim of the questions asked will explore your experiences of RBD and social exclusion. The questions will also ask you to share aspects of your radio shows and motivations for them. These questions will most likely stimulate you to share part of your personal history and life experience. Topics discussed may heighten your concerns on the particular aspects of your culture, experiences of racism and exclusion. Therefore, it is possible that you may become distressed because of the questions asked in the interview.

### CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, ..... (Print name)

I certify that I am over the age of 18 and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'.

I certify that the nature of the study and any risks associated have been fully explained to me by Roshani Jayawardana. I freely consent to participate in the following:

- 2 individual interviews (pre “going live” and post “going live”), which will be audio recorded and transcribed

I have been informed of the nature of the research and how data will be used. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have them answered. I hold the right to object or refuse to participate in any of the research activities listed above. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the principle or student researcher. You can also contact any support services provided, or services of your choice, if needed.

**Professor Christopher Sonn:**

Victoria University  
christopher.sonn@vu.edu.au  
03 9919 5226

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

Institute of Health and Sport

### **Roshani Jayawardana**

Victoria University

[roshani.jayawardana@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:roshani.jayawardana@live.vu.edu.au)

Direct contact number: 0433437414

Institute of Health and Sport

### **Support services**

Dr. Romana Morda

Psychologist

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Health and Support Services

[www.cohealth.org.au](http://www.cohealth.org.au)

Phone: 83984100

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 1 4428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.



**Appendix D: Informed Assent/Consent + Information to Participants (under 18)**

# **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH (under 18)**

## **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

We would like to invite your child to be a part of a research project titled 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'. This study is being conducted by Roshani Jayawardana from the Institute for Health and Sport at Victoria University under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Sonn, Dr Nicole Oke and Dr Amy Quayle. The research project is in partnership with Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses (NH).

The study aims to work collaboratively with Young People involved in the online House Program! to explore their involvement in the program, experiences within their communities and look to understand how these programs and spaces online can speak to responding and expressing Young People's passions and issues.

## **HOW WILL I BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?**

Involvement in this research will begin with taking part in an interview with the researcher to explore what types of programs Young People have previously been a part of, why they have chosen to be part of these spaces, what these spaces address for them, and what they hope to share and gain being part of the online House Program!

After the process of "going live", young people will then take part in another interview with the researcher to discuss what they learnt and gained during the process of planning, sharing and broadcasting in the online House Program!, and what could be improved on in the program.

## **WHAT WILL I GAIN FROM PARTICIPATING?**

Your participation will provide you with an opportunity to express your experiences regarding RBD, social exclusion and sense of community within Brimbank. It will also allow you to have a say in how the current NH spaces may discriminate, include/exclude and cater to YPoC.

You will also be able to share and speak about your radio shows in Brimbank LIVE, how you came to be involved, and suggest better ways that community spaces may connect and support young people.

## **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION I GIVE BE USED?**

This summarised data will contribute towards the compiling of experiences of YPoC in the Brimbank area and be used to build knowledge on their RBD and social exclusion. The summarisation of experiences will contribute towards understanding outcomes of community-based arts initiative,

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

This data will also contribute to research which will be produced into a written PhD thesis, an academic journal article and be used in presentations about the project.

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?

The aim of the questions asked will explore your experiences of RBD and social exclusion. The questions will also ask you to share aspects of your radio shows and motivations for them. These questions will most likely stimulate you to share part of your personal history and life experience. Topics discussed may heighten your concerns on the particular aspects of your culture, experiences of racism and exclusion. Therefore, it is possible that you may become distressed because of the questions asked in the interview.

### CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, ..... (Print name)

I certify that I am under the age of 18 and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'.

I certify that the nature of the study and any risks associated have been fully explained to me by Roshani Jayawardana. I freely consent to participate in the following:

- 2 individual interviews (pre "going live" and post "going live"), which will be audio recorded and transcribed

I have been informed of the nature of the research and how data will be used. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have them answered. I hold the right to object or refuse to participate in any of the research activities listed above. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the principle or student researcher. You can also contact any support services provided, or services of your choice, if needed.

#### **Professor Christopher Sonn:**

Victoria University  
christopher.sonn@vu.edu.au  
03 9919 5226  
Institute of Health and Sport

#### **Roshani Jayawardana**

Victoria University

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

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Institute of Health and Sport

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Phone: 99195223

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Health and Support Services

[www.cohealth.org.au](http://www.cohealth.org.au)

Phone: 83984100

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 1 4428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

**Appendix E: Parent Consent for under 18 + Information to Participants**

# **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS (participants under 18 involved in research)**

## **INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS (participants under 18 involved in research)**

### **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

We would like to invite your child to be a part of a research project titled 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'. This study is being conducted by Roshani Jayawardana from the Institute for Health and Sport at Victoria University under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Sonn, Dr Nicole Oke and Dr Amy Quayle. The research project is in partnership with Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses (NH).

The study aims to work collaboratively with Young People involved in the online House Program! to explore their involvement in the program, experiences within their communities and look to understand how these programs and spaces online can speak to responding and expressing Young People's passions and issues.

### **HOW WILL MY CHILD BE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?**

Involvement in this research will begin with taking part in an interview with the researcher to explore what types of programs Young People have previously been a part of, why they have chosen to be part of these spaces, what these spaces address for them, and what they hope to share and gain being part of the online House Program!

After the process of "going live", young people will then take part in another interview with the researcher to discuss what they learnt and gained during the process of planning, sharing and broadcasting in the online House Program!, and what could be improved on in the program.

### **WHAT WILL MY CHILD GAIN FROM PARTICIPATING?**

Their participation will provide them with an opportunity to express their experiences regarding RBD, social exclusion and sense of community within Brimbank. It will also allow them to have a say in how the current NH spaces may discriminate, include/exclude and cater to YPoC.

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

They will also be able to share and speak about their radio shows in Brimbank LIVE, how they came to be involved, and better ways that community spaces may connect and support young people.

### HOW WILL THE INFORMATION THEY GIVE BE USED?

This summarised data will contribute towards the compiling of experiences of YPoC in the Brimbank area and be used to build knowledge on their RBD and social exclusion. The summarisation of experiences will contribute towards understanding outcomes of community-based arts initiative,

This data will also contribute to research which will be produced into a written PhD thesis, an academic journal article and be used in presentations about the project.

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT?

The aim of the questions asked will explore their experiences of RBD and social exclusion. The questions will also ask them to share aspects of your radio shows and motivations for them. These questions will most likely stimulate them to share part of your personal history and life experience. Topics discussed may heighten their concerns on the particular aspects of their culture, experiences of racism and exclusion. Therefore, it is possible that they may become distressed because of the questions asked in the interview.

### CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I, ..... (Print name)

give permission for my child,

... (Print child's name)

who is under 18 years of age, to participate in the study 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Using Community-Based Arts Practice as a Vehicle in Tackling Structural Violence'.

I certify that the nature of the study and any risks associated have been fully explained to me. I freely consent for my child to participate in the following:

- 2 individual interviews (pre "going live" and post "going live"), which will be audio recorded and transcribed

I have been informed of the nature of the research and how data will be used. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have them answered. I understand that my child holds the right to object or refuse to participate in any of the research activities listed above. I understand that my child can withdraw from this study at any time, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise them in any way.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the principle or student researcher. You can also contact any support services provided, or services of your choice, if needed.

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

### **Professor Christopher Sonn:**

Victoria University  
christopher.sonn@vu.edu.au  
03 9919 5226  
Institute of Health and Sport

### **Roshani Jayawardana**

Victoria University  
[roshani.jayawardana@live.vu.edu.au](mailto:roshani.jayawardana@live.vu.edu.au)  
Direct contact number: 0433437414  
Institute of Health and Sport

### **Support services**

Dr. Romana Morda  
Psychologist  
[Romana.Morda@vu.edu.au](mailto:Romana.Morda@vu.edu.au)  
Phone: 99195223

coHealth  
Health and Support Services  
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Phone: 83984100

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 1 4428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

**Appendix F: Interview schedule (Young People)**

Starter questions

*Brief participants about withdrawal rights, what the research will provide etc*

- Name?
- How old are you?
- What suburb are you from?
- Ethnic identity/nationality?
- Religion?
  
- Tell me a little bit about yourself
  - Hobbies, interests?
  - School?
  - Extra activities you do outside of school? (Sport, music, dance)
  
- How long have you lived in your community area?

Community

- Can you describe your community?
  - Brimbank, Other?
  
- Describe the people who belong in your community?
  
- What things do you do within your community? What things do you do in the Brimbank community?
  - Sport/recreational activity
  - Hang out
  - Volunteer
  - Go to school
  
- What do you like about your community? What do you like about the Brimbank community?
- What is it like to be a young person within your community?
  
- Are there any issues that you experience within your community?
  - Even issues that may not be related to you, but you see other groups and people experiencing in your community
  - E.g Race- relations, issues within schools in the area, judgment around young people

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

- How do these issues impact you as a young person?
- What are some things that could make your community better?

### Programs in Brimbank

- What spaces in your community do you spend time in?
  - Library, Shopping centres (Watergardens, Sunshine Marketplace), Parks, Community Centres, NH spaces, other spaces?
  - When do you spend time in these spaces (on school days, everyday)?
  - What do you do in these spaces?
- What programs/events have you engaged in, within your community and/or Brimbank?
  - House Program
  - Brimbank events/activities
  - Community programs
  - Sport programs
- Tell me a little bit about these programs/events you've been part of?
  - How were these programs set out? Process?
  - Why did you choose to be part of these programs?
  - Pos/Neg/Neutral experience
- What did you gain by being in these programs and spaces?
  - Did you learn skills?
  - Did you make connections/friends?
- Why did you choose to engage in these programs?
  - Did these programs speak to your passions/issues you experience?
  - How do they do this?

### Brim LIVE Program

- Tell me about your radio/show podcast that you've put together for Brimbank LIVE?
- How did you get involved?
- What has the planning process been for you?
- What are you hoping to share in your radio show/podcast?
  - What skills are you hoping to showcase?
  - What topics will your radio show/podcast explore?
- What do you hope to get out of being a part of this program?
  - What do you hope to learn?



## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

- What skills do you hope to gain?
- E.g Sharing passions? Online community? Career? Creating a space?

### Goals and aspirations

- What are some of your goals and aspirations for the future?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Do you feel the programs and services that NH offer help to support you in achieving these goals?
- What other additional programs and services could NH have to help you?

**Appendix G: Focus Group 2 – Schedule of Questions**

- Acknowledgment
- Questions
- Overall, what are some of Brimbank LIVE's successes?
- What have we gained?

Diverse topics, well equipped,

- What are our strengths within the project?
- What are some areas of improvement?
- What are some outside opportunities that have risen from this project?
- What are some external barriers that we've faced within this program? (e.g. COVID)
- What does Brimbank LIVE offer that makes this project unique and different (value proposition)

Moving forward

- What are our current commitments within this program?
- What are some opportunities and additions that we're hoping to create, take to the market or seek funding for? (Ideas we have)
- What are some upcoming opportunities that we think may emerge and we will be able to respond to and pitch for? (opportunities proposed by others)

**Appendix H: Information to Participants & Informed Consent Document (Adults)**

# **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT (Adult Mentors)**

## **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:**

We would like to invite you to be a part of a research project titled **Community Narrative and Placemaking: Mobilising Community Radio as a Liberating Method for Racialised and Marginalised Youth**. This study is being conducted by Roshani Jayawardana from the Institute for Health and Sport at Victoria University under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Sonn, Dr Nicole Oke and Dr Amy Quayle. The research project is in partnership with Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses (NH).

The study aims to work collaboratively with Young People involved in Brimbank LIVE to explore their involvement in the program, experiences within their communities and look to understand how these programs and spaces online can speak to responding and expressing Young People's passions and issues, as well as creating new narratives about young people.

### **How will I be involved in the research?**

Involvement in this research will consist of taking part in an interview with the researcher to explore

- The types of programs Young People have previously been a part of at SNH
- The process of building Brimbank LIVE
- The role of mentors in the youth-led radio space
- The process of planning, sharing and broadcasting Brimbank LIVE
- The outcomes and impacts of Brimbank LIVE

### **What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

- The questions and discussions in interviews will most likely stimulate you to share part of your personal history and life experience, or the experiences of young people who are marginalised, which may be distressing.
- The information you provide the researcher will be kept confidential, and confidentiality amongst the group of Young People will be highly encouraged. All efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality by
  - Your name and any other details that could identify you not being used in the thesis or any publications that come out of this research project.
  - You receiving a written copy of your interview where you will be able to remove any details that you do not want included in the research project.
  - The researchers removing any details that could identify you when we use information from your interviews.

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

### **How will this project be conducted?**

If you are interested in taking part in this research project you are asked to contact Roshani Jayawardana and sign the Informed Consent form (below).

Should you decide to take part in the research, a time and place that is mutually convenient will be organised for interviews to be conducted. After the interviews have been conducted, a written copy of the interviews will be sent to you. You can ask for parts of the interviews to be deleted, if you prefer them not to be used. Data will then be summarised and themed.

### **What will I gain from participating?**

Your participation will contribute to the understanding of building youth-led programs, and allow you to express your experiences regarding the process of Brimbank LIVE to help shape, transform and extend the online spaces which cater to Young People.

### **How will the information I give be used?**

The information you provide us with will be used in a PhD thesis being written by Roshani Jayawardana. The researchers may also draw on this to produce academic articles. A report will also be produced for Brimbank Neighbourhood Houses.

### **CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT**

I, ..... (Print name)

I certify that I am over the age of 18 and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study 'Young People Within the City of Brimbank: Community Narrative and Placemaking: Mobilising Community Radio as a Liberating Method for Racialised and Marginalised Youth.

I certify that the nature of the study and any risks associated have been fully explained to me by Roshani Jayawardana, and I freely consent to participate in this research. I have been informed of the nature of the research and how data will be used. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and have them answered. I hold the right to object or refuse to participate in any of the research activities listed above. I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time, and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

Signed:

Date:

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the principle researcher

## CREATING SITES AND NARRATING STORIES OF RESISTANCE

### Contact Details

Prof. Christopher Sonn

*Victoria University*

[Christopher.Sonn@vu.edu.au](mailto:Christopher.Sonn@vu.edu.au)

*Direct contact number: 99195226*

*Institute of Health and Sport*

Roshani Jayawardana

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### Support services

Dr. Romana Morda

*Psychologist*

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coHealth

*Health and Support Services*

[www.cohealth.org.au](http://www.cohealth.org.au)

*Phone: 83984100*

Lifeline

*Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention*

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

*Phone: 131114*

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Ethics Secretary, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Office for Research, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001, email [Researchethics@vu.edu.au](mailto:Researchethics@vu.edu.au) or phone (03) 9919 4781 or 4461.

**Appendix I: Interview Schedule (Adult Mentors)**

**Demographics**

- What is your job title?
- How long have you been in this position?

**General Role**

- Tell me about your job/role
  - What does your role consist of?
  - Day to day duties?

**Brimbank LIVE**

- Tell me about your role in Brimbank LIVE?
  - How did Brimbank LIVE come to be?
  - Partnership with SNH/BNH
  - Process of training
- Was there a formal process involved in building Brimbank LIVE?
  - Challenges?
  - Institutional/structural barriers with council?
- What makes a successful youth program and what aspects of these were present in Brimbank LIVE?
  - Was this program different to others you have overseen? Why/Why not?
  - How was the youth-led nature embedded? Intentionally or organically?
- What was it like being present in the process of Brimbank LIVE as a mentor/support?
  - Examples of young people seeking support?
  - Importance of mentorship?
  - Support extend beyond radio?
- What are some of the impacts of participation in BL for you people?
  - Social outcomes
  - Financial payment
- Can you tell me a little bit about the reach this program has had to its audience?
  - Stats and broadcasting
  - Organisations collaborating
  - Awards
- How has Brimbank LIVE continued since its launch?
  - Other events or opportunities to platform youth?
  - Challenges? Financial, social?
- Final comments about the process of overseeing the building of a youth space, mentorship with youth in Brimbank LIVE